

## Themes from CEOs for Cities March 09 Strategy Summit

Held March 18-20 in San Diego, CA

### 17 Summary Themes

- CEOs for Cities, with its cross-sector membership tackling issues across silos, is uniquely positioned to offer support and advice to an Administration eager to strengthen cities.
- Civic leadership is coming from new and surprising places. If traditional leadership is not willing to lead, then others must be identified and encouraged. Find people's passions and put them to work. To move forward, we may need to settle for a "coalition of the willing." Otherwise, we risk moving at the pace of the old guard and that may be too slow, especially now. Cities, truly, are facing the fierce urgency of now.
- Civic engagement can be an innovation strategy.
- Stop telling people you're smart and start telling them you're curious.
- People want something to connect with. They need a common vision and context for their work, but they don't have to work together. Your best ideas will go farther if you don't have to go with them.
- The most important challenge in the U.S. is how to create higher density.
- What may appear to be a liability can be turned into an asset. Even Cleveland's vast tracts of vacant land and foreclosed homes can be converted into an economic and ecological asset. But the challenge is how to shrink without compromising density in key places.
- Investments in anchor districts are some of the best bets we can make on economic development. But we must develop metrics and incentives to move anchor institutions to real action more quickly and comprehensively.
- Public pedestrian space is the only place on earth where we are all equal.
- The objectives of equality and sustainability are complimentary. In the process of creating equality by providing public spaces and protected bikeways, you also create environmental sustainability.

- We must inject the remaking of our cities with fun. We should be ready to play with ideas, create solutions playgrounds, promote collective cleverness, take risks, and make fun. Involving designers routinely in solving problems and seizing opportunities can create valuable and unexpected new insights.
- In today's world, the mega projects of Dubai and Shanghai have less to teach us than do micro-economies and micro-solutions. Localism is a new source of strength.
- People have ideas. What they want is a bridge, a connector, a group that can find the overlaps and bring together the best research and analysis, communicate it and get out of the way.
- In a time of limited resources, government must empower citizens to solve many of their own problems and consider outsourcing public services to private firms.
- Public space is a magical good. A park never wears out its capacity to give happiness.
- Mayors are not paying enough attention to education and inequality.
- Demographics is destiny. Major demographic changes i.e., (140 million more people in the U.S. by 2050) will force us to rethink and remake our cities in the next 40 years.

## Summary of Strategy Session 2009:

### The View from Washington

The meeting began with a conversation with Mike Strautmanis, Chief of Staff to Valerie Jarrett, Senior Adviser to President Barack Obama and to whom the new White House Office of Urban Affairs will report (along with reporting to Domestic Policy Adviser Melody Barnes). We had met with Mike during the transition to tell him about City Dividends and our work on anchor institutions.

Mike first asked for our support for the President's policies. "We need voices of support out there," he said. It's hard to win support for what will be required for a 21<sup>st</sup> century America, but "the moment to do so has been called."

Mike encouraged us to develop a relationship with the White House. According to Mike, the White House needs our content. **“We are looking for good ideas that can be scaled,”** he told us, particularly in the President’s priority areas of energy, education and health care. **(The Administration seems particularly interested in integrating transportation, energy, innovation and urban policy. And as some members observed, CEOs for Cities is uniquely qualified to provide the Administration a cross-issue, cross-sector perspective.)**

**He committed to convene the right people from the Administration to meet with us and invited us to bring him a short list of specific policy recommendations.**

Before the day was over, a number of members had committed to develop policy recommendations in several key areas consistent with our work at CEOs for Cities.

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## Innovating from Scarcity

Moderator: Mary Walshok, Vice Chancellor for Public Programs,  
University of California, San Diego

Panelists: Terry Schwarz, Senior Planner, Cleveland Urban Design Center  
Chris Ronayne, President, University Circle, Inc.  
Omar Blaik, President and CEO, U3Ventures

The panel on Innovating from Scarcity emphasized real solutions to real problems. The discussion was particularly interesting for its contrasting view of Cleveland – what Chris Ronayne called A Tale of Two Cities. While Terry Schwarz showed imaginative land use responses to the city’s dramatic population decline, Chris showed imaginative ways to leverage anchor institutions for growth in Cleveland’s University Circle.

Terry showed us **how a shrinking city can turn vacant land into an asset for sustainability** by developing productive landscapes (energy generation and agriculture), green infrastructure (connected greenways, managing storm water more naturally, daylighting streams, protecting headwaters) and protecting and restoring the urban ecosystem (restoring the tree canopy).

Terry pointed out that Cleveland has many brownfields. Unfortunately, brownfield clean up is driven by development demand. If there is no development demand, there are no funds for cleanup. And in most Cleveland neighborhoods, there is no demand for new development.

