



BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF AMERICAN CITIES

WHITE PAPER



NewCityPioneers.Org



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AMERICA'S MOST STORIED CITIES ARE PLAGUED by escalating housing costs, infrastructure decay, and increasing economic disparities. Policy efforts to renew urban America have proven slow, ineffective, and politically divisive. This white paper proposes another pathway to revitalize the urban splendor and overall future of America: the development of new cities across the U.S., designed from the ground up to be affordable, sustainable, and technologically advanced.

To take on this ambitious project, New City Pioneers proposes a phased approach informed by similar initiatives in other nations. Comprehensive master planning and feasibility studies would be followed by the construction of essential infrastructure—transportation, utilities, and digital networks to support smart city technologies. Subsequent phases focus on economic and community development, leveraging partnerships with businesses and educational institutions to foster vibrant, affordable, and economically diverse communities.

In this paper, we also propose bold policy innovations to help catalyze the investments in these new cities. Chief among them is a nationwide competition between the 50 states over which state can build the best, most vibrant new city. Other ideas include the strategic use of federal lands to significantly reduce capital costs, incentivizing students to participate in construction, and utilizing a modular housing approach to lower costs.

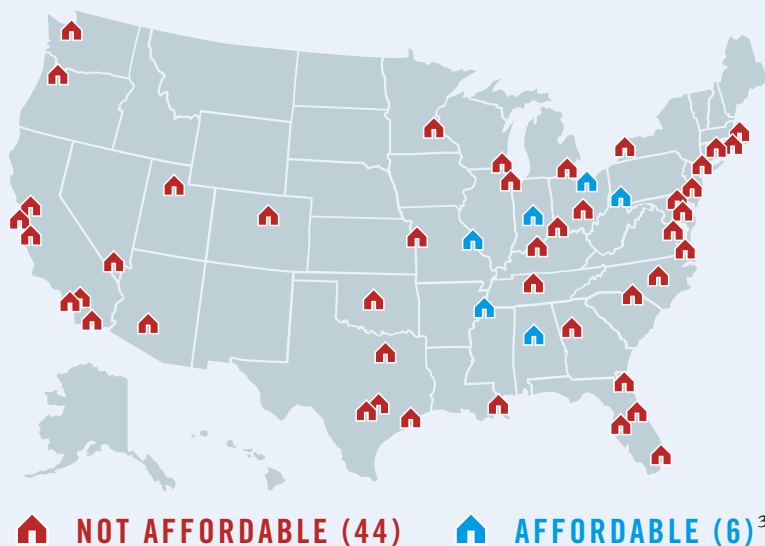
The development of new cities is a proactive solution to America's most pressing urban, economic, and societal challenges, one with the ability to inspire and motivate the nation. This paper sets the stage for a series of additional white papers from New City Pioneers that dive deeper into specific aspects of new city development, such as affordable housing solutions and strategies to promote job growth in the age of A.I.



INTRODUCTION

THE UNITED STATES FACES A CONFLUENCE of economic and societal challenges that impede opportunity and diminish quality of life for our citizens, and nowhere are these challenges more evident than in densely populated urban areas. Inequality, unaffordability, poor infrastructure, and lagging adoption of technological solutions are holding back America’s most storied cities and leading to adverse social, cultural, and political effects.

Current approaches to solving these challenges focus on adapting laws to marginally improve outcomes, but small-scale tinkering is unlikely to create significant long-term progress. To reinvigorate American society, this white paper recommends a novel and ambitious approach: the strategic development of entirely new cities across the U.S., designed from the ground up to address the most pressing urban challenges of our time.



Chief among those challenges: housing is unaffordable for median earners in 44 of the 50 largest metro areas in America.¹ This has led to a rise of the “working homeless” in our biggest cities, where between 40% and 60% of the unhoused are gainfully employed.² This problem, however, is not nearly as acute outside of major urban



areas. Homes are affordable for median-earners in 60% of counties nationwide.⁴ This means housing access is a solvable problem if we can make it attractive and feasible for families to relocate to lower-density areas. New cities can enable this migration because locations can be selected based on land affordability, and residential areas can be designed from scratch to ensure less congestion and lower per-unit costs.

