

## Change Is Here—Learn to Live With It

# You may not but we're acting a revolution

**T**hree shifts are under way that, together, will greatly affect urban development patterns in the coming decades. The first revolution is in economics. Changes set off by technological breakthroughs in electronics and biology will drastically alter how and where we consume and produce. The second revolution is globalization. We're seeing the disappearance of the many small geographic markets that protected local producers when markets were regional. The third is demographics. The wave of immigration from North to South and East to West is affecting virtually all developed nations, including our own.

These intersecting revolutions will over time cause major changes in our social order and urban settlement patterns. They will alter our incomes, attitudes, priorities, and the way we work, consume, and socialize in the future. These changes will cause urban land uses to rearrange themselves into new patterns.

What will these new patterns be? That depends on us. "Global" means competition will be worldwide. We are no longer protected within local market boundaries. We must resolve to evolve. Rich rewards will come

to the citizens of regions with the courage to accept and direct change. Those communities will resist the temptation to reject the future in a vain attempt to preserve the past—in many instances a mythological past. Here's what we see ahead:

### More mixed use

In the digital age, when time counts most, single-use development will become obsolete. We'll see a trend toward mixed-use projects and the obsolescence of many older, stand-alone developments.

### Footloose businesses

In a global economy, businesses no longer have to be close to raw materials, or to markets, for that matter. Today, the most important raw material is skilled and dedicated workers, making universities and technical schools key regional resources. Expanding new firms and innovative older business giants will continue to seek out locations that will help them attract and keep their skilled employees.

### Fewer shopping centers

By 2020, we will see fewer, but bigger, regional shopping centers with more diverse

uses. When time counts most, people don't want to drive to a store. By 2020, we will be doing far more of our shopping over the Internet. We will drive or walk relatively short distances to pick up convenience items. For longer trips, we'll require a center that combines value with entertainment.

### Higher density

The new economy will create higher land values. Thus, it's inevitable that the private real estate market will continue to press for higher densities. The result could be more compact housing development.

We personally do not believe that lower density suburban development is the handiwork of Lucifer, as the anti-sprawl groups insist. It seems unlikely, however, that the public will continue to pay for the highways and other infrastructure needed to open up more outlying land for enough housing to attract and keep a skilled labor force.

Wise regions will choose compact development to avert the long-term economic decline that an ongoing shortage of affordable housing will entail.

### Not so much preservation

Why not, some might ask, simply preserve

What we make of revolutionary changes in our way of life is up to us.

# Don't realize it, we're already living in unordinary time.

By Nina J. Gruen and Claude Gruen

our cities as they are today? If you saw the recently aired public television series *The 1900 House*, you got some idea of the enormous increase in comfort, life span, and recreational opportunities that we have seen since the beginning of the 20th century. Today is better.

## More growth

There is every reason to expect that the new digital economy will offer unbelievable opportunities. Besides vastly increasing individual wealth for many, it will provide technologies that will rid us of atmosphere-poisoning, carbon-based energy sources just as electricity, gas transmission lines, and the automobile made us forget the soot-choked air and horse-manure-covered streets of early 20th-century cities.

## Polarization

The new economy depends on an educated work force. People are now the most critical raw material. This is why our technology firms lobby to get the annual immigration ceiling raised for Asian computer scientists and engineers. Meanwhile, the service industry requires more and more low-skilled immigrants. The result is the most polarized immi-

grant labor force in U.S. history.

## Social challenges

The widening gulf between the haves and the have-nots presents us with two great social challenges. The first is to create new educational opportunities—including apprenticeship training and adult learning programs—for our newest residents. The second is to create a feeling of common purpose in an era of increasing class conflicts.

These conflicts are increasingly being played out in the land-use arena where special interests hold sway. Here's what you can do locally:

- Intensify downtown's cultural, entertainment, retail, and residential base. Downtown amenities will help attract and hold young knowledge workers, the key ingredient of a healthy local economic base.
- Encourage higher density residential and mixed-use development on infill parcels while also encouraging adaptive reuse of older, obsolete commercial developments. Use eminent domain to "take" holdouts when necessary and offer density bonuses to ensure a diversity of uses.
- Provide enough infrastructure to allow developer competition.

- Discourage the stand-alone regional mall or power center in favor of mixed-use projects that allow pedestrian traffic between compatible land uses. Encourage the revitalization and development of neighborhood and community shopping centers, while encouraging nonretail reuse in locations that have too much obsolete retail space.

- Provide flexible transit options—bus, trolley, smart car—to and from major activity centers.

The happy truth is that the wealth- and income-generating potential of the new economy is great enough to raise the standard of living for all of us, but only if we make wise choices. We must not try to stop growth but rather to channel it intelligently. We must define education in the broadest possible terms and offer lifetime learning opportunities for our citizens. And finally, we must work together as a community to improve the quality of life for everyone.

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