Another problem: The EPA district governing Cleveland does not recognize distributed systems as a way to deal with consolidated storm water systems. But the declining cities of the Midwest are the stewards of the nation's great fresh water resource, the Great Lakes. So, as Terry said, **we must test some of the new methods to find new ways of doing things.**

Terry showed an impressive array of maps to support her presentation. Responding to a comment by Teddy Cruz on the power of mapping, Terry spoke of the democratization of data. "People make better decisions when they have the facts and they know what they are doing," she said.

Former Bogotá Mayor Enrique Penalosa warned that cities that are losing population must focus on how to make them fun and attractive again. "The most sustainable city is the most fun," he said. "And the most fun city is the one where there are people."

Enrique continued, "It is the death of a city to turn its downtown into agricultural uses. Don't decrease density. Increase density. Make it fun. Encourage bicycles. Encourage pedestrians. How to attract people again is the challenge."

Terry responded that the idea of making Cleveland a mixed use, vibrant place from border to border is not possible. Perhaps it will be in the future, but for now, Cleveland must manage the use of vacant land.

According to Chris, Cleveland is investing where the city believes it can make good bets: the waterfront, in arts districts and where economic innovation is occurring – that is, in anchor districts.

One of those "good bets" is Cleveland's University Circle. Chris showed how **additional public services and leadership provided through a BID-type organization** (although in the case of University Circle, there is no requirement for property owners to pay extra fees) **can accelerate development of neighborhoods like University Circle with special anchor assets.** More to the point, University Circle is organizing anchor institutions to work together for the benefit of the whole neighborhood and connect anchor institutions in University Circle to the low-income neighborhoods that exist just outside the circle.

Cleveland, along with many other cities, must plan for growth while managing decline. Cleveland is taking an asset-based approach by supporting what works and repurposing what doesn't.

Omar Blaik, who runs U3Ventures, has a broad-ranging perspective on the value of anchor institutions since he works with so many at so many levels. He asserts that **there is nothing with more impact than investing in anchor institution districts**. "Most universities are sterile places that turn out degrees," Omar said. **"Universities need to embrace their role in economic development."**

The anchor institution language has become so popular that every university claims to be doing it. But there is a big gap between talk and action. **"We need a framework that demands change because universities move slowly. We need a national set of indicators and benchmarks that the public can use to discern the level of engagement of its anchors,"** according to Omar. **"We also need incentives for universities to do the right thing."**

[An important observation from Kip Bergstrom noted that states derive benefit from job growth through income and sales taxes while localities derive benefit from property tax paying real estate development. To align these interests, states need to cut cities in on some of the incremental revenues from the expansion of eds and meds. Otherwise, some cities will resist it.]

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## Designing for Innovation (Part 1)

Moderators: Alissa Walker, Design Writer, GOOD Magazine  
Casey Caplowe, Creative Director, GOOD Magazine

Designers: Scott Stowell, Owner, Open design studio  
Dan Maginn, Principal, el dorado inc,  
Valerie Casey, Head of Digital Experience, IDEO

Designing for innovation was our second panel. Led by GOOD magazine's Casey Caplowe and Gelato Baby Alissa Walker, the panel featured three top designers who took challenges submitted by members and offered up their best design solutions.

Scott Stowell, Dan Maginn and Valerie Casey were the designers. These presentations are so exciting that we simply refer you to them on our website at <http://www.ceosforcities.org/news/entry/2195>.

We do note that each of their presentations addressed the issue of reconnecting the city in various ways. And we repeat Dan's principles for designing communities: Stitch the districts; Occupy the gaps in the urban fabric; Have some fun; Have some fear.

Their presentations reminded us why **designers ought to be central to problem-solving and opportunity-seizing in cities**. If there was ever a time when we need fresh thinking for cities, it is now. As one designer noted, **we now have permission to try radical new things**.

## Designing for Innovation (Part 2)

Panelists: Enrique Peñalosa, former Mayor, Bogotá, Colombia  
Teddy Cruz, Architect and Associate Professor in Public Culture and Urbanism, University of California, San Diego

The conversation between architect Teddy Cruz and international consultant for cities Enrique Penalosa was framed by this quote from NYT columnist Tom Friedman: **What if the crisis of 2008 represents something more fundamental than a deep recession. What if it is telling us that the whole growth model we created over the past 50 years is unsustainable economically and ecologically and that 2008 was when we hit the wall – when Mother Nature and the market both said, no more.**

According to Teddy, we have an opportunity to rethink our institutions. We need new ways of thinking and doing. We need creative responses to different arrangements. We have a cultural crisis. **We have set our gaze on Dubai and Shanghai. But now we need to look at places of scarcity for new lessons of micro-solutions and local economies.**

Enrique challenged us by saying, **"I think we'll look back and say, 'How did people live in those awful cities from 2010?' We think what we've created is normal. But what we've created is horrible."**

People can describe their ideal home in great detail, he said. But they cannot describe their ideal city.