Another problem that can be addressed by new cities is the sorely outdated infrastructure in many urban areas. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives U.S. infrastructure a C- grade, pointing to the urgent need for modernization to support population growth.⁵ While retrofitting existing cities is costly and difficult, new cities can be built around the latest advanced civil engineering practices and smart city technologies, enabling optimization of energy use, traffic, public services, connectivity, and more.

Furthermore, new urban developments can prioritize environmental sustainability. Existing American cities have far greater carbon output per capita than their European counterparts, largely due to high rates of car ownership, insufficient public transportation, and poor building standards.⁶ New cities can be constructed around effective, low-carbon public transport, renewable energy sources, and environmentally sound building practices to create spaces that support public health, environmental sustainability, and quality of life.

In this white paper, we at New City Pioneers will delve into international precedents for construction of new cities, propose a phased development strategy, and outline novel policy approaches to kickstarting this ambitious initiative, most notably a 50-state competition to develop new cities nationwide. Through comprehensive planning and innovative thinking, the development of new cities in the United States can offer enhanced quality of life and robust economic opportunities for all Americans.

CASE STUDIES

Initiatives to build new cities, while novel in the U.S., are not unheard of in other developed nations. Below are two international examples of successful new city initiatives.

SONGDO, SOUTH KOREA

Initiated by the South Korean government as a key element of its national strategy to modernize infrastructure, Songdo represents a pioneering venture in new city development. Launched in the early 2000s on 1,500 acres of land reclaimed from the Yellow Sea, Songdo was designed to become a global hub for technology, international trade, and green urban living.⁷ The government collaborated closely with private companies, employing a public-private partnership model that leveraged significant capital investment for its ambitious smart city technologies and sustainable urban planning.⁸ These efforts are geared towards boosting South Korea's economic status on the world stage, while also providing a scalable model of sustainable urbanization.



VINGE, DENMARK

Unlike the top-down approach of Songdo, Vinge's development, begun in 2013, showcases a collaborative effort between local and national Danish authorities. Situated 30 minutes from Copenhagen, Vinge is designed to enhance regional development and connectivity in accordance with Denmark's national policy.⁹ This ongoing project focuses on creating a sustainable city that harmoniously integrates urban living with natural landscapes. Key features of Vinge include a central green park, extensive bike paths, and a focus on public transportation, all underpinned by a commitment to environmental sustainability and community-centric urban design.¹⁰

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Both Songdo and Vinge offer valuable lessons for new city projects in the U.S., though they differ markedly in their inception and execution. Songdo's development was driven by economic ambitions, leveraging high-tech solutions and international



business appeal, which could be particularly relevant for U.S. regions aiming to attract global commerce and tech industries. In contrast, Vinge focuses on sustainability and regional connectivity, appealing to U.S. initiatives aimed at combating urban sprawl and enhancing quality of life.

Culturally, both cities reflect their national identities—Songdo with its focus on technology and efficiency, and Vinge with its emphasis on sustainability and community living. For U.S. projects, blending these approaches could cater to diverse cultural expectations and needs, promoting cities that achieve multiple end goals: economic revitalization, technological progress, environmental sustainability, and more.



PHASED APPROACH

We believe a phased approach to building new cities is crucial to managing complexities and mitigating risks. Below is a partial list of what might be included in each phase of work. This is informed by prior and existing new city projects around the world. Additionally, instead of a top-down approach, each state will handle its own new city planning initiatives, bringing flexibility in the phasing.

PHASE 1: MASTER PLANNING AND FEASIBILITY

- ★ **LOCATION SCOUTING:** Identify potential sites based on strategic value, water resources, accessibility, and environmental impact. Community involvement is crucial at this stage to ensure the project aligns with the needs and values of potential or existing residents.
- ★ **IDENTIFYING FUNDING SOURCES:** A mix of federal, state, and private funding sources is essential. Public-private partnerships can be particularly effective in sharing the financial burden while leveraging private expertise and efficiency.
- ★ **ESTABLISHMENT OF CITY GOVERNMENTS:** Establishing a city council, mayorship, and other key offices can ensure focused leadership and accountability from the beginning, which is critical for the long-term success of the city.

PHASE 2: BUILD ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- ★ **TRANSPORTATION NETWORK:** Build a comprehensive transportation infrastructure including roads, mass transit systems, and possibly airports or train stations.

