# Fast Cities

2010

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Constructing the perfect city means blending the **best and boldest ideas** from across the nation. Here are 12 we hope all future cities will embrace.
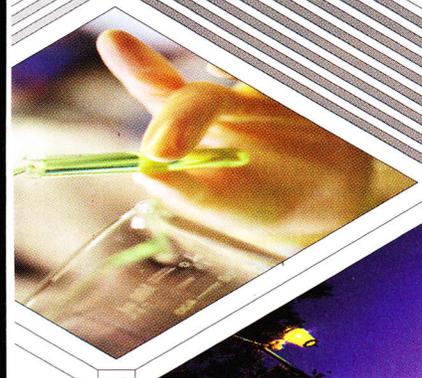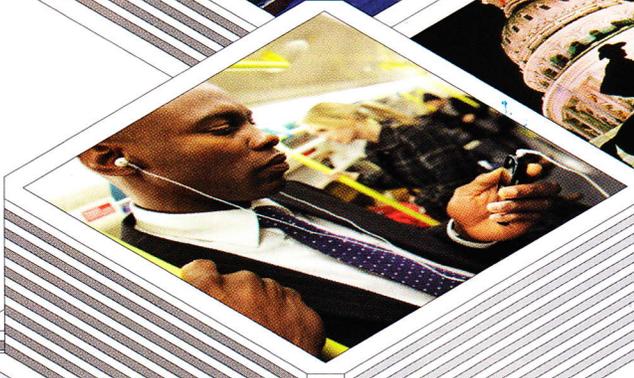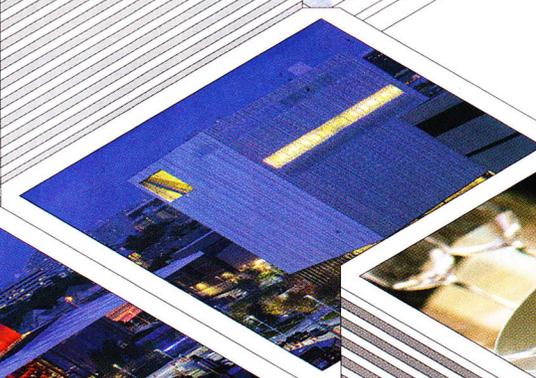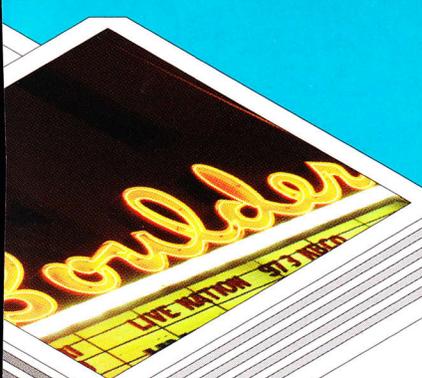
Culture, Front and Center

What would a city be without culture? No place we'd want to live. Yet most attempts to seed thriving centers are fraught with stumbles. The new AT&T Performing Arts Center solidifies Dallas's arts district by bringing a red-hot heart to the city's downtown, already home to a symphony hall and sculpture museum. The center, which opened in October and includes the Wyly Theatre and Winspear Opera House, attracted more than 100,000 visitors its first season. "It's not just the number of facilities but the nature of the facilities," says center CEO Mark Nerenhausen. "We've reached critical mass."

Lone Star Style

Foster + Partners' Winspear Opera House, the eye-catching "red drum" centerpiece of the district, has crimson-washed glass that glows at night. Outside, a solar canopy shades 4 acres and creates a cooled microclimate for al fresco performances. Inside, a chandelier made from 320 acrylic rods retracts into the ceiling during performances, creating the impression of a starry night.

Group Therapy
By teaming up, traditional health-care competitors in Cleveland were able to reshape the city's economic future.

Venture-Capital Mind-set

CLEVELAND

"WE WERE STARING into the abyss," says Baiju Shah, CEO of BioEnterprise, recalling the 2000 recession that had slowed Cleveland's economy to a crawl. "It wasn't just a cyclical thing; there were global forces at work that were going to leave us behind for good." As the city bled jobs in traditional sectors, such as manufacturing, committed competitors—including Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, Case Western Reserve University, and Summa Health System—banded together to save the city and themselves. In 2002, they launched Bio-Enterprise, a unique accelerator that provides health-care startups with access to biomedical-specific expertise, world-class research,

and cold, hard investment cash. "It's a true collaboration," Shah says. "Either the chair or CEO of each partner institution has been actively involved." Shah, a Cleveland native, studied similar bio-medical clusters in other cities, looking for best practices. The big insight? Follow the money. "We ask what investors want to invest in and then we go find it," he says. Bill Sanford, a cofounder and original chair, agrees: "This was not a social-service thing. We were going to take a venture-capital approach to bioscience-related economic development—real companies with business plans and an identified path to success."