As Enrique observed, **the only place on the whole planet that is open to us all is public pedestrian spaces.** The objectives of equality and sustainability are complimentary. **In the process of creating equality, you also create environmental sustainability.**

The most valuable space we have is the space between buildings. There is no technical solution to how much room we give to cars. There is only a political decision.

Are we a country of the “I” or a country of the “we”?

**The most important challenge in the U.S. is how to create higher density.** The only way to have good public transportation is to have a compact city. But density doesn’t mean 30-story buildings. Four- and five-story buildings work.

**When you provide protected bikeways, you show that a \$30 bike is just as valuable as a \$30,000 car.** Again, it’s about equity.

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## Organizing for Civic Innovation

Moderator: Ethan Seltzer, Director of and a Professor in the Nohad A. Toulan School of Urban Studies and Planning, Portland State University

Panelists: Dan Yankelovich, Founder and President, Viewpoint Learning, Public Agenda and DYG  
Eli Singer, social media and brand strategy consultant  
Katy Locker, Program Director, Hudson-Webber Foundation  
Aaron Contorer, Chief of Products and Partnerships, Everyone Counts, Inc.  
Josh McManus, Co-founder and Creative Strategist, CreateHere

Organizing for Civic Innovation was the theme of our final panel of the day. Katy’s presentation on the new vision for Detroit being shaped by her foundation was emblematic of the themes that ran through the panel discussion. Her challenge was to discover the new Detroit and lift that up as an asset. Her conclusion was that the rallying message was not about Motown or sports teams or the Olympics or the city’s history – the silver bullets that traditional leadership generally focused on. “Instead, it is about the city we are building.”

**The people of Detroit want something to connect with. They need a common vision and context for their work, but they don't have to work together.**

Hudson-Webber realized that if the city doesn't get younger and better educated, the city was going to get poorer. So Hudson-Webber Foundation created a new vision and context for Detroit: Attract 15,000 college-educated young adults by 2015. They call it 15x15.

As Katy said, **your best ideas will go farther if you don't have to go with them. So the job is to find and reinforce new leaders.** Instead of coordinating with traditional leaders, Hudson-Webber is building a city with self-interested leaders and people who can see and share the new vision.

Aaron added a **wonderfully humble approach to civic engagement. Stop telling people you're smart and start telling them you're curious.** "Get humble and learn some things that can fix the city," he said. **"What you'll learn is that there is more consensus than you imagine."**

What Aaron and others found is that Californians don't have a love affair with their cars. They have a love affair with getting where they want to go on time. Move San Diego is the organization created to address that truth.

Josh reinforced Aaron's comments by explaining the approach of CreateHere: **Find people's passions and put them to work.** Feed the creative spirit. Put people together in nontraditional situations.

Dan warned against a contagion of group think, an infatuation with computer models, a blind selfishness. **"We've diversified our conception of individualism and lifestyles, but we have lost a sense of public life and citizenship** (as distinct from consumer status)," Dan said.

A continuing theme of the meeting was the slow pace of change. Kip recommended that we initially **create a coalition of the willing. Otherwise, you risk moving at the pace of the old guard that will be too slow.** In effect, Katy and Josh are both pursuing that path.

Eli suggested mobilizing the community around issues not being tackled by government. Become a credible voice and government will eventually want to align with you. To which Dan responded, "You have a practical device in Spacing magazine that has obtained universal acceptance. If you put together agreement on issues and pair it with media, then you are well on your way to engagement."

Aaron added that **people don't want you to tell them what to do. They want a bridge, a connector, a group that can find the overlaps and bring together the best research and analysis and then communicate it and get out of the way.** "We looked for the smallest intervention with the greatest leverage," he said.

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Our final event of the week was a presentation from ULI's Maureen McAvey on The City in 2050.

Maureen told us, "demographics is destiny." In fact, by 2050, we'll have 140 million more people in the U.S. Plus, she said, 60 percent of the buildings we'll need haven't been built. An interesting thing to consider: the country will be run by Gen Y-ers. What will their values be? For one, she said, they value smaller spaces (translation – more open to density) more than their parents.

The City in 2050 is focused on eight core themes: Metro Metrics; The City Wild; Water, Power and Light; Getting Around; Whole Buildings; Full-Spectrum Housing; Plan It Build It; Click Learn Go Get

To prepare for the future, we have to think about how we change parking (focus on eliminating car trips), change housing (needs to be multi-generational, flexible), and consider the way technology is affecting retail and what that means for cities (we may need to figure out how to reuse retail space).

**"Crises generally accelerate trends, not change their direction. We're in crisis, but if you understand your local community and the trends happening there, those trends will accelerate."**

Maureen said there are three trends that are here to stay: Green/sustainability (resource limitations, global warming, alternative power and usage), focus on infrastructure (connections, mobility and access); Equity (social equity, worldwide issues of poverty, resource allocation, dumping, social cohesion, harmony).

You can also access Maureen's presentation at <http://www.ceosforcities.org/news/entry/2195>.

