BEIJING

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INVESTMENT DRIVING CITY SUSTAINABILITY

GROWING ECONOMY
The Chinese capital ranked #9 in Asia, and came #73 on the global list. Beijing’s highest score was under the Profit sub-index underpinned by strong economic growth, as the China capital remains attractive to domestic and foreign investors.

Whilst scoring well in the Profit sub-index, Beijing has room for improvement as indicated in the modest scores in the People and Planet sub-indices. Accelerating efforts to address population and pollution challenges will be important if Beijing seeks to evolve into a sustainable Tier 1 city in China.

Beijing belongs to the Fast-growing Megacities archetype, as defined by the Index, meaning it is a city that has a rapidly growing economy, subject to high levels of inward-migration, investment in infrastructure and change. This profile aligns with the government’s vision to transform the capital, in a phased approach from 2016 to 2035, to become the center of domestic politics, culture, international exchange and innovative technology.

Beijing’s current population is 21.7 million and growing. It is envisioned that the capital’s population will be capped at 23 million from 2020 onwards. This will be done by accelerating the development in suburban areas, reducing the size of lower-skilled inner-city populations, while retaining talents that will contribute to the city’s transformation to become a prosperous and liveable city.

Sustainability is also high on the capital’s agenda. Progress has already been made in improving the capital’s air quality. According to official data from the central government, the number of heavy pollution days in Beijing has dropped from 58 in 2013 to 21 in 2017. The government has goals to reach advanced international air quality standards by 2050.

With its rich and unique history, the government is dedicated to preserve the capital’s vast range of historic and cultural sites, by enhancing infrastructure, water management and urban planning.

These measures will position Beijing well to become a sustainable and liveable city, while improving dramatically citizens’ experience, and enabling the capital to sustain its long-term growth.

Andrew Chan
Head of China North

The three pillars

The Sustainable Cities Index is a broad measure of sustainability, encompassing measures of the social, environmental and economic health of cities. It ranks 100 global cities on three pillars of sustainability: People, Planet and Profit. The three pillars are closely aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and track progress against UN SDG commitments.

Beijing’s three pillar rankings:

- **People**: #51
- **Planet**: #85
- **Profit**: #67

- Social
  - Reflects social mobility and quality of opportunity and life

- Environmental
  - Describes management of energy use, pollution and emissions

- Economic
  - Assesses business environment and economic performance
Our report also features new work on city archetypes and clusters based on an analysis of the citizen experiences of city living combined with the Index data. The four city clusters; Balanced Innovators, Post Industrial Opportunists, Evolutionary Cities and Fast-growing Megacities seek to profile the citizen experience in correlation to the Index ranking.

Beijing is a typical Fast-growing Megacity and the Index features 13 cities that fit this profile. All but three of these cities are in the bottom quartile of the Index and are in rapidly growing economies including China and India. Cities like Mumbai, Shanghai and Shenzhen exhibit significant inequality in terms of income and access to resources and opportunity.

A key challenge for the city is engagement with the citizen. A good example of this is citizen experience of technology in comparison to other city clusters. This is not necessarily a reflection on the level of technological advancement as some of these cities, particularly in China, have a very sophisticated technology infrastructure.
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