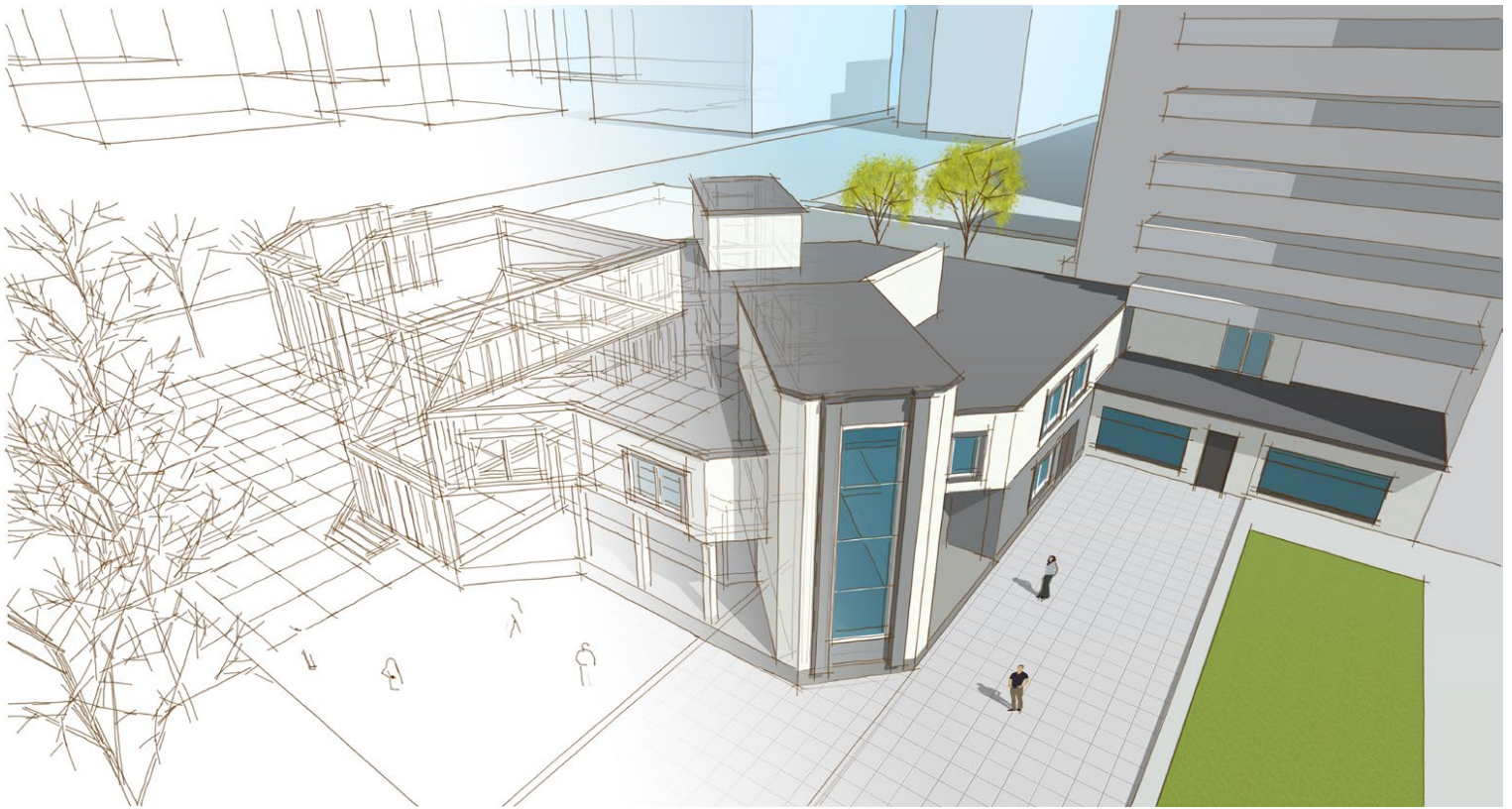


- ★ **UTILITIES:** Develop essential utilities such as water, electricity, and gas. Implementing smart grids can enhance energy efficiency and sustainability.

- ★ **DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE:** High-speed broadband networks are vital for supporting smart city functionalities, improving city services, and ensuring professional and remote work opportunities are immediately available for new residents.

PHASE 3: ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- ★ **ATTRACTING EMPLOYERS:** Partnering with businesses and educational institutions and providing incentives such as tax breaks and subsidies can stimulate economic growth and job creation.
- ★ **HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:** Creating diverse, affordable housing options is essential to attract a broad demographic spectrum. Emphasizing small, modular, and energy-efficient homes can cater to modern needs and sustainability standards.
- ★ **COMMUNITY SPACES:** Developing public spaces like parks and community centers fosters a sense of belonging and community, crucial for the social sustainability of new urban areas.



PHASE 4: SECONDARY INFRASTRUCTURE

- ★ **HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATION FACILITIES:** Early planning for healthcare and educational services ensures that these essential services keep pace with population growth and contribute to the city's attractiveness as a place to live.
- ★ **EMERGENCY SERVICES:** Establishing robust emergency services including police, fire, and medical services is vital for public safety and resilience.
- ★ **COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE AREAS:** Designing versatile commercial and residential zones encourages a vibrant urban life and supports the local economy.

PHASE 5: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- ★ **CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT:** Implement a framework for the ongoing evaluation of the city's development.
- ★ **ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT:** Empower planners and developers to make informed decisions based on real-time data and community feedback.



POLICY INNOVATIONS

To bring this ambitious vision to life, creative thinking on policy is essential. Below is a selection of innovative policy ideas to promote the success of new cities.

A CONTEST FOR ALL STATES

Launching a competition among states can catalyze the development of new cities by tapping into a spirit of rivalry and innovation. A nationwide contest could challenge each state to design and build a model city that addresses pressing issues unique to that state. Such a competition not only fosters creativity and expedites the permitting and regulatory process, but also enhances public engagement and state pride.

GOVERNMENT LAND UTILIZATION

Significant tracts of federally owned land are an untapped resource nationwide. Proposing legislation that allows for the release of these lands for urban development can drastically reduce initial capital requirements. A proposed financial model could include the government retaining a percentage of proceeds from future land sales, ensuring that the public benefits economically from the development in the long run. This approach would also encourage states to identify underutilized rural towns that could serve as foundations for new urban areas.

GAP YEAR OPPORTUNITIES

Engaging youth in the building of new cities offers a transformative educational and work experience. By providing minimum wage employment and the promise of land ownership upon completion of a year's service, young people can contribute meaningfully to the construction of new communities. This initiative would help instill a sense of ownership in the new cities, ensuring that they are populated by residents who are deeply invested in their success.

MODULAR HOUSING

Adopting modular housing strategies can alleviate the housing affordability crisis by allowing new homeowners to start with the basics—a bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, and living room—and expand as needs and financial circumstances change. This approach enables young families to invest in homeownership with more modest upfront costs and to grow over time, while moving less often than would otherwise be necessary.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Building new cities offers a unique opportunity to implement sustainable urban planning practices. By selecting more rural or less densely populated areas for development, these new cities can avoid the heat island effects and ecological disruptions often

associated with large metropolitan areas. As Denmark did in the new city of Vinge, policymakers could mandate larger residential lots to promote green spaces and use of sustainable building materials and techniques to mitigate environmental impacts.



CONCLUSION

A NATIONWIDE, 50-STATE COMPETITION to develop the next generation of great American cities is a bold idea, but bold ideas are exactly what America needs. New cities would not be merely a response to the crises of housing affordability, infrastructure inadequacies, and economic disparities, they would be a proactive step towards a future that inspires pride in every American, and where all citizens can access a better quality of life.

Imagine cities where the air is cleaner due to thoughtfully planned green spaces and advanced public transport systems, where technology enhances daily life without encroaching on privacy or security, and where affordable housing is a reality for residents of every income level. This vision is achievable through the collective efforts of policymakers, private investors, and most importantly, everyday citizens working together to promote new urban construction.

The forthcoming papers in our series will delve into specific considerations and benefits of new city developments, including affordable housing frameworks and strategies to mitigate A.I. job displacement. Through these discussions, we at New City Pioneers aim to provide actionable insights and detailed analyses to support stakeholders as they explore this ambitious and transformative initiative.

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