REINVENTING AMERICA'S LEGACY CITIES

strategies for cities losing population

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leg a cy *noun, plural* **–cies. 1.** *Law.* a gift of property, especially personal property, as money, by will; a bequest.
2. anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor: *the legacy of ancient Rome.*

adjective, of or pertaining to old or outdated computer hardware, software, or data that, while still functional, does not work well with up-to-date systems.
Syn. inheritance.

Legacy—a word that invokes thoughts of both extraordinary inheritances and obsolete relics—is a suitable descriptor for a group of American cities that have rich histories and assets, and yet have struggled to stay relevant in an ever-changing global economy. This American Assembly report discusses both facets of these cities and describes how they can build on the best legacies of the past to reinvent themselves for a productive and sustainable future.

Preface

While most U.S. cities are rebounding from their nadir a decade or two ago with healthier downtowns, neighborhoods, and local economies, other cities with rich historical heritages and valuable resources for the nation's future are experiencing severe population loss. These cities face daunting challenges as they struggle to manage new demographic, economic, and spatial realities and the political, psychological, and legal hurdles that accompany them. More fundamentally, there is little accepted language for talking about shrinking a city in urban policy—no discursive framework that does not revert to talk about growth that ignores the reality of the massive population, jobs, and other losses. Without traditional guideposts this group of American cities must manage their realities in new ways that lead to reinvention rather than decline.

To examine the enormous challenges confronting these cities eighty Americans and Europeans, representing a range of views, interests, and backgrounds, were brought together in Detroit, Michigan on April 14, 2011 by The American Assembly of Columbia University, the Center for Community Progress, and the Center for Sustainable Urban Development of Columbia University's Earth Institute. The participants met for three days in structured discussions. They acknowledged the harsh realities faced by these cities—"legacy cities" is the term they chose to call them—and produced policy frameworks and stronger coalitions for the implementation of those policies. Through these promising approaches and the adoption of disciplined strategies, the participants believe these legacy cities will be placed on a trajectory for long term recovery as assets to the nation's vitality.

The project was co-chaired by Henry G. Cisneros, Executive Chair, CityView and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and Gregory S. Lashutka, Senior Consultant, Findley Davies and former Mayor of Columbus, Ohio. Paul C. Brophy, President, Brophy and Reilly LLC and Elliott D. Sclar, Professor of Urban Planning, School of Architecture & Planning, Columbia University and Director, Center for Sustainable Urban Development, Earth Institute, were co-directors and guided the project since its inception in fall 2009. The project was ably assisted by a steering committee of distinguished leaders, whose names and affiliations are also listed in the appendix.

As part of the project, background papers and sidebars were commissioned for the participants from seventeen leading thought and policy leaders under the editorial supervision of Alan Mallach, Senior Fellow, Center for Community Progress. These papers will become chapters in a book entitled *Legacy Cities* (title tentative), to be published by The American Assembly later in 2011 and available through amazon.com and The Assembly's web site: www.americanassembly.org. The table of contents of the book is listed in the appendix.

During the Assembly, participants heard formal addresses by Henry G. Cisneros and by Rip Rapson, President & CEO, The Kresge Foundation with responses by Scot Spencer, Associate Director for Advocacy and Influence, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Hunter Morrison, Director, Campus Planning and Community Partnerships, Youngstown State University. The participants also heard a panel discussion with The Honorable Dave Bing, Mayor of Detroit; The Honorable William A. Johnson, Jr., Former Mayor of Rochester, New York; The Honorable Dayne Walling, Mayor of Flint, Michigan; and The Honorable Jay Williams, Mayor of Youngstown, Ohio. The discussion was moderated by Dan Kildee, President, Center for Community Progress. The German Marshall Fund sponsored a panel discussion of Europeans, moderated by Oliver Weigel, Head of Urban Development Policy Division, Federal Ministry of Transport, Building, and Urban Development, Berlin, Germany, with panelists Valentino Castellani, Former Mayor of Torino, Italy; Mike Emmerich, Chief Executive, New Economy, Manchester, England; and Engelbert Lutke Daldrup, CEO, Urban Stakeholder Consulting, Berlin, Germany. A third panel was moderated by Gregory S. Lashutka and featured panelists

Raphael Bostic, Assistant Secretary, Policy Development and Research, U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development; Lavea Brachman, Executive Director, Greater Ohio Policy Center; and Marian Urquilla, Director, Program Strategies at Living Cities.

Following their discussions, participants issued this report on April 17, 2011. It contains both their findings and recommendations. The report is available for download on The American Assembly web site.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Ford Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the Mott Foundation, Bank of America, and Ally Financial. Without their invaluable help, this project could not have been undertaken.

The American Assembly, the Center for Community Progress, and the Center for Sustainable Urban Development take no positions on any subjects presented here for public discussion. In addition, it should be noted that participants took part in this meeting as individuals and spoke for themselves rather than for their affiliated organizations and institutions. It should be further noted that individuals currently affiliated with the federal government participated not in their official capacity but as individuals. Their participation should in no way be construed as an endorsement of this report, or of its findings.

We would like to express special appreciation for the fine work of the discussion leaders, rapporteurs, and advisors Eugenie Birch, Lavea Brachman, Diana Lind, Alan Mallach, Marian Urquilla, Jennifer Vey, and Robert Weissbourd in helping to prepare the final draft of this report.

David H. Mortimer
President
The American Assembly

REINVENTING AMERICA'S LEGACY CITIES

STRATEGIES FOR CITIES LOSING POPULATION

DISCLAIMER

At the close of their discussions, the participants in the 110th American Assembly, "Defining a Future for America's Cities Experiencing Severe Population Loss" at the Westin Book Cadillac Hotel in Detroit, Michigan, April 14-17, 2011, reviewed as a group the following statement. The statement represents general agreement, however, no one was asked to sign it. Furthermore, it should be understood that not everyone agreed with all of it.

From time to time in American history—in Detroit as the automotive industry forces closures, in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, in various cities after economic crisis or natural disasters—there has been speculation that an American city has been lost, that the right course is to give up on it. But as Americans we don't do that. This is a matter of principle. But it is also practical. Even our damaged cities have immense value and essential parts to play in the nation's future.

