

The City's Form and Function, 2018.

PONDERING AN IMPONDERABLE.

Demographics, basic human needs, our social contract and technology will determine the form and function of cities in 2050. We can predict demographics and basic human needs. The wild cards are technology and the new social contract. After the first fifth of the 21st century, the rate of technological and social change has been accelerating and disorienting.

Describing the state of affairs by mid-century is imponderable. Extrapolation is a trap; predicting outcomes is delusional. The only defense is process; a process for solving current problems while preparing for future opportunities and issues with a publicly-vetted decision-making process based on a set of principles and an equitable social contract.

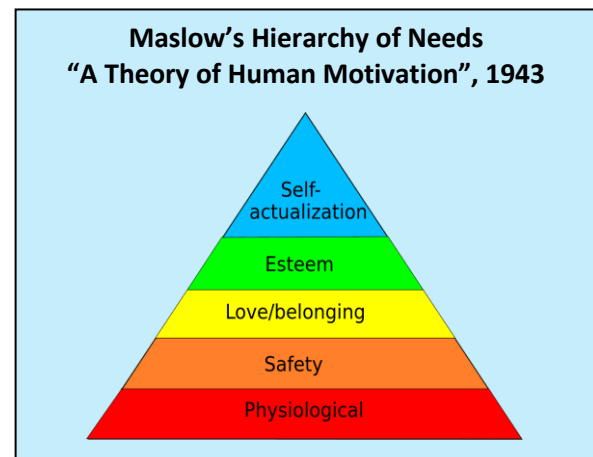
DEMOGRAPHIC EXPECTATIONS.

Unless current trends change, in 2050:

- The U.S. will have 439 million residents; 50% of whom will live alone with only 25% of American families having children. 75% of Americans will live in metropolitan regions with central and suburban cities.
- The domestic birth rate will remain below replacement levels; immigration will be essential to maintain a youthful population and a viable workforce.
- The “dependency ratio” of non-workers to workers will grow from 74% in 2020 to 85% in 2050. Population and labor force are projected to be more racially and ethnically diverse. The aging population and labor force will slow the growth rate of the labor force.
- Education will be year-round, life-long and on-line. Mobility will be provided as a service with autonomous vehicles.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF HUMAN NEEDS.

Despite disruptions and dis-information, human needs are “knowable”. Abraham Maslow got it right over 75 years ago. Despite Ray Kurzweil's melding of man and machine, basic human needs and wants will persist for a while.



The base line assumptions about the future, in addition to demographic expectations, are:

- Maslow's identified needs for personal security, shelter, sustenance and companionship will continue. Esteem and self-actualization will be harder to come by.
- People will continue to want a private and personal place to live connected to sources of daily needs, jobs and entertainment.
- People will still need to work for a living even as the nature of work changes.
- Potable water and electricity will still be consumed; wastes will still need safe disposal.
- High speed broadband internet service will become essential for the basic functions of life; until replaced by a new system that achieves the same or better results.
- Leisure time, real and virtual, will need to be filled; robotics, avatars and holograms will make personal travel less necessary.
- People will still need people.

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TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE.

A subject too big and pervasive to summarize; but what we know is that what we know today may not be valuable tomorrow. Life-long learning will remain the new norm.

THE NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT.

We invented cities as the organizing framework for people to co-habitate in order to be secure, to cooperate on ventures bigger than one person can handle, to collaborate to solve humanity's existential threats and to combat individual isolation. Cities are the vehicles we have to form the 21st century social contract.

Rousseau identified the agreement between society and its rulers and the communities' citizens in 1762. The roles and responsibilities of the governors and the governed are to be known and respected.

The Post-WWII Deal was unspoken but widely believed and firmly established in the second half of the twentieth century. A family could expect the husband to have a stable job for his working life at a livable, middle-class wage. Home ownership was promised and delivered through a favorable mortgage system. Health care and public education met family needs, children could expect to go to college and retirees could expect to live out their lives in some comfort. That was the deal.

As the "post-war" period became the Digital Age, the deal changed. Good things and bad things have happened to disturb the Post-War Deal and revise the go-forward American social contract. On the good side, people of color gained respect and rights, women became full-fledged citizens. The natural environment became a resource worth protecting.

Technology entered everyday life, the workforce and the world became connected for business and pleasure.