BioEnterprise has since created

or recruited more than 100 companies and attracted nearly $1 billion in new funding. Cleveland's bio-medical industry now outpaces the nation's at 7.4% annual growth, bringing with it 20,000 related jobs. A number of venture funds have opened offices in Cleveland, and a Medical Market & Convention Center breaks ground this year.

Shah and Sanford are now sharing what they've learned. "This market-driven assessment could be employed in other troubled regions," says Sanford. "What they don't have is the collaboration among those who are historically competitors. I use the term 'forced collaboration,' and when it works, it's amazing what you can do."

Smart Energy

BOULDER

Cisco, Microsoft, IBM, Google—it seems everyone is in the smart-grid fray, trying to transform our electro-mechanical power grid into a digital network that saves energy, taps alternative sources, lowers costs, and boosts reliability. But Boulder is the first U.S. city to pilot a large-scale smart-grid system, allowing residents to monitor use and control appliances remotely. Xcel Energy has installed 21,000 meters since the $100 million program started in 2008. Early adopters cut energy use by as much as 45%.

Farm-Fresh Food

PORTLAND

Portland has long been lauded for its farmers markets, but in February, the city welcomed a new high-tech tool to bring large-scale, farm-fresh foods to city hospitals, public schools, corporate cafeterias—even Oregon state prisons. Think of FoodHub as the Match.com for the locavore movement. Wholesale food buyers log on to access thousands of small and regional producers, as well as info on varietals sold, minimum orders, insurance, and delivery options. Launched by environmental not-for-profit Ecotrust, FoodHub has already signed on hundreds of Portland restaurants, grocery stores, and businesses and expanded to neighboring states. In March, it registered 32 of Bon Appétit Management's food service accounts, including Adidas, Amazon, Nordstrom, and the Seattle Art Museum. "This is not a tool for the precious," says Deborah Kane, Ecotrust's VP of food and farms. "It's showing people committed to strengthening the local food community what's out there."
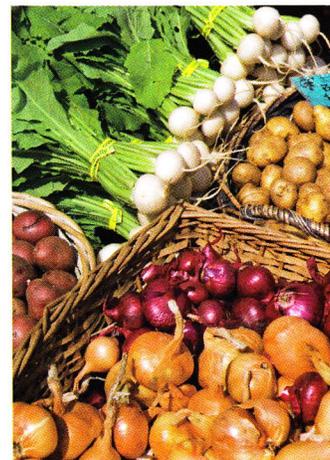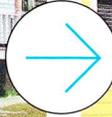
Renaissance
Neighborhoods

During the '90s and aughts, many of Savannah's poorest neighborhoods spiraled into disrepair. Aging residents lacked the money and energy to maintain their properties; younger residents and business owners were fleeing in search of livelier communities. Fed up with rising crime and plummeting property values, residents staged protests. "They

needed help," says Martin Fretty, who oversees Savannah's Department of Housing, "and they needed it soon." In response, the city launched Neighborhood Renaissance Savannah in 2000. The $150 million program is funded in part through a voter-approved "penny tax," which adds one cent to in-city purchases. In three pilot neighborhoods, Savannah fixed up abandoned homes with an eye for eco and historical concerns, selling and renting them to people interested in putting down roots. The city also partnered with local businesses to lure commerce back to those areas and invested heavily in parks and community centers. In Cuyler-Brownsville, a historic midtown neighborhood, the city spent

Space Lift
Savannah is bringing new life to failing neighborhoods by renovating abandoned homes and investing in community spaces.

$8 million repurposing an abandoned elementary school and hospital into additional housing. Crime in the three neighborhoods has dropped significantly and Fretty estimates that property values have risen 40%. Last year, Neighborhood Renaissance Savannah snagged a gold rating from the National League of Cities and is now raising $100 million to revitalize a fourth community. In other words, Fretty says, "We're rolling with what's working."