Henry G. Cisneros, Executive Chair, CityView

A great city should not be confounded with a populous city.

Aristotle

I. INTRODUCTION

The global knowledge economy favors cities because their density and infrastructure support the knowledge spillovers and innovation that flow from concentrated economic activity. Increasing demand for energy efficiency, too, favors the proximity and walkability found in cities' dense urban development patterns. Perhaps most importantly, cities continue to offer a unique opportunity for living well together in dense, dynamic communities where diversity and democracy flourish. In the United States people continue to move to metropolitan areas and before the Great Recession were increasingly returning to central cities, a trend expected to continue as the economy rebounds.

> America's legacy cities and their revitalization are critical to our national economic competitiveness.

Approximately 84 percent of Americans live in metropolitan areas, and in the past two decades many of the central cities within them have begun to see their populations rebound. But despite favorable trends in some American cities, others—largely concentrated in the Midwest and parts of the Northeast—have continued to lose residents and jobs for over a half century or more. Some have argued that this turn of events is the outcome of historic processes of economic and demographic change, and that we should therefore write off these "legacy cities" and let others absorb the nation's growth. For the United States to follow this course would be a strategic and costly mistake. America's legacy cities and their assets deserve attention for equity and sustainability reasons, but equally important, their revitalization is critical to our national economic competitiveness. As a purely economic proposition, the enormous value of the physical infrastructure, civic institutions, and human capital embedded in these cities should be supported and exploited for the common good. The country needs them as much as they need the support of the country.

America's legacy cities are vital places with living histories. If they can reinvent their economic and land strategies, they can be desirable places to live, to work, and to raise families. These cities may not have the same numbers of residents and jobs as in the past, but they can be authentic and economically efficient urban areas where residents can feel safe, workers can find and sustain quality employment, and children can thrive in strong neighborhoods with high quality schools. To these goals legacy cities can and should aspire.

> Legacy cities...can be desirable places to live, to work, and to raise families.

The United States needs to understand the global stakes in the decisions it makes. Our competitors in China, India, and Europe are not allowing their cities to disintegrate. Even as China builds new cities to accommodate its expanding economy and population, it is investing heavily in high speed rail and transit-oriented development in its older communities. India and Europe, too, are focusing resources on their existing cities and metropolitan regions. We will be at a global competitive disadvantage if we disregard the urban gems we have cultivated over the past two centuries. We cannot afford such wastefulness as a matter of national policy.

Legacy Cities Have a Complex Mix of Assets and Challenges

In an era when the American economy was driven by manufacturing, the industrial cities of the Heartland were the engines of the nation. Vibrant and dynamic, they epitomized the energy of a growing country. That changed after World War II, when urban disinvestment swept the United States. Suburban flight, deindustrialization, and automobile-oriented sprawl triggered massive population and job losses in the cities that had once led America's growth. While some older cities began to rebound in the 1990s, others are still losing population and jobs. These include large cities such as Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh, as well as many smaller cities such as Youngstown, Scranton, Saginaw, Trenton, and Utica.

As the population of these legacy cities has declined, so too has demand for their buildings and land, creating a new urban landscape rife with vacant lots and abandoned structures. Even in relatively more stable neighborhoods boarded-up houses are scattered among the blocks. But the impacts of population loss are not purely physical: As affluent residents have left, legacy cities have become poorer, with barriers of race and class impeding access to opportunities. Such long-standing challenges have been made worse by the Great Recession, the mortgage crisis, and the tumult in the automotive industry, which have hit many of these cities with particular force. Trapped behind rigid municipal boundaries, today legacy cities face growing fiscal crises, making it increasingly difficult for them to provide public services and maintain their infrastructure.

The impacts of population loss are not purely physical.

Yet this is only part of the picture. Legacy cities contain assets that are important for their own futures and for those of their states, regions, and of the United States as a whole. These assets include business clusters, manufacturing plants, and Fortune 500 headquarters, along with major hospitals and universities, large nonprofit organizations, arts institutions, and foundations. These cities contain rich resources of historic buildings, gracious tree-lined neighborhoods, and beautiful lakes and riverfronts. Above all, they contain valuable human capital—the leaders and ordinary citizens working in businesses and government, nonprofits and neighborhoods, who are committed to making their cities better places in which to live and work.

Across legacy cities, however, conditions vary considerably in both nature and degree. And areas of both strength and weakness can be found in each, with vital neighborhoods adjacent to areas that have been largely abandoned and thriving downtowns just blocks from acres of empty factory buildings. As such, cities are already developing strategies and tools that will work best to address their unique challenges: Philadelphia has begun to stabilize its population, for example, while Pittsburgh, although still losing residents, has begun to rebuild its economy around new technologies. Moving forward, the strategies that will restore America's legacy cities must be thoughtful and nuanced, reflecting both the differences between cities and those within them.

The strategies that will restore America's legacy cities must be thoughtful and nuanced.

Building a Framework for Change

Understanding that one size does not fit all places, in this report attendees of the American Assembly lay out the following recommendations for fostering transformative change in cities that have lost substantial portions of their population:

1. Develop a creative vision for the future of the city, grounded in a thorough understanding of the city's economic geography, the role it plays in its region, and its function in the global economy
2. Rigorously and objectively analyze the city's assets, understanding both opportunities and constraints
3. Design strategies tailored to areas and opportunities with the greatest market potential, informed by social, environmental, and other values
4. Recapture surplus land for public uses in areas where private markets are not functioning
5. Build the city's ability to execute complex revival strategies by:
    - Strengthening governance and leadership
    - Growing financial capacity
    - Investing in information infrastructure

6. Forge supportive partnerships among federal, state, and local governments by:
    - Targeting resources
    - Revisiting regulatory policies
    - Incentivizing regional collaboration

Though this report focuses on actions that legacy cities should undertake, it emphasizes that state and federal governments also have crucial roles. States need to conserve financial resources, environmental amenities and previous investments in the built environment and, thus, states should give strong preferences to already-developed areas in funding transportation, sewer, water and other infrastructure, state facilities, and restoration of previously used sites in a coordinated fashion. The federal government should similarly support these state initiatives through its allocation of transportation funding, incentives for meeting environmental regulations, and stimulation of regional planning efforts that recognize the costs of sprawl. Change will not come easily nor will it come quickly. Cities, states, and the federal government need to commit to long-term strategies and follow them consistently and aggressively not for years, but for decades. Change is possible, and it is worth our effort.

