

Cities of the Future – People and Nature Come First in this Bold Vision of a Next-Generation City

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By 2050 the world's population is expected to reach 9.8 billion.

Nearly 70% - 6.7 billion people – are projected to live in urban areas.

We asked architectural and urban planning firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM, <https://www.som.com/>) a question:

How would it design a city of the future?

The plan follows ECOLOGY to guide development.

WATER sources are protected and systems are designed to capture, treat and reuse it.

ENERGY is renewable and the city becomes more LIVEABLE even as it becomes more densely populated.

All WASTE becomes a resource.

FOOD is grown locally and sustainably.

High-speed rail improves MOBILITY.

The CULTURE AND HERITAGE of the increasingly diverse population are publicly supported.

The INFRASTRUCTURE is carbon-neutral, and the ECONOMY is largely automated and online.

ECOLOGY – The future city is designed around natural features and forces, protecting wildlife habitat and natural resources. Based on a unified vision for the region, the city is compact and dense to limit impacts on the ecosystem.

WATER – Protecting upland water systems and rigorous collection and cleansing of stormwater improve water quality. Wetland restoration and sponge-city measures revive habitats and protect against flooding and sea-level rise.

ENERGY – In the city of the future, energy is 100% renewable. Enough power is produced within or close to the city for it to be self-sufficient. Area buildings share energy resources, generating as much energy as they consume.

LIVABILITY – The city of the future is designed for accessibility and safety as more people populate urban areas. Residents have healthier lives with more streamlined access to nature, services, and automated technology.

WASTE – Waste becomes a resource to produce energy or alternative material. Landfills and abandoned industrial areas are gradually converted to other purposes after soil remediation. Wastewater is treated for irrigation or human consumption.

FOOD – Sustainability practices are mandated across the life cycle of a product, from food production to delivery and disposal. Global standards are established for organic farming and animal treatment; most produce is locally sourced.

MOBILITY – Traveling in the city of the future is more affordable, safe, and convenient because of automated technology and high-speed rail. Fewer personal automobiles are on the road and more pedestrian space is available.

CULTURE – In the densely populated and diverse city of the future, historical heritage is preserved and celebrated. Recreation, arts, and entertainment can be shared globally through virtual and augmented reality.

INFRASTRUCTURE – Buildings are constructed more efficiently and include technology that can improve the quality of natural resources such as water, soil, and air. Infrastructure is designed for pedestrian access with limited roads for cars.

ECONOMY – The economy of the future city must work in tandem with policies that safeguard ecological sustainability. People adapt to more flexible working hours as artificial intelligence and automation become more widespread.