Open-Source
Government

IT'S A GOOD THING GAVIN NEWSOM checks his Twitter feed during meetings. Otherwise, San Francisco's mayor would've missed a life-changing missive about . . . potholes? "It really made me wonder," he says. "What if we used social media to make our city services work better?" That stray tweet led to the city's first-of-its-kind Twitter account (@SF311), which encourages residents to send queries and messages about nonemergency issues. But it also underscores the city's open-source stance on government. Just as Google, Facebook, and Twitter released their programming interfaces to app makers, San Francisco opened its arsenal of public

information—train times, crime stats, health-code scores—to software developers. "There's a tremendous amount of tech talent here," Newsom says. "We'd be fools not to leverage it." To date, more than 140 data sets have been liberated, spawning roughly 30 smartphone apps, such as Crimespotting (browse interactive city-crime maps), Routesy (see real-time train schedules), and Eco-Finder (locate the nearest recycling spots). But San Francisco's open-source stance doesn't stop at the city limits: In February, it launched an idea-sharing site, which blueprints everything from citywide health insurance to banning plastic bags. And in March, it released the API for its 311 city-service center. Boston; Los Angeles; Portland, Oregon; Seattle; and Washington, D.C., have already pledged to adopt the new standard.

Car Sharing

Encouraging people to use public transportation by giving them free access to cars may seem counter-intuitive, but Austin is doing just that. Last fall, the city partnered with Daimler to launch Car2go, the nation's largest car-sharing initiative. The program lets city workers tap a free network of 200 smart cars and designated parking spaces for work errands—and pay by the minute to check a car out for personal use. In the first four months, demand was triple original estimates, and more than 1,000 employees climbed into the (shared) driver's seat.

Incentivized Teachers

DENVER

Head of the Class
Denver students are gaining ground—and educators are earning more money—through a new program to attract the best teachers.

Studies show that top-notch teaching talent is the biggest factor in a student's academic success, and Senator Michael Bennet, the former head of Denver Public Schools, thinks it's high time we start reflecting that in teachers' salaries. "We haven't changed the way we pay teachers in this country since we had a labor market that discriminated against women," Bennet says. But reform efforts almost always end in gridlock among teachers unions, school districts, and residents. In a rare accord in Denver, though, residents voted in a $25 million tax increase to fund ProComp, an incentive program that passed with 78% union support. Under Pro-Comp, teachers can opt in for any number of annual bonuses, such as $2,403 for serving in disadvantaged schools with high turnover rates or making strides on standardized tests. They can boost base salaries by earning advanced degrees or positive evaluations. So far, incentives are averaging $6,500 and 75% of teachers are pursuing professional-development courses. Reports show that recruitment and retention rates are rising in high-need schools, and, since 2006, Denver has had larger gains in student achievement than any other district in Colorado. "The goal from the beginning was to better align compensation with the actual goals we're trying to achieve with students," says Shayne Spalten, ProComp's chief HR officer. We give that sort of thinking an A+.

Urban Farms

NEW YORK

New York's concrete jungle is about to get more green—and tasty—thanks to Gotham Greens, which is building a hydroponic rooftop farm in Brooklyn. The eco-efficient farm will take a small bite out of the $2 billion in produce that's trucked into the city each year. Here's how it works.

Power Feed
The $2 million, 16,000-square-foot farm—which opens this spring—is powered by a 60-kilowatt solar-voltaic array.

Buzz Off
Beneficial bugs, such as ladybugs and wasps, are used instead of pesticides to protect crops.

Water-works
A large cistern collects rainwater, which is used for irrigation.

Green Wheels
Produce is delivered by bicycles or renewable-energy-powered vans, depending on distance and volume.

Watery Fields Forever
Everything from bok choy to basil is produced using hydroponics, a soil-free method of farming. "Our plants grow straight from nutrient-filled water," says CEO Viraj Puri. Hydroponics uses 10 times less water than traditional farming, with higher crop yields.

Local Hunger
Of the 40 tons of expected crops, 70% will head to Whole Foods. The rest will be sold to restaurants and at farmers markets.