Change will not come easily nor will it come quickly.

II. DEVELOP AN INFORMED VISION THROUGH A BROAD, INCLUSIVE PROCESS

Reinventing legacy cities commences with crafting a vision built on the collective understanding of the reasons for their losses, an acceptance of current conditions, and a realistic assessment of an achievable future.

Informing a city's vision must be data that describe the regional economic geography in which the city exists, and provide a socioeconomic portrait of each of the city's neighborhoods. It must present its assets, including residents, land, legacy industries, newly emerging business clusters, anchor institutions, history, and infrastructure. And it must document its liabilities, including high crime rates, failing schools, a limited tax base, low labor force participation, vacant and distressed properties, the fiscal burden of pension obligations, and an overall loss of confidence in the city. While a vision needs a fact-based foundation, capturing more intangible attributes—the "soul of the city"—through qualitative or local knowledge is also essential. In sum, a vision, grounded in facts and shared values, expresses community hopes and expectations for a city's future.

> Recognition that a city can be smaller...enables a community to turn a psychological corner.

Developing such a vision is complex. For some cities, it may include a period of mourning the past, passing through the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and depression to acceptance. For others, it may include the reconstruction of the history of how things came to be by confronting longstanding racial and class divisions. However it begins, the visioning process must move toward developing a new construct for the city, one that focuses on substantive issues, envisions a future in which each participant can see a role for him or herself, and which is realistically aspirational. Recognition that a city can be smaller and still be a good place to live, work, and gather enables a community to turn a psychological corner and begin addressing its concrete challenges. Cities can rally around new opportunities to produce turning points. These may be inspired by a new leader, landmark projects, or civic processes to generate a new consensus. The object is to create targets and deadlines to pursue milestone initiatives together.

Developing a shared vision in a legacy city requires much more than the routine forms of citizen participation because the consensus built must be strong enough to power a long and arduous implementation process. Five principles should guide the process of developing a vision:

1. it is inclusive and substantive;
2. it is conducted in trust, based on honest and transparent discussion;
3. it is fact-driven, grounded in market realities that can inform a plan for action that will follow;
4. it factors in both current residents and potential newcomers;
5. it produces a vision that is creative, internally coherent, has integrated elements, and provides the specifications and community values to be embodied in the reimagined city.

Youngstown's 2010: A Plan for a Smaller City

When Youngstown, Ohio lost its last steel mill, its leaders realized that the city had hit rock bottom. Over thirty years, Youngstown had lost tens of thousands of jobs and more than half its population; the hoped-for revival of manufacturing had vanished. But this last plant closing was a wake-up call. It energized the mayor and the president of Youngstown State University to start a broadly inclusive planning process that first yielded a vision to guide the plan, Youngstown 2010, and finally led to its adoption in 2005. Crafting the vision involved extensive community engagement and resulted in a simple, compelling statement of four principles:

1. Accepting that Youngstown is a smaller city: Youngstown should strive to be a model mid-sized city.
2. Defining Youngstown's role in the new regional economy: Youngstown must align itself with the realities of the new regional economy.
3. Improving Youngstown's image and enhancing quality of life: Making Youngstown a healthier and better place to live and work.
4. A call to action: An achievable and practical plan to make things happen.

See **www.youngstown2010.com**

III. DEVELOP STRATEGIES BASED ON MARKET REALITIES

If legacy cities are to build sound and healthy futures, they must base their decisions on a clear, objective understanding of the realities of their market conditions, with deep knowledge of the city's assets and liabilities and where it fits within the broader regional economy. While some parts of these cities retain varying degrees of market strength, other areas may be extensively abandoned and no longer capable of generating market activity. Cities must recognize this bifurcation, making investments that are reality-based, and that ultimately link spatial development plans with regional and local economic development strategies.

1. Principles for Market-Supporting Areas

Market-supporting areas are those where the market still continues to function, although in many cases low prices may mean that public subsidies may initially be needed to make new projects feasible. In order for local economic development approaches to capitalize on market opportunities and reuse land productively, they should be informed by and linked to regional economic activity and growth strategies. (Some of these approaches were highlighted in The American Assembly's earlier report, *Retooling for Growth*). Neighborhood assets need to be connected and deployed into economic markets that are nearly always larger than the neighborhood, and that are frequently regional in scope. A key goal is to build practical, operational economic linkages between the people, businesses, land uses, and marketplaces of the neighborhood with this broader activity: connecting workforce to emerging sectors, entrepreneurs to supply chains, land to migrating people and businesses looking for sites. These connections not only restore local economic vitality, but also build the practical foundation for institution and relationship building that helps align interests and generates more deliberate collaboration between central cities and their suburbs.

A key goal is to build practical, operational economic linkages.

Some key principles for redevelopment in market-supporting areas include:

Build from strength

Areas with relatively strong market activity should be targeted for investment, with the goal of increasing demand, strengthening property values, and rebuilding confidence in the community. Focusing resources on these places—which may include residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, and/or downtowns—can motivate existing property owners to reinvest in their properties, and encourage people to buy in the area. Anchor institutions such as universities can make a major contribution by providing financial assistance to employees to buy homes in surrounding neighborhoods, as well as by strengthening neighborhood amenities such as local public schools.

Building from Strength in Baltimore

The Baltimore Healthy Neighborhoods Program targets neighborhoods with market conditions strong enough that a combination of neighborhood marketing, slightly discounted mortgage loans, organized residents, and modest community improvements have resulted in an increase in both home prices and community confidence.

See **www.healthyneighborhoods.org**

Change the investment climate

Public investments need to change the climate so as to leverage private financing. Approaches include making strategic infrastructure investments, eliminating deterrents to investment, creating an entrepreneurial environment that builds on existing businesses, focusing on clusters that leverage the city's economic assets, and growing export-oriented firms. Under some circumstances cities can benefit from import-substitution strategies oriented around major anchor institutions—like Cleveland's Evergreen Industries—which, when executed well, can have a positive effect on local economies.

