CITIES:
SURVIVAL OF THE RESILIENT
JUST AS THE NATURAL WORLD HAS TO ADAPT TO SURVIVE, SO TOO DO OUR URBAN CENTERS. THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE PLANET AND THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH WE LIVE ARE EVOLVING FASTER THAN CONCRETE AND STEEL EVER COULD.

John Batten - Global Cities Director
ATTRACTING INVESTORS

In addition to urbanization and natural hazards, cities face an escalating array of challenges. Social unrest and economic crises continue to persist globally. These elements conspire to increase city vulnerability and where that vulnerability occurs in areas of high population density cities face significant risk and an unknown future.

With their individual futures in the balance, a city’s ability to be resilient has a direct impact on its competitiveness, performance and well-being. In a nutshell, the more resilient the city, the greater its ability to attract investment.

In fact, there is a direct correlation between the quality of city programs that safeguard society, the environment and its economy and its ability to attract investment. These speak to a city’s social, economic and environmental capital. Where cities have equilibrium across these elements, external investment will follow and the city’s future protected.

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But what happens when one aspect of the city’s ecosystem isn’t functioning effectively? If one system is inefficient, it inevitably affects everything else, and quality of life suffers. But cities can’t stop to correct failures and eliminate resiliency shortcomings. Adaptation must happen amidst rapid growth and increasing risk of natural disasters. But how — and at whose expense?

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The battle to survive will be won or lost on the field of resiliency. Urban centers absolutely must implement proper resiliency programs to ensure their competitive edge and livability for future generations.

Cities are their own unique ecosystems, living and growing entities. They are centers of art, heritage and cultural pride. Their vibrancy attracts visitors, while their wow factors make them unique. These ecosystems work best when economic, social, transport and utility infrastructure operate together efficiently and in harmony — in essence, when resiliency is at work.

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By the middle of the century, 70 percent of the world’s population will live in urban centers. The consequential pressure on resources and increasing natural disasters have created a new urgency for cities to adapt to this new normal. Cities that meet this challenge will thrive; those that do not face extinction.

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The battle to survive will be won or lost on the field of resiliency. Urban centers absolutely must implement proper resiliency programs to ensure their competitive edge and livability for future generations. The contemporary urban center should not merely try to keep its head above water, it should be aiming to thrive and prosper.

A crisis should not be the only reason for a city to react. Yet, sadly, this all-too-familiar strategy is commonplace in a world of short-termism and transience. The contemporary urban center should not merely try to keep its head above water, it should be aiming to thrive and prosper.

The only way this can happen is if cities are run as businesses — agile and looking to pre-empt the next pitfalls and capitalize on trends. This is when a city will truly flourish.
“IT IS NOT THE STRONGEST OR THE MOST INTELLIGENT THAT SURVIVE BUT THOSE WHO CAN BEST ADAPT TO CHANGE”

Charles Darwin

A proactive resiliency strategy safeguards cities from risks. Adaptation measures around resiliency help cities ensure their recovery when change or a disaster strikes. The ability to rebound, quickly and successfully from shocks and stresses is essential for a city to remain competitive, investable and livable.

Many cities and their businesses have competing resiliency issues, but one thing they have in common is not knowing where to start. Guiding decision makers on where to invest and how to prioritize is a key step. When planning city resiliency programs, cities must take an integrated approach to connecting designers, planners, engineers, developers and financiers to influence not only what is happening in the here-and-now, but also what is several steps ahead. Effective transportation, green spaces for recreation and social developments all play into this and seriously warrant investment and innovation.

Evolving cities are thriving cities and thriving cities are better places to live, work and invest.

RESILIENCY NEVER ENDS

It is important to remember resiliency is evolutionary – it is never complete. As with the natural world, our cities – regardless of how grand or impressive they may be – need to go on developing, learning from their competitors, becoming more complex, all the while living with nature.

We live in an age of innovation, technology and data. Cities must use these resources to help them become safe havens for their citizens, businesses and assets.

PREPARING CITIES FOR A RESILIENT FUTURE

At Arcadis, we provide cities with the tools and solutions to create a long-lasting competitive advantage. Whether it’s helping multinational corporations push the boundaries of their performance or city authorities attract inward investment, we get to the bottom of our clients’ needs and make sure we deliver for the good of a city’s social, economic and environmental capital.

Our approach covers every aspect of the urban resiliency process and we understand the risks cities face, enabling our clients to identify and prioritize where to invest to increase resilience, maximize benefit and safeguard critical assets and systems.

We are dedicated to helping cities become more successful and “survival-ready”. Shaping resilient cities for the future, to be investable, adaptable and competitive while improving quality of life.

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