On the downside, globalism created a conflict between a nation's global responsibilities and its sovereign rights. Events around the globe now have local impacts; diseases traveled fast, social media has been weaponized, jobs are no longer secure, atrocities anywhere in the world became local headlines, international trade is becoming more contentious. In the US, education and health care are readily available only to the wealthy and the moral compass of society has become situational. The middle class is getting squeezed financially and morally.

A replacement deal has yet to be struck. The interim deal between people and their society is in flux. The old expectations linger as their reality disappears.

In this flummoxed situation, the challenges will be globalism, personal isolation, degradation of the natural environment, the cluttering of outer space, increasing wealth disparity and the need for broad-based education and health care.

International, national and state governments may or may not fulfill their obligations, but local governments can commit to address the challenges of isolation, poverty, education, health care and environmental degradation.

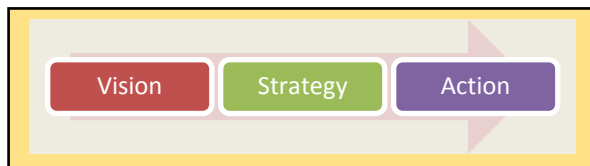
The contract between citizens and their local governments can be crafted to address local issues and opportunities through a process of transparent and well-intended decision-making that relies on a broad-based community vision with sophisticated strategic and action plans.

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A PROCESS: SUSTAINABLE URBANISM.

Sustainable urbanism offers a process to equitably balance the city's economic, social and physical forces. A transparent, well-intended process can form a city-based narrative discernible to a wide audience. It promises a rational story to counter the fictional tales of self-absorption, fence building and isolation.

The vision-strategy-action continuum is the process to actuate the system of sustainable urbanism. Sustainable urbanism is not a vision; it is a strategy, a means to an end. Strategies and actions are designed to achieve a vision, to serve a purpose, to achieve a goal.



1. Vision.

Vision is the desired outcome; a community-based vision is the collective aspirations of the town. One vision of the 21st century city is to be a place that is interesting, pleasant and prosperous for all residents, businesses and visitors with its downtown as the city's social, civic and commercial center.

2. Strategy.

The overall strategy of the town is to leverage every asset to achieve the community's vision. The Strategic Objectives for the physical, economic and environmental systems of the city are:

a. Economic System Objectives.

- To deliver meaningful jobs and livable family incomes.
- To create a strong public finance system of reasonable taxes and fees.

b. Social System Objectives.

- To provide programs that promote community civility and sociability.
- To engage in partnerships that advance multi-benefit public projects.
- To design public facilities to encourage social engagement and interaction.

c. Physical System Objectives.

- To have great neighborhoods with a diversity of housing types and prices.
- To have vibrant activity centers with the primary center being the main street.
- To have productive and organized development corridors with mixed uses.
- To have a holistic open space system of trail-connected parks, school yards, important wetlands and uplands, stormwater areas and beautiful streets.
- To have a strong infrastructure system with traditional facilities plus ubiquitous high-speed broadband internet service.

3. Actions.

Over time, society is becoming more isolated, more self-possessed, more anonymous, more disinterested and more extreme in views and actions. Public trust declines; equity suffers.

The antidote is good government, high business ethics and community-based actions to equitably distribute economic resources, to preserve functions provided by nature and to build a strong society based on virtuous values.

High quality public education is the place to start. A new generation of change agents is wanted. Committed women and men of talent and high community ideals will be the ones to write and tell the story. Their work will be hard.

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Social Attributes of a Character Town

ENACT PROGRAMS:

- Foster mutual expectations by engaging all segments of the town's society.
- Promote broad-based respect for rules of civic behavior.
- Build trust through open and frequent community communication.
- Enhance the city's capacity for self-reliance by building its capacity to solve problems.
- Pursue a common interest in fun with community events and celebrations.

USE PARTNERSHIPS:

- Celebrate shared rituals and traditions with local organizations and neighboring communities.
- Construct ubiquitous connections to groups in the city, in neighboring towns and global cities.
- Appreciate enlightened civic, municipal, regional, state and federal leadership.

LEVERAGE PHYSICAL FACILITIES TO PRODUCE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS:

- Understand that public spaces matter; they serve social and economic purposes.
- Insist upon respect for civic assets.
- Showcase the town's great neighborhoods, its vibrant downtown and its system of connected educational, cultural and recreational venues to retain and recruit businesses and their workers.