Changing the Investment Climate in Cleveland

The city of Cleveland and the region's transit agency constructed the nation's first bus rapid transit line (BRT), the Health Line, on Euclid Avenue. The $200 million transit investment has triggered over $4 billion in investment in the teeth of a brutal recession. The line connects the traditional downtown to its arts and culture center six miles away. Downtown is turning into a residential neighborhood with a 92 percent occupancy rate. Cleveland State University invested $500 million to reconnect to the city and support a residential campus. The Cleveland Clinic is supporting a global presence with investments in clinical and research facilities. University Circle, Inc. is evolving from a traditional community development corporation to a community service organization. In-fill development is occurring all along the line. The BRT investment proved to be to be catalytic in triggering institutional and market-responsive investment. See **www.rtahealthline.com**

Invest in human capital

Racial and poverty concentrations are a distressing by-product of sustained population loss in legacy cities. Improving schooling at all levels and connecting workforce training to regional job growth can help integrate the city's human capital with surrounding economic opportunities. Advancing public policies that promote equity is essential for overcoming these cities' histories of race and class disparities. Other opportunities can be provided by drawing immigrants to legacy cities, which can help repopulate neighborhoods and schools, and revitalize business districts.

> Advancing public policies that promote equity is essential.

Promote density

Evidence is growing that demand for city living is greater when there are dense, walkable neighborhoods. Even in legacy cities with a surplus of land, growing nodes of density can be an effective strategy to strengthen the city's residential and commercial areas. Where appropriate, strategies should focus on increasing densities to help support healthy residential neighborhoods, strong downtowns, and effective public transportation systems.

As they focus on encouraging neighborhood density, cities should offer a variety of housing types for people of all incomes. In order to support a balanced workforce, cities must include affordable and upscale housing in for-sale and rental buildings, townhouses, and detached homes in safe neighborhoods. Given low prices in most legacy cities, however, building markets and increasing home values should be a priority.

Nevertheless, planning for areas with market strength is not just about economic development and housing. Successful communities need safety, access, and in the case of residential neighborhoods, good schools and quality of life amenities. Public sector and nonprofit strategies must address these issues, while building community engagement and cohesion.

> Successful communities need safety, access, ...good schools and quality of life amenities.

2. Principles for Weak- and Non-Market Areas

Many legacy cities contain areas where widespread abandonment has taken place, where market demand is limited to few but low-end speculators, and where vacant buildings and lots predominate. Approaches to these areas must be radically different from those areas where there is market strength.

Some key principles for redevelopment in these non market-supporting areas include:

Get land under public control

Cities should build their capacity to assemble, hold, and maintain vacant land, clear title, and dispose of property for non-market uses. Cities—enabled by their states—should employ land assembly tools including the aggressive use of tax foreclosure.

Incentivize responsible property stewardship

Property owners have responsibilities as well as rights. States should enact measures such as vacant property registration fees and aggressive code enforcement that press owners to restore vacant properties to productive use, maintain them responsibly, or relinquish them to others. At the same time, cities should provide incentives for owners willing to restore properties to use.

Property owners have responsibilities as well as rights.

Encourage alternative land uses

Strategies for non-market areas should be designed to ensure that surplus land enhances the city's stronger neighborhoods and economic development strategies. Vacant land can be used for a wide range of both interim and permanent uses, including productive landscapes for environmental remediation, storm water management, habitat and wetland restoration, community gardening, recreational and cultural activities, and contemporary forms of homesteading.

Encourage relocation where necessary

In implementing their land use strategies, cities may seek to encourage residents and businesses left in largely vacant areas to relocate to more populated neighborhoods with better amenities and services. This raises difficult issues, as many people, particularly older individuals, may be reluctant or unable to afford to move. Rather than forcing people to leave their homes and businesses, cities should provide sensitive, thoughtful incentives and support that enable them to relocate to communities that may offer a better quality of life or more viable business location. The critical goal is to offer residents and businesses choices, rather than impose "solutions" on them.

All of these strategies—for market-supporting and non-market areas—are difficult to execute and slow to show results. Cities were originally built lot by lot, block by block, and restoration proceeds in the same way. Cities and their partners in regeneration—neighborhood organizations, community development corporations (CDCs), foundations, anchor institutions, developers and realtors—must not only have patience, but must be willing to chart a course and stick with it for the long haul.

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IV. DEVELOP NEW CIVIC AND GOVERNANCE CAPACITY

Legacy cities have been described as a size 40 man wearing a size 60 suit. Though apt, this metaphor misses the fact that this man is not just smaller, but undernourished in a multitude of ways. In addition to economic and social challenges, legacy cities suffer from weakened political, social, and civic structures; profound fiscal stress; and a lack of the data and information needed to successfully develop and implement their respective vision and strategies—and, ultimately, restore their overall economic health and vitality. As such, it is essential that cities take innovative, entrepreneurial approaches to building or rebuilding the robust governance structures, financial capacities, and information infrastructure needed to successfully implement their vision and strategies.

1. Construct the New Governance for the Next Economy

The places best poised for economic success forge governance structures that encourage nimble, cross-sectoral activity, engage firms and citizens in the work of government, welcome newcomers, and tolerate risk. To prosper in the next economy, then, legacy cities need not just improved government, but better governance,

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which encompasses the entire civic and institutional infrastructure that drives economic activity. These cities need to cultivate and lift up leaders who can garner widespread support for their city's vision and strategy, and have the ability to inspire the human and financial capital to implement it. They need the civic and governmental capacity to undertake the day-to-day work required to foment real change. And they need organizational structures suited to 21st century economy functions.

Cultivating New Forms of Leadership

In their heyday, groups of corporate civic elites—together with city hall—played a major leadership role in the development and governance of their respective cities. The power and influence of these leaders, and elite business organizations of which they were a part, has waned considerably in recent decades, however, and has been reduced by the forces of economic restructuring, corporate reorganization, and deregulation.

In many American cities today, leadership is different, both in terms of its composition and how it wields its influence. This leadership emerges from several different spheres, including government and business, as has always been the case, but also the nonprofit sector, anchor institutions, neighborhood organizations, and a range of other groups—from networks of young professionals to parent advocates— that have declared a commitment to the city.