Illustration by **DON FOLEY**
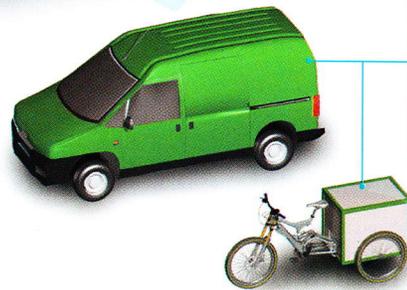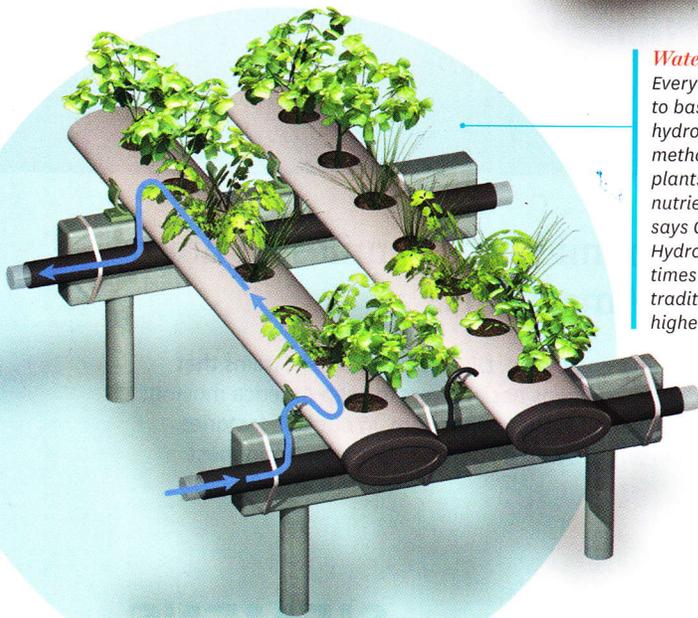
Zero-Emission Public Transit

Buses and trains may trump cars on the carbon front, but for true sustainability, why not power public transit with alternative fuels? AC Transit has three hybrid-electric, hydrogen fuel-cell buses up and running in Oakland and surrounding areas, with plans to add 12 next-gen models to its fleet by the end of this year. Each diesel bus that is replaced saves 130 tons of carbon-dioxide emissions annually. Though fleet-wide replacement isn't feasible until more cities commit to the technology, Chevron and the Department of Energy have invested in the project to demonstrate the viability of a hydrogen-powered system. And to stir public interest in the ultra-clean rides, the buses are moved among different routes. "Communities have been clamoring for these buses," says AC Transit's Clarence Johnson. "They run quiet and they burn clean, so they are always a welcome sight."

Artists as Residents

BOSTON

Home Is Where the Art Is
Katherine Ahern's studio (above) and Brian Knep's *Drift-wall* (right) are made possible by Boston's housing initiatives.
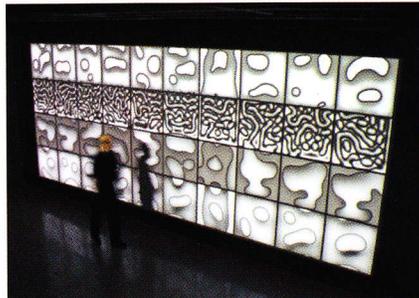
Boston has become a beacon for displaced and emerging artists, thanks to the city's innovative housing program. The Artist Space Initiative (ASI) is dedicated exclusively to artist housing issues, from surveying artist needs in live-work units to implementing zoning tweaks that allow them to reside in industrial areas. It encouraged foot traffic by securing ground-floor galleries in emerging neighborhoods and also created a peer-review system that guarantees artist spaces will be used only by artists. ArtBlock, for example, is an old schoolhouse the city granted to a developer on the promise that half of the renovation include art studios, galleries, and live-work units. "It's an effort to use our tools to create permanent space for artists," says Heidi Burbidge, ASI's senior project manager. "It's helped revive the art scene." ASI has already created hundreds of new housing opportunities and received more than 1,000 artist applications. Fear not, RISD grads: More residences are on the way, with new lofts opening later this year.

Broadband Everywhere, for Everyone

MINNEAPOLIS

Most municipal Wi-Fi initiatives end in the graveyard, but cemeteries are among the few spots not covered by Minneapolis's new $20 million wireless network, which blankets 95% of its 59 square miles. As an anchor tenant of the system, the city lowered many of its own costs, while capping resident rates at $20 a month. But the Wi-Fi blanket is also a powerful tool to narrow the digital divide for low-income residents. "It's not just about access to broadband, but affordable access," says Lynn Willenbring, the city's CIO. To bridge the significant usage gap between the lowest- and highest-income homes, Minneapolis established an $11 million digital-inclusion fund. Not-for-profits that offer public computer access get free broadband; hot spots in parks and plazas offer timed free usage; and anyone can access city sites online for free.

Katherine Ahern; Brian Knep