Economic Attributes of a Character Town

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS with:

- A Strong Data Base that identifies business participation in regional and global commerce.
- Development Plans that build town character to attract New Innovation Economy "talent".
- Collaborative Business Retention and Recruiting Plans.
- Workforce Development Programs prepared in partnership with business sector.
- Marketing and Public Relations Plans with a local council of export-oriented businesses.
- Assignments for each city, institutional and business player.

COMPREHENSIVE LONG-RANGE FINANCE PROGRAMS with:

- Annual and capital budgets for the city and special districts.
- A comprehensive, long-range finance plan for the city.
- Capital improvements that support economic development.

INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT FINANCING AND INCENTIVES using:

- Land development entitlements.
- Physical infrastructure improvements.
- Public finance tools, incentives and partnerships.
- Marketing and promotional assistance.

ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDES AND INFRASTRUCTURE to:

- Cross-leveraged social, economic and physical capital.
- Train and support programs for startup companies.
- Connection to global networks with high-speed internet service.
- Build a tolerance for responsible risk by public entrepreneurs.
- Fully utilize partnerships and collaborations.
- Provide business resource centers, incubators and accelerators.
- Brand innovation and innovators.
- Celebrate successes.

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Physical Attributes of a Character Town

GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS include:

- A diversity of housing:** A wide variety of housing types, prices, locations and styles.
- Ubiquitous access and pedestrian connections:** An interconnected system of walkable streets, sidewalks and trails that connect the places people use as they go about their daily activities.
- Accessible daily need uses:** Accessible shops, schools, parks, theaters, offices and civic buildings.
- Participatory organizations:** A neighborhood organization with identifiable boundaries that protects the neighborhood from obnoxious intrusions and facilitates participation with local government.

VIBRANT DOWNTOWNS: The main thing is to keep “Main Street” the main street with:

- Buildings** of two to four stories with active and accessible ground floor retail, restaurants and other uses alive beyond nine-to-five weekdays.
- Streets** that are inviting, not foreboding, with two travel lanes, wide sidewalks, on-street and off-street parking with 75’ to 100’ building face to building face separation across the street, bus stops, crosswalks, street trees, street lights and business friendly signs; plus local ownership of the street.
- Active storefront uses** such as restaurants, shops, farmers’ markets with regional foods, convenience shopping for drugs, groceries, books, gifts, clothing, hardware and ice cream.
- Personal and business services** such as laundries, dry cleaners, barber shops, car care shops, plus tech support and business services like banks, full service copy centers and business incubators.
- Hotels** and other types of visitor accommodations to support “small town” tourism.
- Venues for community entertainment and personal gatherings** including theaters for live performances, public libraries, local history museums, places for religious gatherings and weddings.
- Programmed activities** such as book fairs, parades, festivals, car shows and community celebrations.
- Visitor information centers**, physical and virtual, for residents, business and visitors with guides to local places and activities, notice of non-recurring events and tickets to local activities.

RESPECTED HISTORIC AND NATURAL RESOURCES: Hometown pride is engendered through the preservation, display, use and celebration of natural resources and historic places and buildings, parks, lakes and waterfronts.

CONNECTED COMMUNITY VENUES: A system of walkable streets, sidewalks and trails that connect close-in neighborhoods with schools, parks, shopping, libraries, museums, theaters, downtown businesses and civic buildings like city hall, the post office and the civic auditorium.

HOLISTIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEMS with:

- Basic utilities and high-speed broadband internet service that are intimately connected, “smart” and “green” to form the foundation of a strong community.
- A multi-modal transportation grid with universal blocks and buildings adaptable to many uses.
- A unified open space system that fully integrates parks, school yards, stormwater ponds, lakes, streams and preserved natural lands, all connected with pathways and trails and signed with educational materials as the signature of the town that promotes civic socialization.

COMMUNITY PRIDE BUILT ON AUTHENTICITY using an iconic place or traditional event, unique to the town, with Florida examples such as:

- The West Orange Trail in Winter Garden, Ocoee and Apopka; Central Park in Winter Park;
- Haslam’s Book Store in St. Petersburg; S. F. Travis Hardware in Cocoa Village; The Lakeside Inn in Mount Dora; or the lakefront parks in Clermont, Eustis, Kissimmee, Sanford and Tavares;
- The downtown colleges, theaters, art galleries, festivals and local history museums in DeLand, Eustis, Winter Garden, and Winter Park; Carriage rides in Fernandina Beach’s historic neighborhoods.