But these groups may not always fully exercise their leadership, nor always work together in productive and successful ways around a defined set of common goals. True leaders must self-identify as such; be so recognized both among residents and their peers as worthy of trust and confidence; and be willing to commit their time and energies over the course of many years. Most importantly, they must engage with one another in consistent, durable partnerships oriented around the strategies described herein.

True leaders must self-identify as such.

Building Stronger Civic and Governance Capacity

Cultivating a new leadership regime must be coupled with aggressive efforts to rebuild the basic functional capacities—both in the public sector and the broader civic fabric—that allow a city to provide the basic services and amenities that residents and businesses expect and depend upon.

In the public sector realm, this begins with ensuring that government has the necessary competencies in such basics as planning, budgeting, procurement, and hiring, and can provide quality services in key domains such as education and safety. It also means that the public sector has the capacity to tackle complex matters of economic development and land management that are marked by the uncertainty and constrained resources characterizing legacy cities. Finally, city governments need the capacity to substantively and authentically ensure citizen engagement in the development and certification of strategies and plans.

External philanthropic resources used to augment staffing, import technical expertise, support strategy development and convening, and a range of other assistance can support such public sector capacity building through stand-alone grants, ongoing partnerships, or enduring training programs. For example, philanthropy, in partnership with local universities, could establish formal training institutes designed to provide rigorous education and skill building for both new and incumbent public employees in legacy cities.

Cities' broader civic capacity must also be cultivated at all levels. Whether through the development of new intermediary structures or through the coalescing of existing efforts, legacy cities must have formal, organized, and representative civic leadership that cuts across sectors and coalesces around large-scale problem solving. Such a macro-level civic platform is essential to driving large-scale consensus building, but it is also important as a mechanism for leveraging resources, aligning efforts, and providing the necessary continuity for the long-term efforts required to turn these cities around.

Neighborhood-focused leadership, for example, is critical to ensuring that city-wide strategies are responsive to on-the-ground realities and that large-scale plans can actually take root in neighborhoods. Such leadership, particularly through the work of formal associations, is essential to organizing and executing the detailed and labor-intensive efforts needed to sustain neighborhoods through the difficult transitions faced by legacy cities, ranging from reclaiming abandoned land to marketing neighborhoods and welcoming new neighbors. Wherever possible, cities should strive to link neighborhood associations to one another in order to ensure resource and solution sharing, promote cooperative efforts, and develop a clear sense of how each neighborhood fits into the city's future.

Cities should strive to link neighborhood associations to one another.

Finally, legacy cities must also participate in or catalyze regional civic formations. Such regional relationships are vital to ensuring that city interests—in matters of emergency response, transportation planning, economic development, talent attraction, and other critical areas—are represented in the broader regional context.

Detroit Works

The Detroit Works Project is a process to create a collective vision for Detroit's future at the neighborhood, city, and metropolitan scale. Envisioned as an extended process of community engagement and planning, the work is led by a fifty-five-member Advisory Task Force, representing residents, community members, faith-based and nonprofit organizations, city council members, the business and foundation communities, and civic leaders. The Mayor's Interagency Task Force, made up of key city departments and local government agencies, works to ensure that all elements of the plan are achievable and able to be implemented as part of a shared vision.

See **http://detroitworksproject.com/**

The George Washington Project

The Certified Public Manager (CPM) Program is designed to provide District of Columbia government managers the tools to be more effective leaders. The nationally accredited CPM program is administered by the District of Columbia Department of Human Resources. Academic rigor is brought to the program through strategic partnerships with The George Washington University.

See **www.gwu.edu/~cepl/regional/pemm.html**

Creating 21st Century Organizational Structures

Public sector workers at all levels have made positive contributions to the success of American cities, and will continue to be critical to their renewal. However, over the last fifty years in the United States, a new governmental entity has been created, on average, every eighteen hours. Such proliferation and fragmentation of government has too often resulted in fiefdoms, self-serving bureaucracies, and inefficiencies in taxation, allocation of resources, and provision of public goods.

To make matters worse, these trends move us in exactly the wrong direction for the next economy. Today's economic boundaries and political boundaries no longer even remotely coincide. Indeed, while we have city, state, and national governments, the geography of the economy is increasingly neighborhoods (where assets reside and are developed and connected to larger systems), regions (where assets are deployed into regional economic systems), and global markets. Government needs to be reoriented towards this new economic geography.

> Government functions need to be focused where they can best enable economic activity.

To do so, government functions need to be focused where they can best enable economic activity. Some of the functions of city government, like transportation and fire protection, need to move "upstream" to counties and regions—not necessarily through consolidation, but through deliberate coordination. Other functions need to move "downstream"—to neighborhoods, where local institutions more readily know and can support their assets, and/or through tax increment financing districts (TIFs), business improvement districts, community service corporations, local development authorities, or other entities. Such entities can tailor services more closely to neighborhood needs, achieve economies of scale, and raise resources from non-governmental sources.

2. Chart New Directions in Municipal Finance

With rising costs and declining revenues, governments at all levels are facing severe financial stress. This is a particularly difficult challenge in America's legacy cities, which have fewer and poorer taxpayers and reduced industrial and commercial activity, at the same time they face the growing costs of maintaining aging infrastructure, meeting payroll and retiree benefit obligations, and managing a landscape strewn with empty houses and vacant lots. Any responsible approach to these challenges will demand hard choices, choices that will force state and local leaders to rethink the very nature of the services they provide and how they will be funded.

No legacy city can rebuild if it cannot provide essential services.

Traditional methods of funding municipal services assumed that sales, income, and property tax revenue were aligned with city boundaries. That is no longer the case, however, as revenue-providing wealth is now generated across cities' respective regions, often out of cities' reach. No legacy city can rebuild if it cannot provide essential services. As such, cities must explore every available avenue to raise revenues and reduce costs. There are a number of approaches worth considering, many of which may require changes in state law. These include:

Seek new dedicated revenues beyond traditional sources:

- *Reform the property tax collection system, a major source of revenue* *for most cities.* Most cities—working under antiquated state laws—enforce property tax collections in ways that effectively transfer delinquent tax fees and the value of foreclosed properties to speculators. By reforming state tax foreclosure systems, cities and counties can reap significant new revenues and retain the ability to direct the reuse of abandoned properties in ways consistent with local needs. Coupling such reforms with local or regional land banks offers a new source of both revenue and land control for legacy cities.

Flint's Tax Foreclosure Model

Rather than selling tax liens to speculators, Genesee County (Flint), MI internalizes tax enforcement revenues by issuing delinquent tax anticipation notes (DTANs) for unpaid taxes and by providing full funding of anticipated taxes to all local governments. The county then collects delinquent taxes, retiring the note and foreclosing on unpaid properties. This process creates significant arbitrage earnings – money that once flowed to tax lien speculators. The result has been $1.6-$2.1 million per year of new revenue to a fund dedicated to management, remediation, and redevelopment of tax-foreclosed properties. Taking title to and selling foreclosed properties has raised additional revenue previously lost to speculators.

See **www.thelandbank.org/aboutus.asp**

- *Employ new models of tax-increment financing (TIF).* TIFs have proved an effective way of directing revenues to cities experiencing large-scale abandonment. In Michigan, for example, brownfield TIFs allow for regional, scattered site, cross-collateralized plans that generate regional revenues to fund redevelopment in distressed areas that could not otherwise attract investment.

- *Implement user fees and other tax methods of cost recovery such as vacant property registration fees.* Such fees can be an effective method by which to raise resources to manage problem properties.

- *Explore regional revenue sharing models.* While difficult to enact, revenue sharing, such as that employed in Minneapolis/St.

Paul and in the Allegheny Regional Asset District, is an equitable method of tax revenue distribution that recognizes the critical role cities play in a region's economic health.

Increase efficiency to achieve better financial performance and stabilize the tax base:

- Reduce the negative financial consequences of mortgage foreclosures by reforming state foreclosure laws. This includes requiring recordation of all foreclosure filings with local government, and allowing local government to enforce codes on vacant properties in foreclosure against lenders.
- Reform state laws governing shared service agreements. Many existing laws, while allowing such agreements, are overly restrictive and thus can thwart successful intergovernmental cooperation.
- Realign public services at the appropriate neighborhood, city, or regional level, as discussed in the preceding section.

Generate new tax revenue by stimulating urban reinvestment:

- Maintain business and development tax credits for urban investment, rather than reduce or eliminate them, as is currently occurring.
- Develop investment funds to support business expansion and transformative real estate development projects. Such funds should include money derived from public and union pension funds.
- Develop a federal and/or state infrastructure bank. Such a bank can help finance the rebuilding of essential infrastructure, as well as the development of transformative new urban reinvestments such as high-speed rail and modern public transit systems.

Despite the best efforts of responsible local officials, some legacy cities may continue to face insolvency, a problem that most state systems aren't adequately equipped to manage. Thus, in addition to the tools described above, states may also need to consider emergency measures—including state financial distress programs—as a means of instituting lasting financial reforms.

3. Create a Robust Information Infrastructure

Data and analytics are central to governance activities and constitute the lifeblood of economic activity. As such, establishing a grounded vision and detailed strategies tailored to place, enabling excellent execution, and restoring market activity all depend upon rich and interactive information resources. Such resources should include a range of knowledge from expert to novice, and should be comprised of raw data, sophisticated analytics, and social engagement. They should also include state-of-the-art interactive tools that enable transparency and easy use—particularly by the private sector—and a qualitative assessment of local knowledge and expertise.

Data and analytics are central to governance activities.

Information resources serve several key purposes with respect to the special challenges and opportunities of legacy cities:

Developing strategies tailored to place

Strategies for each neighborhood—and even for each asset, such as a parcel of land—have to be tailored to their particular challenges and attributes. This requires rich information and analysis to understand neighborhood assets and markets, and where they fall on the spectrum from strong (where market-based strategies are most fitting) to weak (where alternative uses are more appropriate). It also demands knowledge of how local neighborhoods and assets connect to the unique opportunities of the larger metropolitan economy: What clusters of economic activity are emerging in the city and region? And which local labor force, supplier, and land assets can strengthen and grow with these emerging clusters? Such fine-grained information is vital to public development agencies', community-based organizations', and private developers' ability to appropriately and strategically allocate their resources.

Intelligent Cities

From the next generation of "e-government" technologies that improve value for customers while reducing cost and complexity to a wide array of applications made possible by wireless broadband, mobile devices, social media, and other Web 2.0 developments, technology is taking the promise of "intelligent cities" well beyond the basic information infrastructure emphasized in the main text. Such developments include infrastructure and buildings that "talk" to locals and visitors alike, providing real-time information through smartphones, pad computers, or other devices; homes and workplaces that provide real-time energy consumption feedback to their occupants; interactive tools for public education and "e-democracy;" and compact mini-vehicles that are available for short-term, cross-town rentals just like luggage carts in the airport. Innovations are no longer just premium products for the highest income communities. In more and more cases, they provide lighter weight, lower cost ways of meeting the public's needs while engaging the public in supporting and continuously improving what gets delivered, by whom, and how. Intelligent Cities, a collaborative project by the National Building Museum, TIME magazine, IBM, and the Rockefeller Foundation, is highlighting a wide range of innovative technologies already in use and shining a light forward, too—on cutting-edge efforts to change our conception of what is possible in cities and how to make it accessible to as many communities as possible.

See **www.nbm.org/intelligentcities**

Undertaking inclusive market-based development

More accurate credit data enables lending to new people and places. Accessible data on local expenditures enables expanded retail services. And better data and tools on human capital and labor demand make labor markets more efficient and inclusive. Rich information resources, in short, can help expand market-based neighborhood strategies so that they include under-deployed neighborhood assets, align neighborhood and regional development, and ultimately foster more inclusive prosperity, which is better for both.

Rich information resources... can help expand market-based neighborhood strategies.

Promoting sustainable development informed by market trends

More accurate data on market trends also supports sustainable and forward-looking development by helping disparate parties—including public agencies, CDCs, and private developers to coalesce around a common strategy for revitalizing communities. Sustainable neighborhood development strategies depend on accurate information to enable appropriate and strategic allocation of public and private capital by public development agencies, community-based organizations, and private developers. Neighborhood and city-level institutions are uniquely situated to analyze information and ensure that development strategies foster an inclusive and equitable prosperity.

Improving governance

Government and local communities are primary sources of the key information resources necessary for developing market-based improvement strategies. Effective governments in the next economy will use their information resources to further engage citizens and firms in the work of government. These resources must thus be transparent, providing clear and readily accessible information that can help forge new partnerships. Well-conceived government partnerships can be important tools for cultivating and reinforcing change, and providing support for new policy and practice reforms.

Well-conceived government partnerships can be important tools for cultivating and reinforcing change.

Information resources can also vastly improve the efficiency of government itself: They are critical to fact-based government planning, as well as to monitoring performance and on-going operational evaluation and improvement. "Government 2.0" could reduce the costs to both government and governed, by more efficiently enabling transactions with government, from obtaining business licenses to reporting building code violations.

Developing the information infrastructure described above entails a cultural shift towards valuing transparency and engagement, and an ongoing commitment to continuously building capacity. Modern computer-based data mining, modeling, Geographic Information System (GIS), and other platforms, such as community meetings, provide continuing opportunities to enrich information resources and expand their use. These tools should allow for the collection and analysis of well-organized, accurate, and accessible data on land use and the status of parcels; activity in residential housing markets; nature and performance of neighborhood businesses; labor demand and supply characteristics; and much more. Advanced tools for amassing and using this data for the varied purposes described above range from The Reinvestment Fund's PolicyMap to NEO CANDO's data for planning and monitoring to RW Ventures' "Dynamic Neighborhoods" database and tools for evaluating markets and interventions.

Advanced data management tools

The Reinvestment Fund's PolicyMap (**www.policymap.com**) is a fully web-based online data and mapping application that provides access to over 10,000 indicators related to demographics, housing, crime, mortgages, health, jobs, and more. NEO CANDO (**www.neocando.case.edu**), Northeast Ohio Community and Neighborhood Data for Organizing, is a free and publicly accessible social and economic data system of the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development at Case Western Reserve University. RW Venture's "Dynamic Neighborhoods" database (**www.rw-ventures.com/publications/n_analysis.php**) provides sophisticated tools for analyzing neighborhoods and the impacts of interventions.

V. FORGE SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS & STRATEGIES

To leverage the strategies suggested above, legacy cities, their counties, regional entities, neighboring communities, states, and the federal government need to forge new partnerships with one another, aligning their efforts both vertically and horizontally. Government must also engage in effective cross-sector partnerships with anchor institutions (such as colleges and hospitals), businesses, foundations, and other organizations.

1. Partner With State Governments

In an era of broad fiscal challenges, rising energy costs, and environmental concerns, states can no longer afford to facilitate low-density, high-cost development at the metropolitan fringe while its older communities continue to decline. Instead, states need to conserve financial resources, environmental amenities, and previous investments in the built environment, including their legacy cities.

> States can no longer afford to facilitate low-density, high-cost development at the metropolitan fringe.

One key way states can accomplish these objectives is to give strong preferences to already-developed areas in funding transportation, sewer, water, and other infrastructure, as well as state facilities, in a coordinated fashion. The federal government should similarly support these state initiatives through its allocation of transportation funding, incentives for meeting environmental regulations, and stimulation of regional planning efforts that recognize the costs of sprawl. Both federal and state infrastructure support should encourage rehabilitation, repair, and maintenance of existing infrastructure and should incentivize a life-cycle budgeting and finance plan.

States should also reexamine other policies and programs. Many states have tax policies, resource allocation formulas, business location incentives, and other policies that historically have disadvantaged legacy cities. These include, for example, policies and approaches that encourage cities, suburbs, and exurbs to compete against one another for new business and economic development rather than

> Many states have tax policies... and other policies that historically have disadvantaged legacy cities.

cooperate for the benefit of their metropolitan area. States could better position legacy cities to compete in the next economy through numerous reforms and innovations. In the first place, state agencies themselves could take a more coordinated approach by breaking down program silos and by exhibiting sustained commitments that transcend political cycles and jurisdictional boundaries. In this spirit, states could also provide tools to support the new governance framework outlined above, including legislation allowing permissive local government mergers, or modernizing antiquated planning statutes. Other innovative state tools might include supporting approaches that pool regional resources to pave the way for regional economic development, such as creating a regional revolving loan fund for infrastructure and development projects, and incentivizing and directing investments to places where anchor institutions are aligned with cluster development. States might explore how they can reform and expand state tax increment financing laws, and provide incentives for TIF-supported projects and areas. And they should create incentives for legacy cities to better concentrate resources by prioritizing assistance toward areas the city has identified as strategic targets for intervention.

Finally, states should reform outmoded laws and regulations that thwart legacy cities' efforts to acquire, manage, dispose, and/or redevelop vacant and abandoned land and buildings—and to prevent vacancy and abandonment in the first place. Cities are creatures of the state. As such, state laws, regulations, and policies establish the ground rules for what cities can and cannot do and set the stage for how and where development occurs. States need to consider, for example, major overhauls in such basic systems as the property tax foreclosure system (to finance new land banks and eliminate sale of tax liens); code enforcement (to provide for priority "superliens" for cities); mortgage foreclosure (to address the responsibilities of mortgagees and shift from non-judicial to judicial procedure); and the municipal finance tax structure.

Working Together in the Denver Area

The Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation (Metro Denver EDC) is a full-scale regional economic development entity in which many area economic development groups have joined together to represent, and further, the interests of an entire region. Its partners include seventy cities, counties, and economic development organizations in the seven-county Metro Denver and two-county Northern Colorado region. These entities have signed a no-compete agreement, in which they prohibited themselves from using financial incentives to lure businesses across jurisdictional lines via the use of financial incentives.

See **www.metrodenver.org**

Ohio Hubs of Innovation

The Ohio Hubs of Innovation are regional economic development initiatives that build upon leading assets in urban centers to accomplish three major goals:

1. Propel innovation through cutting-edge, market-driven applied technology and knowledge spillover;
2. Foster the opportunity for job creation and retention; and
3. Catalyze the formation of new companies in the region, while at the same time helping to ensure that Ohio's existing industries retain their competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

See **www.development.ohio.gov/Urban/OhioHubs.htm**

2. Partner with the Federal Government

While the federal government plays a more limited regulatory and institutional role than state government, it can leverage its financial resources and, in so doing, exert strong influence over how states use their legal powers and discretionary funding, and how local governments pursue revitalization activities.

Jumpstarting the process by which legacy cities develop their economies and reconfigure their physical landscapes demands better alignment of federal and state policies with the aim of bolstering local practices—a goal that must be pursued systematically and intentionally. For instance, if state and federal governments can align in making strategic and targeted funding decisions, both the public and private sectors can leverage their respective investments with greater potential for success. For its part, the federal government can better support legacy cities in three primary areas: (1) stream-lining and making existing programs more flexible, especially the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s Community Development Block Grant Program; (2) designing "race to the top"- like qualifications for funding allocations that would require specified state reforms to enhance a city's ability to deal with vacant land, such as faster property transfer in the face of tax delinquency or code enforcement liens; and (3) expanding cross-departmental cooperation in crafting incentive programs to enhance regional cooperation in planning and economic development.

> Both the public and private sectors can leverage their respective investments with greater potential for success.

Two new Obama Administration initiatives exemplify these approaches.

First, through the new Partnership for Sustainable Communities, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Department of Transportation (DOT) have together developed overarching "Livability Principles" to guide the collaborative allocation of grants and technical assistance, including: HUD's $150 million in Sustainable Communities grants for local and regional planning that integrates land use, transportation, and economic development; DOT's $600 million in Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER II) grants for innovative, high-return transportation projects; and EPA's technical assistance for local sustainability efforts tied to water quality, infrastructure investment, housing, and other sustainable development priorities.

Second, the Economic Development Administration (EDA), Department of Education (DOE), Small Business Administration (SBA), and Department of Labor (DOL) have joined forces through the Task Force for Advancing Regional Innovation Clusters (TARIC) to coordinate the goals and allocations of competitive grant programs and technical assistance, with a focus on promoting regional competitive advantage. TARIC's priorities include coordinating and leveraging federal resources to support the growth of existing regional business clusters—for example, through federal research and development investments and efforts to commercialize technological innovations—and promoting the establishment of new ones. TARIC aims to monitor market trends, coordinate federal staff in regional offices, and thereby facilitate a more unified federal response to requests from regions for assistance related to economic development, education, workforce, and entrepreneurship. Two more agencies with important economic development functions—the Department of Agriculture and HUD—are now joining the effort.

VI. CONCLUSION

This report focuses on how America can help legacy cities stem their losses, uplift their communities and their institutions, and harness their assets to help move the nation toward success in the next economy. This American Assembly has focused particularly on the challenge of recalibrating the economic strengths, human capital abilities, and physical attributes—land, buildings, and infrastructure—of these valuable cities to new roles and functions. The Assembly has offered recommendations about rational land use strategies, creative financing approaches, improved civic capacity, and stronger partnerships. These recommendations proceed from the conviction that our nation gratefully acknowledges the historic contributions of these cities, and that the immense value in skills, institutions, and hard resources that these cities hold are a key asset for America's future. The smartest course for America is to put them back to work.

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PART 1: DEFINING AND DESCRIBING THE SHRINKING CITY

1. Growth and Depopulation in the United States
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   Columbia University

   Case Study: Bringing the Fiscal Crisis Home
   Eric Scorsone, Michigan State University

2. Population, Market Collapse and Abandonment: Understanding the Problem of Surplus Property in Shrinking Cities
   Alan Mallach, Center for Community Progress

   Case Study: Block Level Vacancy in Detroit
   Eric Dueweke, University of Michigan; Danielle Lewinski, University of Michigan

3. Planning for Better, Smaller Cities After Decline
   Hunter Morrison, Youngstown State University; Margaret Dewar, University of Michigan

   Case Study: Youngstown 2010: The Process of Developing America's First Shrinking Cities Plan
   Hunter Morrison, Youngstown State University

4. Building a Local Economy from Bases of Strength: Identifying Competitive Assets and Building Future Economy around Them.
   Edward Hill, Cleveland State University; Harold L. Wolman, George Washington University

   Case Study: Pittsburgh Goes High Tech
   Sabina Deitrick, University of Pittsburgh

5. Preserving Healthy Neighborhoods: Market-Based Strategies for Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization
   David Boehlke, Healthy Neighborhoods Group

   Case Study: Creating Healthy Neighborhoods in Youngstown, Ohio
   David Boehlke, The Healthy Neighborhoods Group

THE AMERICAN ASSEMBLY

The American Assembly, founded by Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1950, is affiliated with Columbia University. The Assembly is a national, non-partisan public affairs forum that illuminates issues of public policy through commissioning research and publications, sponsoring meetings, and issuing reports, books, and other literature. Its projects bring together leading authorities representing a broad spectrum of views and interests. Assembly reports and other publications are used by government, community, and civic leaders, and public officials. American Assembly topics concern not only domestic and foreign policy, but also issues that include arts and culture, philanthropy, health, business, economy, education, law, race, religion and security.

THE CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The Earth Institute, Columbia University

The Center for Sustainable Urban Development (CSUD) engages in and fosters education and research for the advancement of physically and socially sustainable cities. To fulfill its mission, CSUD undertakes interdisciplinary analyses of the linkages between urban transport and land use to economic development, demographic shifts, population health and climate change. It collaborates with faculty, students and researchers across Columbia University, but its work stretches far beyond the university setting. Affiliates work on the ground with CSUD, both locally and internationally, with a variety of stakeholders including local universities, officials and community-based organizations to develop policies and plans to meet their goals for sustainable urban-based social and economic development.

THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY PROGRESS

The Center for Community Progress was launched in 2010 with a mission to revitalize America's cities and create vibrant communities through the reuse of vacant, abandoned, and problem property—to transform the systems that affect how the community development, government, and private development fields repurpose these properties and communities. This national organization supports the development of new policy approaches at the federal, state, and local levels and works directly with local officials and practitioners to develop new strategies and capacity to implement meaningful reforms. With offices located in Flint, Michigan; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Washington, DC; Community Progress seeks to connect policymakers at the national and state level with its hands-on work in the cities and towns of America.

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Center for COMMUNITY PROGRESS
Turning Vacant Spaces into Vibrant Places

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THE EARTH INSTITUTE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY