

# NEXT\_CITY DISRUPTION INDEX

PEOPLE\_PLACES\_AND\_IDEAS\_  
THAT\_CHANGED\_CITIES\_IN

# 2012

NEXT  
CITY



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This is not a list of the most disruptive people and projects in cities. Rather, it's a conversation-starter about how a few figures are changing the ways cities look and feel by moving toward a more disruptive outlook. They exist in a continuum between nontraditional and establishment forces in cities, trying to find the right mix of old and new policies and practices to shift how cities are led and experienced.

If necessity was once the mother of invention, it now fuels disruption. How else will cities deal with climate change, housing shortages and outdated municipal business models, while city budgets shrink and inequality grows? Not by doing business as usual.

It's these two major concerns — the need to innovate and the need to find ways of funding those innovations — that form the basis of Next City's Disruption Index.

While many of these changes are welcomed after the fact, this Index shows how rarely we encourage disruption in cities.

Take, for example, mobile apps like Uber or Airbnb and their disruption of the taxi and hotel industries. Uber has run afoul of taxi regulators around the country; meanwhile, Airbnb and its users have run into legal trouble for not paying taxes on vacation rentals. For better or worse (and we think for the better), these tools are forcing government to adapt regulation and taxes to the way we live in the wired 21st century.

In a precarious economy, which seems

to be tilting ever more toward globalization and toward a local, artisanal workforce, cities need to think anew about how we'll pay for the infrastructure, services and lifestyle so many urbanites want. Our matrix of disruptors is plotted along two axes. On the x-axis, we look at where the person or project fits within the establishment; on the y-

axis we examine how its business model works. Uber and Airbnb, for example, fit into the profitable, nontraditional quadrant of the matrix.

In another quadrant, we look at the nontraditional but not-so-profitable enterprises that represent some of the most important projects and people to emerge in cities. Among others, we profile Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland and an open government initiative, Transparent Chennai, in India. Evergreen's cooperatively owned businesses are upending workforce development and wealth creation in one fell swoop, while Transparent Chennai is creating an alternative way for locals to understand their city and use data to advocate for change. These efforts to break old models of civic engagement and economic development have already changed their hometowns.

This is not to say that all disruptive ideas need be nontraditional. In fact, some of my favorite people featured in the Index come from, or partner with, the establishment. People like Harriet Tregoning and Mitchell Silver — planning di-

rectors who have done great work for the governments of Washington, D.C. and Raleigh, respectively — have succeeded precisely because they marshal old-school influence to support fledgling ideas and can reshape institutions to better reflect future needs. The kinds of disruption they support aren't radical so much as nuanced, but shouldn't be taken less seriously as a result.

Unlike the bureaucratic process of building institutions, disruption is a meritocratic free-for-all. There are no preordained ways of disrupting a city, no special degree required. Any person can do it. And that's what makes it so exciting.

Over the course of the next two weeks, we'll deliver short profiles about these #CityDisruptors on our Daily page. All the content is free to read, but to see how all the people, places and ideas fit on the matrix, you have to be a [subscriber to Forefront](#), our weekly series of long-form journalism. Subscribers can download a PDF of the entire Disruption Index, designed by Danni Sinisi.

But while we're all about digital disruption these days, we also know printed material offers a unique experience. We've created a full-color printed version of the Index with beautiful graphics and a double-spread of the matrix. To support Next City's own work disrupting the media landscape and urban policy field, join us as a supporter and make a [100% tax-deductible \\$75 donation today](#). We'll mail you or the recipient of your choosing a printed Index, just in time for the new year.

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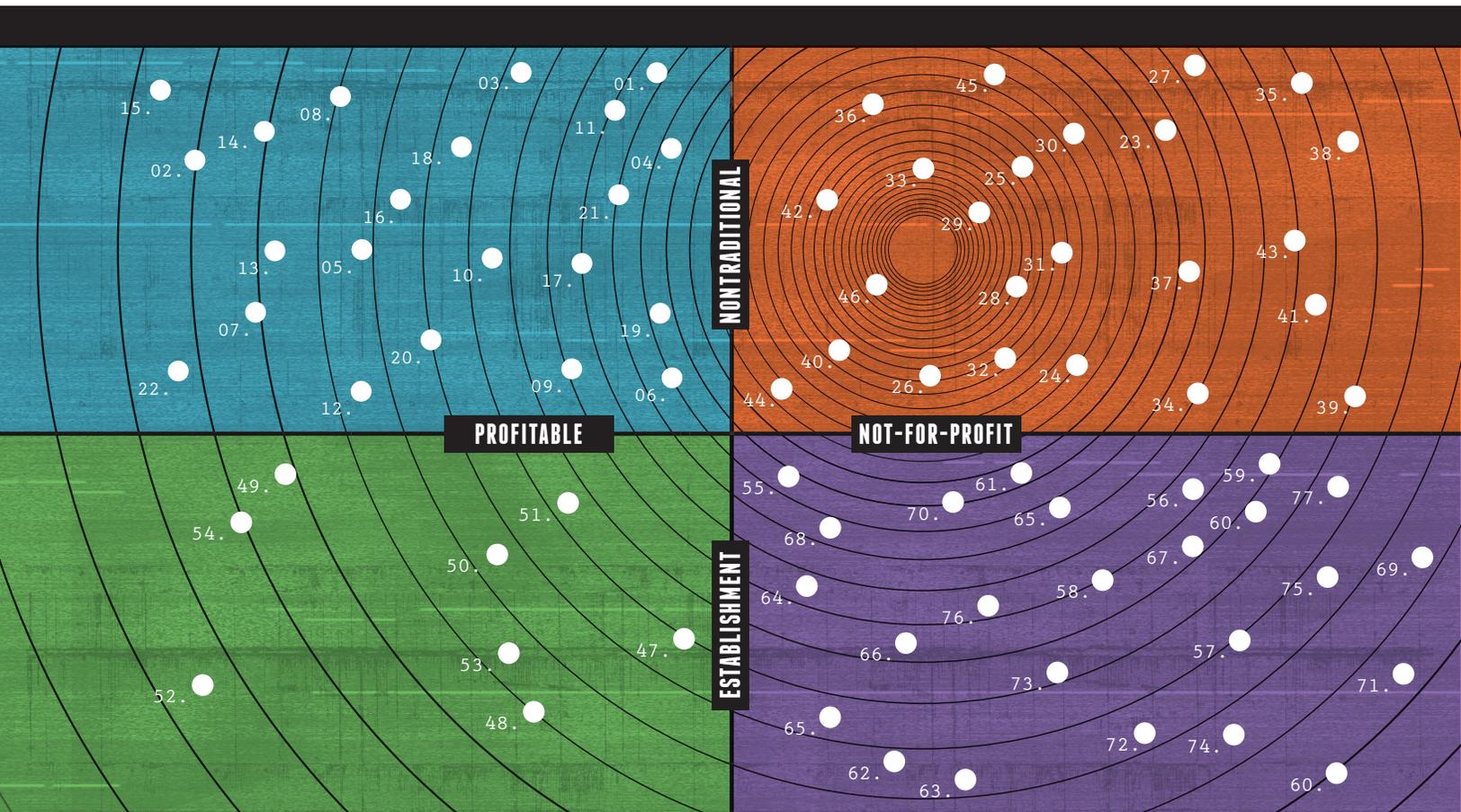
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# NEXT CITY DISRUPTION MATRIX

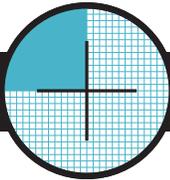


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## NONTRADITIONAL / PROFITABLE



### 01\_TEJU COLE

Born in the U.S. but raised in Nigeria, writer Teju Cole splits his time between Brooklyn and Lagos, where he's currently at work on a non-fiction narrative about the African megacity, one of the most dynamic in the developing world. But in the course of researching this work, Cole was struck by the amount of small but no less significant stories of life in Nigeria's fastest-growing metropolis — the deadly collapse of a bus station latrine, for example, or the mother with only daughters who steals a son from the hospital. These tidbits of strange news wouldn't necessarily fit into a book, but they still say something about the city and how it works. And so Cole shares them. In super-short prose, Cole brings these stories to a wider audience through his [Twitter feed](#), twisting the amusing, the absurd and the frustratingly sad. Reads one:

"Elisha dashed out of his Kaduna shop to settle a dispute between a policeman and a prisons official. Oh. Who will care for his children now?"

Judging by his most recent work, the

award-winning novel [Open City](#), Cole's forthcoming Lagos please. In time, his snapshots zerre and offer a cupointed Lagos that illuminates some of the world's most pressing urban issues.



### 02\_DAVID BELT

Adaptive reuse is all about meeting new demands with existing resources. It takes both creativity and a sense for how needs and attitudes are changing, which is how David Belt turned a dumpster into a swimming pool. The New York-based real estate developer and his company, Macro Sea, ended up plopping their converted garbage haulers into various public spaces around the city over the past few summers, offering New Yorkers a new, if slightly quirky, way to cool down. In the process, Belt pushed the boundaries of reuse, recreation and how we use

public space.

Now, he's taking his ability to move the dial to a project that's bigger and arguably more important: Resuscitating Brooklyn's manufacturing epicenter. Belt and his team are behind a 161,000-square-foot complex of industrial and office buildings being developed in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a project aimed at creating a "high-tech design and prototyping center" in the reemerging manufacturing zone that's been bubbling up in the former heart of this industrial borough. Part of the Navy Yard's \$46 million [Green Manufacturing Center](#) project, the idea is to give designers and manufacturers access to the facilities and technologies they need to bring their designs to reality, and the spaces they can use to both incubate and grow their businesses. Between this new facility and his dumpster pools, Belt is on his way to becoming a master of re-invention.





### 03\_URBAN-THINK TANK

The slums of the world are either celebrated as centers of innovation or bemoaned as intractable urban problems. But when it comes to serious critical consideration and intervention, one firm’s work goes beyond those two extremes to bring real and relevant solutions to these underserved areas. [Urban-Think Tank](#), an interdisciplinary design firm founded in Caracas, Venezuela in 1998, has been focusing on the unique urban conditions of slum life and actually building the sort of projects that can make life in slums better. The firm’s work includes the creation of community centers, dry sanitation facilities and an expansive cable car network now serving tens of thousands of slum dwellers in Caracas every day. The firm specializes in working with com-

munities to define what would make life easier and then building it.

In 2012, Urban-Think Tank, architecture writer Justin McGuirk and photographer Iwan Baan collectively won the Venice Biennale’s top prize for their project focusing on the “informal vertical community” of squatters who’ve taken over an unfinished high-rise office building in Caracas. The prize underscores the importance of understanding these increasingly expanding elements of modern urban life. It also recognizes formally the immense body of work Urban-Think Tank has performed to grow that understanding.



### 04\_PAOLA ANTONELLI

Paola Antonelli is one of the world’s foremost experts on architecture and design. She’s also one of its main evangelists, pushing the concepts of physical design toward the mainstream through her work as a senior curator of architecture and design at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. By watching the field closely, Antonelli has become a master at highlighting the most relevant and pressing developments of design as it relates to the real world. Her exhibition last year, [Talk to Me](#), focused on the interactivity of design and how people connect with the common things around them. The city, being a

collection of people and things, was an underlying theme throughout the exhibition.

And city design issues can be expected to come up in future MoMA exhibitions, as Antonelli was recently named the museum’s first director of research. This new position will essentially put her in charge of doing what she already does best: Finding the best and brightest emerging ideas that are shaping modern art and the world around us. Given her expertise in architecture, design and cities, it’s easy to be excited about what she’ll find.



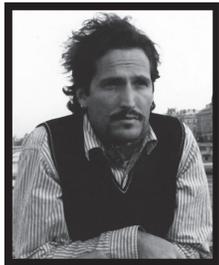


## NONTRADITIONAL / PROFITABLE



### 05\_CHARLIE LEDUFF

As a career move, it was a bit surprising to see Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times reporter Charlie LeDuff follow up a gig at the Grey Lady with a job as a correspondent at a local TV news station in Detroit. But following convention is not LeDuff's way. After two years in television news, LeDuff has distinguished himself as one of the most creative and interesting reporters working in the medium.



In July, in what is emblematic of the sort of reporting and storytelling LeDuff does so well, he turned the city into a single, 18-mile golf hole and [literally golfed the city](#). Passing through Detroit's vast emptiness, struggling neighborhoods, resurging pockets and even abandoned homes, LeDuff's golf hole (par-3,168) painted an intimate, if slightly bizarre, portrait of a city so easily misunderstood. The absurdity of being able to drive a golf ball through a major American city was not lost on LeDuff, or the countless locals he interviewed along the way.

Through this type of innovative reporting, LeDuff is telling a refreshingly honest story about Detroit as it continues to evolve and the people who are part of its changing course.

### 06\_JULIA LANDSTREET

Nashville, a center for country music and cowboy fashion, isn't known for progressive public design. That may be changing and with it, the relationship between traditionally car-centric southern cities and their often overlooked public spaces.

Since taking over as executive director of the [Nashville Civic Design Center](#) in 2010, Julia Landstreet has led this sea change in the city's design community. Spearheading a variety of neighborhood and city-focused design initiatives, Landstreet has worked diligently to make design more important to Nashville by showing how it can help the city's bottom line. Through programs aimed at youth and workshops focusing around the design of specific neighborhoods, the Center is making urban design a key part of plans to make the city a more livable, healthy and economically robust place. Landstreet, who got her start in the art world at White Columns, a New York visual arts organization in government background that marries political pragmatism with a contemporary result? Forward—a more beautiful and



The Center recently sponsored a competition that reimagine 75 acres of Cumberland River. It got 139 teams from 29 countries to participate. Though there's no funding right now to bring any of the winning designs to reality, that wasn't really the point. For Landstreet, the real takeaway is planting a seed in the minds of Nashville's people and encouraging them to envision the future of their city. Ultimately it's up to them to push for a real change, but it's helpful to have a visionary guiding the way.

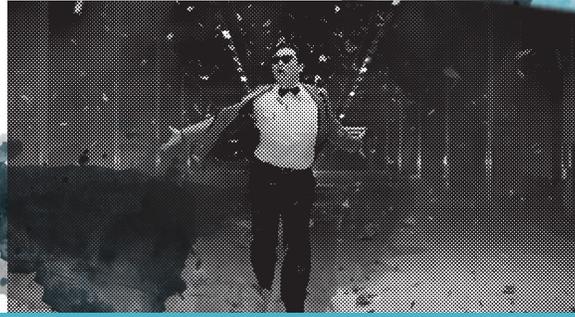


## 07\_PSY

The impressive, almost calculatedly pervasive spread of the Korean pop song “[Gangnam Style](#)” by Psy — more than 800 million YouTube views and counting — is enough to confound even the most sophisticated observers of Internet culture. But beyond the silly horse dance and the over-the-topness of it all, the video has within it a message that runs somewhat counter to its overwhelming popularity. The “Gangnam Style” video is actually a subtle satire on gross inequality in Seoul, with the finger pointing directly at its wealthiest neighborhood, Gangnam, and the people who aspire to live there.

Psy’s antics throughout the video lampoon some of the image-conscious materialism that pervades the rich neighborhood, and is meant to criticize those who seek to emulate and celebrate that lifestyle. By juxtaposing the fancy cars and swank spas of the super-rich lifestyle with the farmlands and public transit of the 99%, Psy calls out the vast differences that exist in the city, but also lays some blame on those who place too much value on the excesses of affluence.

Though now likely one of the bigger stars in Korean pop culture, it’s hard to imagine Psy’s lifestyle diverging much from the elitism his video seeks to attack.



## 08\_ADAM GREENFIELD

In the 21st century, it wouldn’t be totally inaccurate to think of the city as a combination of people, technology and infrastructure. Increasingly, the technologies that take up our attention and pulse through devices in our pockets are changing the way we experience and operate in cities. Information technology has met the city, and the relationship is developing nicely.

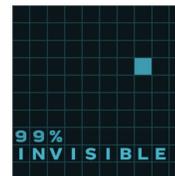
At the forefront of thinking about this relationship is [Urbanscale](#), an urban systems design practice centered on reimagining city infrastructure and improving the way people engage with it. Founded in 2010 by urban technologist Adam Greenfield, Urbanscale has developed an interesting set of urban infrastructure projects that focus on tapping into and sharing city data with people where they need it. From wayfinding to kiosks for 311 services to intuitive transit tickets, Urbanscale is creating new ways for people to connect with infrastructure through technology.

The practice, though, is currently in a holding pattern. Greenfield announced in May that Urbanscale was taking a pause for him to focus on finishing his book, *The City is Here for You to Use*. By the sound of it, this exploration into the evolving and interactive nature of cities is less a pause of Urbanscale’s work than another example of how Greenfield is working to change the way urbanites engage with and experience the city.



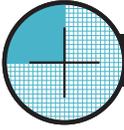
## 09\_ROMAN MARS

The design forces that shape our world are 99 percent invisible, according to Roman Mars. So it sorta makes sense that Mars has taken the subject of design to the 100 percent invisible medium of radio. He’s the producer and host of [99% Invisible](#), a “tiny radio show about design” that’s become one of the freshest and most engaging projects to explore the impact of design, architecture and the built environment. From the shapes and colors of camouflage to airport design to pneumatic tubes, 99% Invisible explores the stories behind some of the most ubiquitous but under-considered elements of the physical world. Stylistically, 99%



Invisible is a close analogue to the science-focused Radiolab, and excels at explanatory storytelling that’s both fun and intriguing.

This past summer, Mars continued to challenge convention by running the most successful Kickstarter fundraising campaign for a journalism project, rallying more than 5,600 of the show’s fans to kick in \$170,000 for the third season of the show. It’s a strong counterpoint to the traditional fund drives and grant writing that fuels most public radio. Perhaps more importantly, the widespread support for 99% Invisible shows that architecture and design has a growing audience that doesn’t need to see it to be interested.



## NONTRADITIONAL / PROFITABLE

### 10\_LUFA FARMS

The urban rooftop farm is more than a goofy utopian ideal. It is real, and it is happening in more and more cities. At the leading edge of this movement is [Lufa Farms](#), which calls itself the world's first commercial rooftop farm. It built a 31,000-square-foot greenhouse on a two-story office building that has been growing more than 25 different types of fruits, vegetables and herbs. And it's in Montreal, where winter temperatures average in the low teens. Impressive, right?

What's even more impressive is that Lufa Farms has been able to at least break even since opening in 2011. Large-scale rooftop farming, it seems, can work. And investors are interested. Lufa recently locked down about \$4.5 million in financing to spread its operations to other North American rooftops. It plans to build two more facilities in Montreal, and also to expand to a handful of other cities, including Toronto, Boston, New York and Chicago. Whether its early success can be replicated remains to be seen, but so far Lufa Farms seems to have shown that the utopian's rooftop garden can be more reality than dream.



### 11\_UBER

Hailing a taxi is just so... analog. But it doesn't have to be, according to [Uber](#), the start-up technology company that's changing the way people catch cabs. By connecting people in need of rides with licensed car service drivers in their area, Uber's phone apps are making an end-run around historically low-tech taxi companies to offer more choice and, ultimately, improve the user experience of getting a ride. And as the app catches on cities such as Washington, D.C., New York and its hometown of San Francisco, it's forcing some creative reflection on the entire transportation eco-system. A good thing, if you ask us.

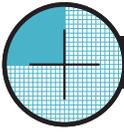
The taxi industry, not surprisingly, hasn't been too pleased with the San Francisco-based techies for usurping some of its business. Regulatory disputes in New York, for example, caused the company to retract an effort to work directly with taxi drivers in the city. It's now focusing specifically on the black town cars of private services.

Founded in 2009, the company has taken off over the past year, cropping up in more than 24 urban areas worldwide. And though traditional cab services are pushing back, Uber is growing — and attracting competitors in many of its markets. People will probably still be hailing cabs the old-fashioned way for years to come, but Uber is proving that there's a digital future in what for so long was a low-tech transportation system. Crucially, it's also proving that there is a payoff for those who invest in transportation innovation.

### 12\_AIRBNB

To best see a new city, it helps to stay with people who live there. That's great if you've got friends all over, but what if you don't? Getting stuck in some cookie-cutter hotel room in a downtown business district is not exactly the ideal way to find a city's unique nature. But now, thanks to [Airbnb](#), you don't need to have friends in a strange city to experience it on a more intimate level. The website connects people looking for non-hotel accommodations with people in cities all over the world who are willing to rent out their space for a short amount of time. This can range from taking over someone's apartment for a week in Milan to crashing in the guest bedroom of a house in New Orleans. By giving visitors choices outside the commercial areas where hotels flock, and drawing them to the neighborhoods where locals choose to live, Airbnb has upended the traditional arm-length relationship between tourists and cities.

For cities, this means tourist dollars trickling into neighborhood businesses and helping those crucial community anchors stay healthy. Indeed, a recent report from Airbnb, produced in conjunction with the firm HR&A, showed that 72 percent of listed properties in San Francisco are located outside central hotel areas. The study determined that guests spent \$15 million in the past year in these neighborhoods, and in total, 60 percent of guest spending occurred in the neighborhood where they stayed. For cities seeking ways to keep thriving, Airbnb is a new ally.



### 13\_URBAN INCUBATORS

Sometimes even great business ideas need a little help. Thanks to a new and growing crop of business incubators, entrepreneurs are able to tap into large pools of expertise and experience to help them turn their ideas into reality. In St. Louis, three non-profit economic development groups have underwritten [T-REx](#), an incubator that's been helping to connect entrepreneurs with the education, experience and investment needed to get their ideas off the ground. Denver's [Galvanize](#) incubator is aiming to grow a string of tech businesses in the city. Its focus is on providing the co-working space, and the collaborative business learning of a typical incubator, with an added crash course in coding to help the web-illiterate break into the world of programming. And in Seattle, the founders of the [Center for Impact Innovation](#), yet another incubator, are touting their co-working facility as one of the largest concentrations of social entrepreneurs in the country. These incubators offer a new and exciting way that entrepreneurs can come together to not only help one another with their business ideas, but also to help grow the sort of business community cities need to thrive.

### 14\_PLUS POOL

In clean renderings, people are doing something most New Yorkers would hardly dream of doing on purpose: Swimming in the East River. But in this imagined swim session, the ickyness, pollution and danger of swimming in the river are gone, replaced with an ingenious solution. It's called the [Plus Pool](#), and it's a plus sign-shaped floating swimming pool that filters the river's water to create a clean and safe place for New Yorkers to cool off in the hot summer.

Designed by Dong-Ping Wong, Archie Lee Coates IV and Jeffrey Franklin, Plus Pool was little more than an interesting idea when they first came up with it in 2010. But after a series of meetings, designs and a flurry of media interest, the Plus Pool idea

has grown into a full-fledged concept. With more than \$40,000 from a Kickstarter campaign and donated engineering and feasibility plans from the engineers at Arup, the pool guys have New Yorkers, designers and swimmers strongly behind them and their suddenly not-so-crazy idea.

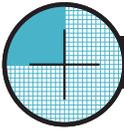
In addition to public support, the Plus Pool team has been steadily gathering valuable endorsements from politicians who may be critical in helping the project through the complicated funding, permitting and construction processes. With a May 2015 opening in mind, Plus Pool still needs a lot of funding to get off the ground. But many in New York and beyond are already getting their swimsuits ready for what may be the coolest place to go for a swim.



### 15\_ST. LOUIS TRESTLE

Clashing opinions abound over the value and impact of New York City's High Line, but if there's one unequivocal truth, it's that the elevated park is an inspiration. For some cities, that means finally having found a new way to think about an old problem. In St. Louis, locals are hoping to build on that success with the [St. Louis Trestle](#).

The Trestle is a 1.5-mile abandoned railway alignment now owned by the Great Rivers Greenway District, which is building a system of parks and trails throughout the region using a combination of state, federal and private funds. The Trestle crosses over an interstate highway and connects with a riverfront bike path, making it a key part of an expanding network of active trails within the city. For the past few years, the railway has been open to pedestrians and cyclists. Now, Great Rivers Greenway is planning to turn it into a linear park that they're hoping will attract even more people out to its growing network of activated trails. For the industrial riverfront neighborhood through which the Trestle passes, the new attention could help speed up a promising yet slow process of revival.



## 16\_WALKSCORE

There are plenty of ways to compare neighborhoods, but one that's becoming increasingly important is walkability. More and more Americans want to know how easy and safe it is to walk around a neighborhood and what sort of urban amenities they can access on foot. The best way to find out — aside from actually taking a walk — is [Walkscore](#), the website that rates addresses by how easy it is to accomplish bipedal daily errands. Having become a crucial tool for pedestrian advocates, the site is also used by some of the biggest real estate services; the Walkscore of a neighborhood has become a new selling point for real estate agents and homebuyers.

Most recently, Walkscore has augmented its website and mobile app to allow people to add missing places to its map. Users can snap photos and upload descriptions of places in their neighborhoods, identifying areas where walkability could be improved. The thinking is that locals know what makes their neighborhood a good or bad place to walk. By tapping into this local crowd wisdom, Walkscore is aiming to become an even more trustworthy authority on navigating cities without a car.



## 17\_YOU'VE MADE A BUSINESS SUCCEED. NOW, TURN AROUND A DOWNTOWN

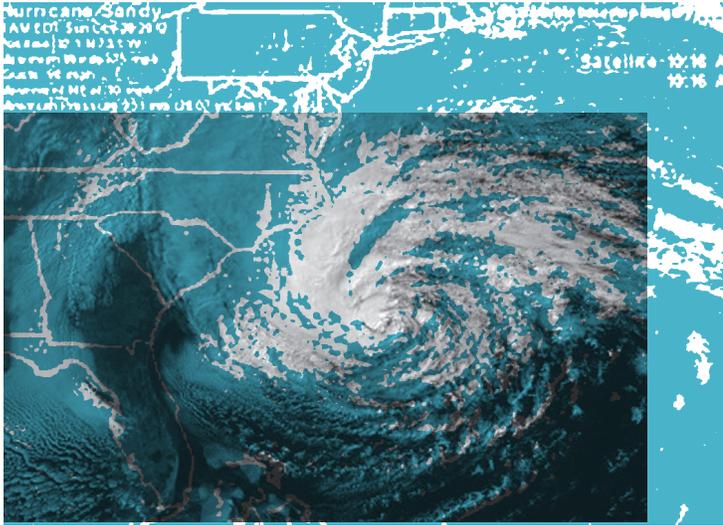
So, you're a super-millionaire and you want to make a difference? There's a downtown area somewhere in the U.S. that needs you. It's become something of a new trend for successful business people to see new opportunities in reviving and reinvesting in American downtowns on the brink. Dan Gilbert, Quicken Loans founder and Cleveland Cavaliers majority owner, is investing his resources in downtown Detroit. He's gone on a major binge of property acquisitions there in recent years, and has helped to fuel a population boom by relocating his company's headquarters downtown and incentivizing his workers to follow. In Las Vegas, Tony Hsieh of the online shoe retailer Zappos is [making a huge investment](#) into the once-thriving but now seedy downtown Vegas area. Hsieh is actively luring start-ups and more established businesses to relocate to some of the office and residential buildings he's rehabbing, hoping to help spur a business revolution that will turn downtown around.

Gilbert and Hsieh may not be the only solutions for their cities, and their projects are certainly not panaceas. But they do represent innovative thinking that can be good for both business and the city. Could other successful business leaders follow in their footsteps?

## 18\_HIGHER DENSITY CITIES

To thrive in the modern economy, we must live in cities, and those cities must be dense. That's the charge of Harvard urban economist Edward L. Glaeser, who has become one of the leading expert voices arguing for the wisdom of urban density in recent years. His 2011 book *Triumph of the City* makes an impassioned and heavily researched argument that city living is the key to the future of humanity, and that density will have to become a priority as global urbanization continues.

But there's a reason — many reasons, in fact — why cities aren't as dense as they probably should be. To explain the intricacies and limitations of the housing market and city zoning, recent books by *The Economist* writer Ryan Avent and Slate writer Matt Yglesias delve into the policies that actively work against densification. Their work cleanly lays out what needs to change to enable developers to build more densely and how the finances of the housing market need to be revised to make it easier for people to live in cities affordably. The argument for denser cities is becoming louder thanks to the work of Glaeser, Avent and Yglesias. Now, it's time for action.



## 19 REGIONALISM

In an increasingly metropolitan world, the issues of the city often bleed beyond city borders. From water security to transportation to clean energy infrastructure, the systems that keep metropolitan areas functioning are much bigger and more encompassing than any one municipality. To address many of these urban problems, people are realizing they'll have to take a regional approach.

As an extreme example, Hurricane Sandy's landfall on the Eastern Seaboard spurred the need for quick action across a wide geography. Volunteer and rescue groups from around the New York-New Jersey area and beyond converged on the hard-hit communities of Staten Island and the Jersey Shore to provide aid, which ranged from handing out bottles of bleach to helping people find missing loved ones. But not every regional issue is of such immediate emergency. On the slower, and arguably more devastating, side of the spectrum is the steady decline of the post-industrial cities of the Rust Belt. To try to tackle issues of economic decline facing cities across a large region, important investments have been made by groups like the American Assembly's Legacy Cities Network to analyze the issues and propose solutions. For these types of multi-city and multi-state questions, it's becoming more and more important to have a regional lens if there is any hope of finding answers.

## 20 CROWDSOURCING FOR CIVIC GOOD IN CITIES

The website Kickstarter has revolutionized the way people fundraise. By tapping into the large audience of the Internet and trying to convince people of a project's worth, creators of all stripes have been able to build up the funding they need to actually build or develop projects as varied as films, watches, video games and household appliances. Building on Kickstarter's success, two crowd-funding websites have developed to connect funders with civic-focused projects.

[ioby](#) is one U.S.-based website that allows community members to post ideas for small-scale neighborhood improvement projects and raise money to complete them. With an environmental focus, ioby has helped neighborhood groups fund efforts to build community gardens or rain barrels and set up bicycle repair stations. But it's not just about raising money — ioby also tries to recruit volunteers interested in helping to actually build these projects. The UK-based [Spacehive](#), another crowdfunding site for civic projects, tends to include much larger ambitions, like building entirely new parks or redesigning community centers. These two sites show that [crowdfunding can be a useful tool](#) for both generating financial support for projects and prompting the community to see them through.



## NONTRADITIONAL / PROFITABLE



### 21\_DANNA MASAD

Disillusioned with architecture, Palestinian-born architect Danna Masad returned to her homeland after years abroad to search for a new purpose. She found it in the garbage of Ramallah. Masad is now leading a design studio that specializes in turning local waste material into furniture. Frustrated that so much of what was being designed and built in Palestine was sourced from outside, Masad has emphasized the importance of local products and materials. Luckily, garbage is plentiful.

With three other young architects, Masad founded [ShamsArd Studio](#). Their recycled furniture designs include old doors and piping turned into tables, packing crates turned

into dinette sets and oil barrels reconfigured into love seats. Their work has been featured in design publications worldwide, and in June they held an exhibition featuring 42 different designs. In addition to its work in furniture, ShamsArd is developing a variety of ecologically minded landscape and architecture designs. Similar to the studio's furniture, these designs rely on locally sourced materials and strive for sustainability. Masad and her studio are quickly establishing themselves as the driving force behind the emerging movement for urban sustainability in Palestine. And it all started with a little garbage.

### 22\_FUNDRISE

Real estate development doesn't happen without investors. And to invest, they must be "accredited" — that is, big banks, Wall Streeters or the just plain wealthy. This almost always leaves out the people actually living in the communities where real estate is developed, people likely to have a deeper connection to whatever it is that gets built.

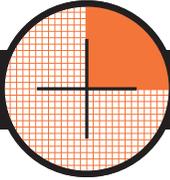
Through a new model called [Fundrise](#), these local community members can invest as little as \$100 in real estate projects in their neighborhood. Created by Washington, D.C. developers, Fundrise uses crowd equity and vested neighborhood funders to bring about real estate projects that communities want and need. It's a dramatic departure from the existing model, and took nearly two years to bring from idea to reality. After significant effort, Fundrise's creators got the Securities and Exchange Commission to qualify their first public offering in 2012, which drew 175 investors and more than \$325,000. Fundrise has already opened a handful of other offerings, and each has met its funding goal. The concept seems to be working, and it's making real estate development into a truly community-based endeavor.

# NONTRADITIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT

23\_Theaster Gates  
24\_Monica Campana  
25\_Omari Walker  
26\_Johnny Isakson  
27\_Saskia Sassen  
28\_Detropia Filmmakers  
29\_Derek Douglas  
30\_Michael Replogle  
31\_Transparent Chennai  
32\_Alexander Apostol  
33\_Roger Keil  
34\_Doorways to Dreams

35\_Kounkuey Design  
Initiative  
36\_Bjarke Ingels Group  
37\_Music Box House  
38\_Temporary  
Intervention  
39\_Restorative Justice  
40\_City-Based ID Cards  
41\_Jeffrey Brenner  
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43\_Reuben Jones  
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45\_Red Hook Initiative  
46\_Bike Share



## NONTRADITIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT

### 23\_THEASTER GATES

To call Theaster Gates either an artist or urban planner confuses the issue. In fact, his work straddles both realms, and quite fluidly. A contemporary artist whose works have been displayed in some of the most important museums and galleries in the world, Gates is as much entrenched in the world of high art as he is in community-centric social practice.

For the past few years, Gates has been buying dilapidated buildings in his south Chicago neighborhood and bringing them back to life. He's turned one into an art and architecture reading room. Another is being redeveloped as a cinema, and another still he's made into his home. Much more than a neighborhood pet project, it's an effort he hopes to spread. Gates has recently been named director of the University of Chicago's [Arts and Public Life Initiative](#), which aims to work within the city's South Side to grow cultural institutions and cultural literacy at the neighborhood level. This work will focus on connecting the university's arts efforts with the local community to create an environment where culture can thrive and the neighborhood can evolve. With Gates at the helm, art and urban planning will easily commingle.



### 24\_MONICA CAMPANA

Most conferences — boring, regular ol' conferences — are simply about something. But in Atlanta, a couple of creative artists have developed a conference that actually *is* something. In this case, it's a multi-day art-in that results in a fleet of new murals and public art pieces throughout the city.

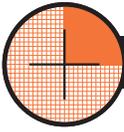
Called [Living Walls](#), the project coordinates with the owners and administrators of various blank walls throughout Atlanta and recruits street artists from around the world to come to town and paint them all. Monica Campana is co-founder and executive director of the project, and she's been working to both grow the street art culture in Atlanta and enliven the city's public spaces.

Launched in 2010, the first Living Walls conference brought out 15 acclaimed street artists flown in from around the world to paint murals on donated walls throughout the city. The 2012 conference — this one consisting of an all-female roster of artists — filled in 28 different mural locations with new artworks. Building on this growth, Campana is now looking at ways to turn the once-a-year event into a local art movement that can last all year long.

### 25\_OMARI WALKER

In the Massachusetts school districts of Framingham and Fall River, Omari Walker and his collaborator Janice Manning have been fighting a seemingly endemic problem. High school students — for an admittedly wide range of reasons — were dropping out at especially high rates. To counter this trend, they argued, a different approach was needed. And so, through alternative education programs tailored specifically to students in danger of flunking out, Walker and Manning developed a high school education program that eschews the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to schooling. Dropout rates declined sharply.

To help expand on this work, Walker formed the [Resiliency Foundation](#) in 2009. It's a standalone organization that aims to help public school systems meet the needs of their most vulnerable students. The students at risk of dropping out or flunking out shouldn't just be let go. To try to help students stay in school and graduate, it has adapted the traditional school schedule and academic program to help kids catch up, broaden their skill sets and get more personalized attention. In Fall River, upon working with the Foundation, the dropout rate fell by nearly 8 percent between 2007 and 2010.



## 26\_JOHNNY ISAKSON

You can't legislate a solution to the housing market's post-recession woes. But it doesn't hurt to try, and Georgia Sen. Johnny Isakson is certainly trying. In office since 2005, Isakson has translated his previous experience as president of a real estate company into legislation largely aimed at rejiggering the housing market into a more reasonable and fiscally responsible system.

Most recently he's proposed the dissolution of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the federal government's mortgage security arms. He wants to replace them with a new entity that, within a 10-year timeframe, would privatize and therefore relieve the public of the risk of government-backed mortgages. Isakson argues that a system like this would protect taxpayers should the housing market undergo another major downturn. He's also made other efforts to counteract the aftereffects of the housing bust, such as lifting some of the burdens on people whose homes are underwater and tax credits for new homebuyers in the immediate months after the crash. It's not a cure-all, but Isakson's efforts to legislate solutions are important steps toward reducing the inherent risk of the housing market.

## 27\_SASKIA SASSEN

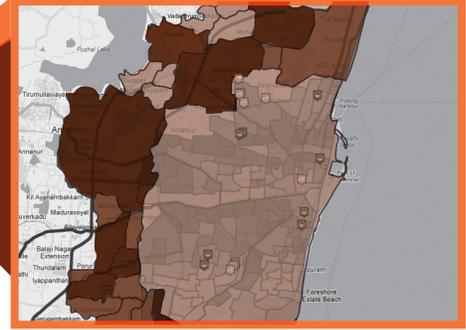
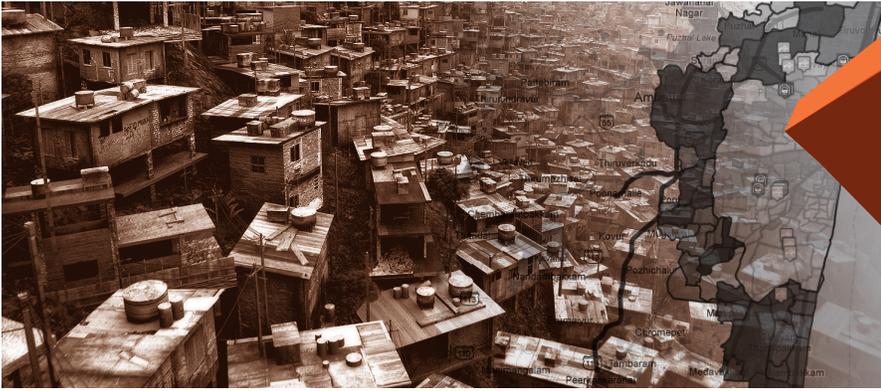
If the end of the 20th century was characterized by globalization and the increasing interconnectedness of powerful global cities, the beginning of the 21st is shaping up to be an era indebted to the global street. For our understanding of both, we have urban theorist and sociologist Saskia Sassen to thank. The global street, Sassen writes, is "a space where new forms of the social and the political can be made, rather than a space for enacting ritualized routines." The Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, the ongoing rebellion in Syria, the crowds of jobless youth in Spain — all of these embody Sassen's notion. With these movements, the city serves as both a center of power and of powerlessness, and in this urban space, Sassen says, "the powerless can make history." Understanding these movements as specifically urban phenomena, Sassen is building on a consistently groundbreaking career of challenging the way we think about the social ramifications of city structures. A decade ago, urban thinkers and doers were figuring out how to adapt to a global economy. Now they must embrace the global street.



## 28\_HEIDI EWING AND RACHEL GRADY

In their new film [Detropia](#), directors Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady take on the well-trodden subject matter of modern-day Detroit in the context of what it once was. This topic has become all but a formula in most examinations of the city's evolution: Once great, now fallen. But Ewing and Grady take a far more nuanced look at the city's challenges and opportunities. Detroit is portrayed as suffering a fate both unique to the city and epidemic among other former industrial U.S. cities. Detroit, the film argues, could happen to you.

But the film doesn't just document the gloomy outlook that's become so familiar in these days of Motor City speculation and voyeurism. *Detropia* also highlights the chance this particular situation has created for many people. Land and space are cheap, and the city is purring with a sense that something different needs to be done. For those with a creative bent, the city seems an ideal stage or starting point. Ewing and Grady don't suggest, as some have, that these people are the answer for Detroit. In fact, they argue subtly that even if there were one, the city doesn't need an answer. It's changing, and there's no denying that.



## 29\_DEREK DOUGLAS

Cranking out urban policy from the very top is, understandably, a major challenge. So it's somewhat unsurprising that the Obama administration has so far struggled to develop many specifically city-focused national policies. But it's **not for want of trying**, nor of having the right people to do it. One of them, Domestic Policy Council Special Assistant Derek Douglas, may have been the best suited to accomplish something in the White House.

But in late 2011, Douglas decided to leave the White House behind and scale efforts down to what may

be a more manageable level. Now vice president for civic engagement at the University of Chicago, Douglas has the chance to put his many years of urban policy expertise to work. Focusing specifically on his employer's connection with the surrounding South Side neighborhood, Douglas is working to make sure the university's vast resources and investments are good for the city at large in addition to the academic institution. Through strategic partnerships with the City of Chicago and various small local banks, Douglas is already helping to put the university's dollars to work on projects that have an impact beyond the ivory tower.

## 30\_MICHAEL REPLOGLE

Many observers saw June's United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, or Rio+20, as something of a disappointment. Despite environmental concern being at possibly its highest point ever, hard agreements and binding plans for dramatic environmental policy change didn't really take shape. But, for those interested in sustainable transportation — the bikeable, walkable, bus-rideable transportation efforts many see as crucial to improving city function and quality — the conference was a smashing success.

In what can only be seen as a major coup for the field, a consortium of eight multilateral development banks pledged a total of \$175 billion toward sustainable transportation over the next decade. Yes, that's \$175 billion with a B.

Behind this impressive agreement is Michael Replogle, founder and global policy director of the **Institute for Transportation and Development Policy**. He's the guy who literally defined the term "sustainable transport" back in the '80s. His decades of work in the field helped to make the case to the world's biggest development banks that the economically vibrant cities of the future need more environmentally friendly transportation options than most have today.

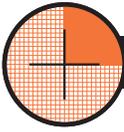
In contrast to the typical piecemeal funding mechanisms behind progressive transportation ideas, this massive investment could dramatically advanced the concept into on-the-ground projects in cities all over the world. Replogle is the man to thank if it does.

## 31\_TRANSPARENT CHENNAI

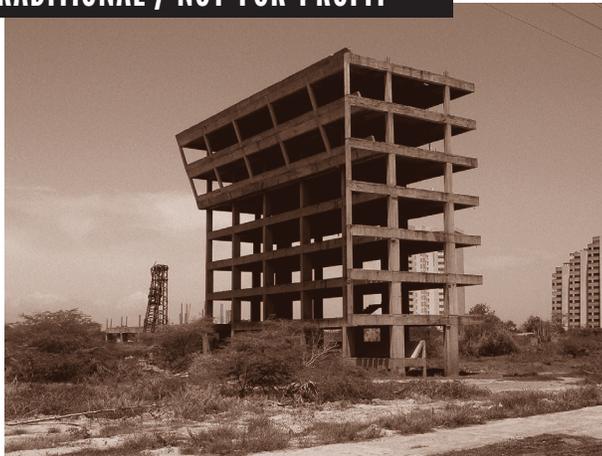
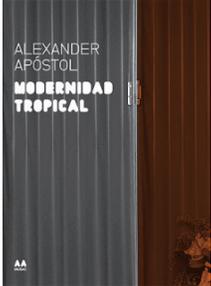
For urban data to do any good it has to be accessible, understandable and usable. In Chennai, India, it was none of those things. So in 2009, Nithya Raman decided to take on the challenge by going to municipal offices and warehouses to find the city's data and open it up. What's resulted is **T**, a mapping and data website that connects the city's people to its important numbers and statistics. By putting this data into the public eye, the project aims to empower residents to advocate for change in their communities.

In Chennai, slum-dwellers live literally off the grid and go uncounted by government, a willful ignorance that perpetuates a status quo in which families don't receive the public services they need. Raman's theory is that data can help slum-dwellers in their quest for recognition — and once that happens, it will be much harder for the government to continue to ignore their existence.

To that end, Raman and her team use the data they collect to create tools to put slum dwellers on the map, literally and figuratively. Some maps are straightforward, showing routes or police stations. But others go beyond providing simple information, highlighting the city's most dire needs and calling on locals to demand better services and treatment from the government. Their website also includes easily accessible information on how residents can reach out to officials and which offices are responsible for utility outages or insufficient sewage infrastructure. By making this information available and usable, Raman and her colleagues at Transparent Chennai are creating a more informed public and giving it the tools to transform their city.



## NONTRADITIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT



### 32\_ALEXANDER APOSTOL

One of Latin America's most acclaimed contemporary artists, Alexander Apóstol uses photography and film to document the physical realm of the developing world. Born in Venezuela and now splitting his time between Caracas and Madrid, Apóstol's work ranges from imagery of half-constructed buildings to the jaggedly stacked brick and block homes of typical Latin American neighborhoods. His photographs portray colloquial design in a straightforward way, but also emphasize some of its absurdities.

His first monograph, [Tropical Modernity](#), focuses on Latin American modernism as it plays out in various contemporary cities. The suggestion of Apóstol's work is that a physical modern architecture or design style is grossly out of line with social and political realities, where progress hasn't followed the path left by the modernist movement. His work presents the sharp contrasts between the modern urbanism and architecture of these cities and the sociopolitical legacies that have led to corruption and marginalization. This work, in addition to other artistic pursuits, makes Apóstol one of the most interesting documentarians of urbanity in Latin America.

### 33\_ROGER KEIL

The suburbs are important, according to Roger Keil. A professor at York University in Toronto and director of its City Institute, Keil understands that suburban development has spread so far and wide that flippantly disregarding it as inherently wrong, as so many have, ignores the reality of its impact. Keil is leading a seven-year, 50-person research effort focused on suburban developments around the world. It's the first major research project on the "suburbanisms" that form within metropolitan areas all over the world.

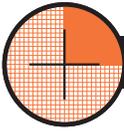
Among a variety of outcomes, Keil's project is challenging the no-

tion of cities and suburbs being two separate and distinct conditions. Rather, it's becoming clear that suburban areas have elements of urbanity and that cities have elements of suburbanism — from a walkable Main Street in an outer ring suburb to a 45-minute solo car commute four miles across a major city. The approach here is to document the governance structures that lead to and regulate suburban development, and to create a more sophisticated conversation about these places. Suburbs may not have the cachet they once did, but they're certainly not going away any time soon. Keil's work argues that it's useless to ignore them.

### 34\_DOORWAYS TO DREAMS FUND

Sometimes it seems like the only way to make money is to already have money. Asset building may be one of the most effective financial strategies, but if you don't have assets to start with, it's hard to build on them. It was this dilemma that led to the creation of the [Doorways to Dreams Fund](#). Think of a financial advising firm for low-income people, one that helps those with few assets make savings without breaking the bank.

D2D has certainly taken a creative approach to addressing that need. Its focus has been making technologies that keep the costs of financial advising and saving not only low, but also comprehensible. One way to achieve this is through video games. In 2008, D2D created *Celebrity Calamity*, a game that helps adults understand credit and spending by making them the manager of a celebrity's credit cards. Another game, *Groove Nation*, combines dancing and budgeting. It's an unconventional approach, but mainly because financial advisers have ignored the low-income population for so long. Through its innovative use of technology to communicate with people with few assets, D2D is helping to engender a culture of saving among those who never thought they could.



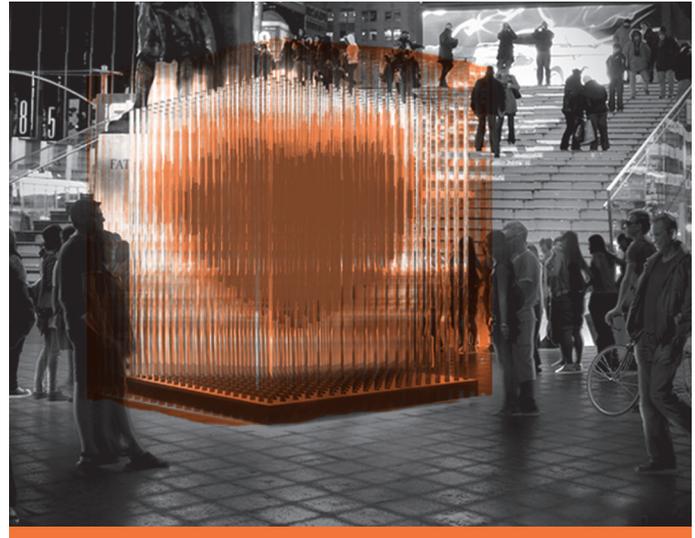
## NONTRADITIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT



### 35\_KOUNKUEY DESIGN INITIATIVE

To understand the needs of some of the developing world's most underserved communities, it helps to have people on the ground. That's the model of the [Kounkuey Design Initiative](#), a non-profit that partners with low-income communities in places like Nairobi, Casablanca and Haiti to bring about much-needed community improvements. The Initiative's work emphasizes the creation of what it calls Productive Public Spaces: Projects that transform formerly unusable space into active, productive and sometimes even revenue-generating resources for the community. These projects are devised, built and operated in conjunction with community members to ensure that they're really needed and beneficial. Often, they fill glaring holes in places that might not otherwise be filled.

Some projects include public sanitation centers, playgrounds, schools and flood control interventions — all relatively simple in scope, but which can have huge impacts on people living in a given community. Among other awards, the Initiative was given an Innovation Challenges Award in 2012 from the Rockefeller Foundation for its online and phone-based initiative to help community members in Nairobi identify, access and improve water infrastructure projects. Through this participatory model, the Kounkuey Design Initiative's work is not only bringing needed services to communities, but also enabling community members to build on the improvements they themselves have helped to create.



### 36\_BJARKE INGELS GROUP

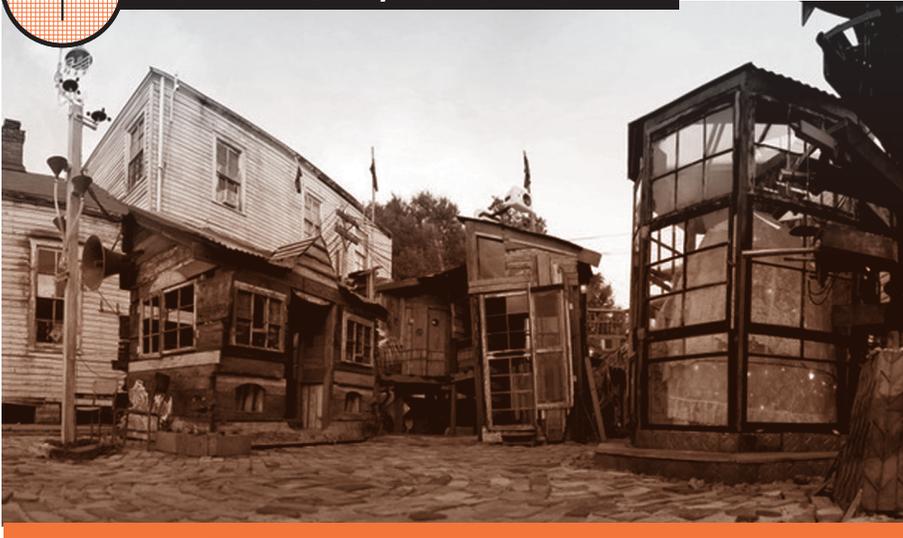
If you want to know how to get a heart racing on Valentine's Day, ask the [Bjarke Ingels Group](#). This past February 14, the international architecture and design group accomplished just that feat in a way that bodes well for the future of public art and the romance of place.

BIG installed a big red heart in a cube-like matrix of translucent glass rods right in the center of Times Square. The heart beat and glowed bright red through the clear tubes, creating a 10-foot-tall symbol of love. The display was also responsive, with an attached kiosk where the touch of a person would cause the heart to beat faster. The more people touching the sensor, the faster the heart would beat. This installation exemplifies the kind of work BIG creates: That which encourages and celebrates the public interaction that makes cities great.

BIG was born out of the vision of Ingels, who founded the company after cutting his teeth working for Rem Koolhaas at the OMA. And as BIG's motto of "Yes is More" indicates, the architect shares Koolhaas's eye for bold spatial experimentation. Where they differ is in their voice; BIG is a bit friendlier, a little more humane. At a time when cities are experiencing unprecedented growth and change, art with a little heart seems like a good, and even radical, idea.



## NONTRADITIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT



### 37\_MUSIC BOX HOUSE

The [Music Box House](#) in New Orleans brings together two of the city's most notable cultural legacies: Music and architecture. An art project of bizarre and wondrous proportions, the Music Box House is really a collection of small, purpose-built shanties constructed not into living quarters but into musical instruments. Each small structure, therefore, can be played like any keyboard or drum set.

Created by street artist Swoon and arts organization New Orleans Airlift, the Music Box House was built out of the ruins of a collapsed Creole Cottage by a group of artists and musicians. The result is a small orchestra's worth of playable shanties — bells and clangers and pedals and organ keys, all built out of the old parts of the house. Sound artists and musicians have been coming to experiment with the contraption, and compositions have even been written specifically for the site. Performances are something like a campfire, school play and cabaret mixed together. It's a unique piece of artistry and architecture, and shows that there's really no limit to the sort of creative ways abandoned property can be reused.

### 38\_TEMPORARY INTERVENTION

You can make a city better for a week, a day or even an hour. And in a growing number of communities, the idea of temporary urban interventions is becoming one of the most effective ways to create change. In 2012, ephemeral, pop-up urbanism has stepped from the fringes of the grassroots to the mainstream of citymaking. But don't let the temporary nature of this strategy fool you; its implications are anything but. The popup model allows fledgling entrepreneurs to realize their visions without the expenses of a brick-and-mortar business, encouraging individuals to take small risks with big payoffs for the communities they serve. And while the concept of retail establishments that are only around for a month might have once seemed like a self-destructive business model, pop-up shops are now seen as a way to bring life to areas that are otherwise empty.

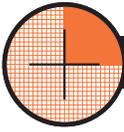
Urban designers and economic developers have embraced these types of temporary projects, and for good reason. The evolution from the temporary park creation of Park(ing) Day to the permanent "parklets" built by cities like San Francisco and Long Beach, Calif. is proof of the way that these small-scale ideas can spread.

### 39\_RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

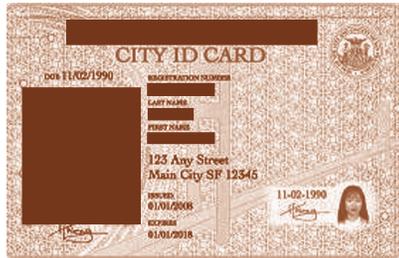
More young people were killed in Chicago in 2012 than in any other American city. But while this homicide rate is exceptional, the concentration of violence is not. As is standard in most cities, the majority of murders happened in a minority of neighborhoods. The consequences are equally catastrophic for the communities torn apart by violence as they are for the city as a whole. In 2011 alone, Chicago spent upwards of \$27 million to detain youth from areas of the city with a collective population of about 2,400, according to the Cook County Juvenile Justice Task Force. The spending is expected to be even greater in 2012. It's that reality that has inspired a rethinking of the criminal justice system, one that seeks to disrupt urban America's tragically normalized population flow from school to jails — and all too often, to coffins.

Restorative justice is a community-based alternative to a traditional system of punishment that puts young offenders in detention centers or jails. By asking stakeholders involved in the crime to find a resolution, rather than relying on the criminal justice system to lay down a punishment, practitioners break established cycles of incarceration, retribution and recidivism. This works in surprisingly sensible ways. Under the restorative justice model, a thief who stole a television, for instance, would be compelled to bring it back.

Leading this change are organizations like Chicago's [Community Justice for Youth Institute](#), which focuses on building the community capacity to address and resolve youth crime in the city and its schools. By shifting responsibility back to the community members involved, restorative justice seems much more likely to change patterns of crime and with that, transform the entire city.



### 41\_JEFFREY BRENNER



### 40\_CITY-BASED ID CARDS

In November, the Los Angeles City Council approved a plan to issue city-based identification cards, an initiative that will have wide-ranging benefits for the city's hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants. The ID cards would enable L.A. residents to open bank accounts and pay utility bills, easing the burdens of a lifestyle that, up to now, had been limited by a reliance on cash-only transactions.

L.A. joins a handful of other American cities, from San Francisco and Oakland, Calif. to New Haven, Conn., in creating the city-based ID system. Through their ID programs, these cities have made major strides in improving civil rights for immigrants whose lack of documentation has held back their economic activity and wealth generation. For Los Angeles, the ID cards will help legitimize a large segment of the city's economy that had for decades been off the official books. By easing the banking complications of the undocumented, L.A. and other cities with ID card systems are also helping their own economies to flourish.

Physician Jeffrey Brenner started out making crime maps. Frustrated with the policing in his city of Camden, N.J., Brenner wanted to fill what he saw as an obvious gap by creating a map of where crimes happened to clue in to the sort of trends that might be useful to police and beneficial to public safety. To make the maps, he convinced the three local hospitals to avail medical billing records. The trends he found in healthcare provision turned out to be far more interesting — and dysfunctional — than the crimes he'd originally intended to find. Through "hot spot" maps of medical billing, Brenner found that most of the city's health care efforts were being spent on a very few patients, and most of

those patients were relying on hospitals for fairly trivial conditions like colds, sore throats or ear infections. So he decided to do something about it.

Brenner founded the [Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers](#) to focus on improving how health care is provided, especially to the city's vulnerable and high-risk populations. By working with local providers and using the hot spot maps, the Coalition has successfully reduced the amount of hospital visits by nearly 50 percent. It's a [major improvement to urban health care](#), and it's saving money. In 2012, Brenner spread the Coalition's hot spotting method to four other cities, launching what could be a new model for urban health care provision.



### 42\_KIDDADA GREEN

Of all the problems facing cities today, how women feed their newborns wouldn't seem to be a big one. And yet statistics show that the decision of whether or not to breastfeed can mean the difference between increased risk for cancer and diabetes and even infant mortality. Yet in urban communities, and particularly black communities, that health risk is not well known.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, less than half of black babies are breastfed, compared to nearly three-quarters of white babies. And black

dada Green, the connection is easy to see.

So, in 2007, Green founded the [Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Association](#), a non-profit that hopes to counteract those numbers.

Green has been evangelizing breastfeeding among the black population in Detroit, hosting support groups and leading seminars on the techniques and benefits of natural feeding. And now she's taking her mission beyond Detroit, visiting states across the country to meet with mothers, black and otherwise, in urban areas with low rates of breastfeeding and high rates of medical issues. This year, Green's group won a \$100,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation to keep spreading the word. With this funding, Green will be able to help even more parents to raise healthy babies that can grow up to be healthy people, breaking a cycle of sickness that has for too long pervaded urban communities.



babies are twice as likely to die before their first birthdays than white babies. For former Detroit public school teacher and mother Kid-



## NONTRADITIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT

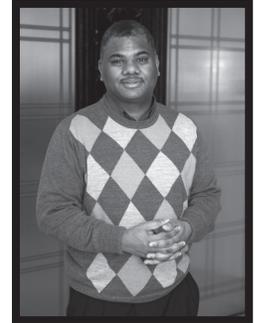
### 43\_REUBEN JONES

For some fathers, gaining custody of their children can be one of the toughest fights of their lives. But imagine doing it from prison. Reuben Jones was serving a 15-year sentence for aggravated assault when he successfully lobbied to gain custody to his son. Once released from prison in 2002, Jones set out to help other fathers in similar situations. Jones, who lives in Philadelphia, started [Frontline Dads](#), an organization aimed at helping other African-American men understand and work their way through the system to gain custody of children, handle child sup-

port issues and improve their parenting skills. The organization is small, yet its mission to encourage black fatherhood reigns large in urban neighborhoods where single motherhood has become a de facto norm and a lack of strong male role models is often given blame for high rates of violence among black boys.

In January, Jones was one of 20 black men given the BME Leadership Award by the Knight Foundation, which honors black men from Detroit and Philadelphia who are leaders in their communities. With his \$20,000 grant, Jones

is launching the Frontline Dads Comprehensive Transformation Initiative to expand his efforts to help other black fathers deal with the convoluted systems that sometimes unfairly keep them away from their children. Gaining custody of kids can be difficult, but with programs like Jones' parents will be better equipped to face the challenge and communities better able to offer strong male role models to their sons.



### 44\_MOSIREEN

The fall of the Mubarak regime in Egypt was the result of a momentous outpouring of public disgust. It was also a textbook case study for the role of mass communication in the 21st century. Thousands of Egyptians captured the actions of the regime and the revolution on mobile phones and digital cameras, posting and sharing across the Internet and world. Recognizing an important shift in the way information was gathered and shared, a group of activists, journalists and filmmakers formed a collective called [Mosireen](#) to make sure the citizen journalism continued even after the revolution.

In addition to publishing videos and other media, the group helps provide training and technical support to citizen journalists and filmmakers eager to share stories. It has a community workspace in downtown Cairo that's open



six days a week and free to all. It has also expanded workshops on citizen journalism to other Egyptian cities. By providing the space, equipment and community that's changing the way information flows in Cairo and elsewhere, Mosireen is spreading a form of community engagement that is vital to the creation of post-revolution Egypt.





### 45\_RED HOOK INITIATIVE

Nearly 50 percent of the adults living in Brooklyn’s Red Hook never completed high school. By no coincidence, 47 percent of the neighborhood’s 10,000 residents live in poverty, many of them in vast towers of public housing. This often-ignored population came into public view this fall when Hurricane Sandy left the area flooded without running water and power for weeks. But during this infrastructural failure, one small organization — [Red Hook Initiative](#) — stepped up.

The non-profit, which focuses on providing young people with employment and leadership training, miraculously avoided flooding and subsequently became the headquarters of neighborhood recovery. Crossing race, class and geographic divides, the Initiative began providing access to hot meals, cell phone chargers and copious amounts of donated emergency supplies. Youth from its programs helped run these efforts and coordinated the hundreds of volunteer workers from around the city. It was a test in a time of need that showed how the Initiative’s youth-focused efforts are already creating the type of leaders that can break a community’s pernicious cycle of under-education and poverty.

### 46\_BIKE SHARE

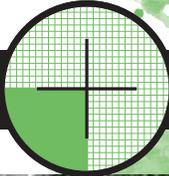
There’s an inherent urbanity in the sharing economy. As city-dwellers who only need cars once or twice a month can turn to programs like Zipcar, those who don’t cycle every day have at their disposal an increasing number of bike share systems opening in their cities. It’s not surprising to have seen bike-friendly towns like Minneapolis and Washington, D.C. launch successful bike share programs. Nor is it particularly outrageous to learn that larger cities like New York and Chicago plan to jump on the bike share bandwagon next year.

But in 2012, a few fairly car-dependent places got in on the game as well. Cities like Charlotte, Chattanooga, Houston and Kansas City all implemented bike share programs, demonstrating that even in the Sun and Rust belts — where for so long, car was king — cycling is viewed more and more as a viable means of transportation. Though still relatively small (the Kansas City system so far has 12 stations and 90 bikes), more young people are using these services to prove that they don’t need even a rented car to get around.

Over the next year, this trend can be expected to spread, especially in the mid-sized and slightly larger cities of the U.S. where growing ranks of residents are moving beyond the car dependency their cities may once have required.

# ESTABLISHMENT / PROFITABLE

47\_Michael Kimmelman  
48\_Maurice Cox  
49\_Christopher Gergen  
50\_Johnathan Rose  
51\_Iwan Baan  
52\_Calstart  
53\_Privately Run  
Public Spaces  
54\_Hostel Detroit



## ESTABLISHMENT / PROFITABLE



### 47\_ MICHAEL KIMMELMAN

It's almost quaint to think that there could still be a paper of record in 2012, and yet the *New York Times* has held onto the title. Its architecture critic similarly retains a vaunted sense of authority, even in an age where a dozen architecture critics are a blog's throw away. So it was anticipated relatively closely when, in July 2011, the paper named former art critic and foreign correspondent Michael Kimmelman as the latest in an impressive list of writers to play that role.

Months later, Kimmelman kicked off his era with something of a surprise: His [first article](#) as architecture critic was about a new public housing project in the Bronx, and much more about the process of integrating it into the neighborhood than any architectural intricacies. Pieces since have focused on New York's changing bike networks, its public spaces, its relationship with the Occupy movement — not exactly the post-and-beam makings of a traditional architecture column. And though criticized at times for not focusing enough on the field, Kimmelman's tenure has so far shown that the urban context of architecture is just as nuanced and important as the buildings themselves.

### 48\_ MAURICE COX

When Maurice Cox and his University of Virginia students arrived in Cape Coast, Ghana last summer, Cox made it clear that they were there to do things a little differently than had been done in the past. Piloting a community-driven, place-based study abroad program, Cox, then an architecture professor at UVA and faculty advisor for the program, told his students to talk to the people in the community about the design problems they observed. Over and over, they heard about a dangerous main street with nowhere for pedestrians. Children were being injured and killed in traffic. Under Cox's advisement, the students decided to present a solution: painted sidewalks. Building relationships with local officials and residents, the UVA students gained the approvals needed to paint eye-catching murals on road and thus, create a visible, recognizable right of way for pedestrians, even small ones.

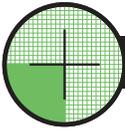
Upon his return from Ghana, Cox was appointed associate dean of community engagement at Tulane University's architecture school, where he's also heading the university's renowned Tulane City Center. A community-focused architecture design/build studio



launched just months after Hurricane Katrina, the Center works with neighborhood groups and community members to collaboratively design and construct projects, from new housing to a youth-run working farm.

Designing for communities often means designing with communities, so it's best to know the players involved. It's even better to have been practically every one of those players at one time, as Maurice Cox has. He's been an architecture professor at the University of Virginia, founded an urban design firm, served as a city councilor and mayor of the city of Charlottesville, Va., and worked as design director of the grant-giving National Endowment for the Arts. This range of experience uniquely situates him to understand the varying needs of stakeholders involved in community design and to, somehow, bring them all together.

Fortunately for New Orleans, that is exactly what he plans to do at Tulane. Cox is spearheading an expansion of the City Center that will take the university-run organization far off campus, to a satellite office in one of New Orleans's poorest and most underinvested neighborhoods, Central City. By breaking the traditional town-gown divide, Cox plans to make the already powerful City Center into an even greater force for change. The new center, which will open on Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard in the next year, will be part office, part community resource center and neighborhood hub. His goal? "We want to inspire the communities in which we work to fight against the status quo," he said. In other words, Cox has found another street to disrupt, another path to blaze.



### 49 CHRISTOPHER GERGEN

The Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill Research Triangle in North Carolina is known as one of the country's top centers for innovation, education and business development. In Durham, a group of civic leaders are trying to expand the city's reputation to go beyond just churning out good business ideas.



They want Durham to be a center of businesses that care about the triple bottom line of people, planet and, yes, profit.

Duke University professor and entrepreneurship guru Christopher Gergen founded the group, known as [Bull City Forward](#), to connect the social entrepreneurs in the city by creating a co-working space where they could collaborate and share knowledge. Launched in 2010, Bull City Forward filled in a 30,000-square-foot facility right in the heart of downtown Durham, and has been like a greenhouse for socially responsible small business development in the city and beyond.

It has also been working across the community, spreading ideals of social entrepreneurship in schools and at community meetings. Now with more than 70 members, Bull City Forward is becoming a powerful business interest group in the city. Though it moved out of its physical space in September, the group is still a connecting glue for the city's existing entrepreneurs, and those to come.

### 50 JONATHAN ROSE

After more than 10 years of planning and hoping, Philadelphia will soon be getting the sort of transit-oriented, mixed-income development project the city really needs. [Paseo Verde](#) will, when it opens in 2013, be a LEED Platinum-rated, mixed-use residential and office development immediately adjacent to a major transit stop. A mix of 120 affordable and market-rate apartments, the complex will include space for ground-floor retail and community services and will be a literal stone's throw from the train station. Doubtlessly, it will transform the North Philadelphia brownfield where it's slated to rise, bringing new residents and businesses to a part of the city that for too long has languished without investment.

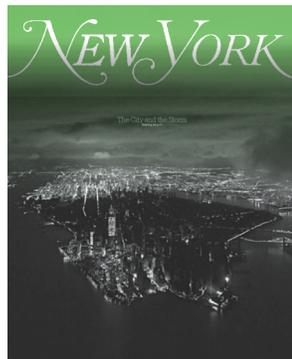
The man behind the project is Jonathan Rose, whose Jonathan Rose Companies has long been an innovator in the sort of green development projects that are beginning to reshape cities around the world. Rose, working closely with the city and architects Wallace Roberts and Todd, developed Paseo Verde in partnership with a local community development corporation Asociación de Puertorriqueños en Marcha. If all goes as planned, the project will be a model of how to revitalize a neighborhood without pricing community members out. Rose's work on Paseo Verde represents an example of a big-time developer doing good. May others follow in his path.

### 51 IWAN BAAN

When Hurricane Sandy hit New York and New Jersey this fall, many outside of the impact zone couldn't help but stare at the photos of its devastating effect. The images of the destruction were streaming in on almost every news source with gritty and savage detail, giving people all over the world a close-up look at what happens when a major metropolis is flooded and battered. If there's one image that captures the drama, it's photographer Iwan Baan's striking [cover shot](#) for *New York Magazine's* issue on Sandy. Looking down from the sky on Manhattan at night, Baan's lens captures the city's glowing lights amid a cloudy gray

sky, and a huge chunk of the middle of Manhattan completely darkened by power outages.

A serial globe-trotter who charts helicopters like most people make dinner reservations, Baan has become the most notable architecture photographer in recent years for his style of capturing not only buildings but also their urban context. It's a more humanizing approach to a field that had previously been steeped in glamour shots. This eye for the connection between people buildings and cities is what makes Baan's work stand out. It's why he was able to encompass Sandy's wrath so simply and elegantly.





## ESTABLISHMENT / PROFITABLE



### 52\_CALSTART

Clean transportation means more than a Prius in your driveway. Spreading that message is the mission of [CALSTART](#), the nation's leading consortium of industry experts promoting clean energy transportation. Made up of more than 100 transportation parts manufacturers, large-scale fleet operations, government entities and energy specialists, CALSTART is trying to work within the industry to create the sort of systemic change that will allow cleaner transportation technologies to thrive in the marketplace.

When it comes down to sheer numbers, the collective trips we take to the store in our cars is a drop in the carbon bucket compared to the massive trucking fleets and port operations that hold together the country's supply chain. Improvements to these industries — even minor part changes or engine efficiency increases — can have a wide-reaching impact on the environment. As CALSTART acknowledges, transportation is the major source of emissions that affect urban air quality. By convincing fellow industry members that cleaning up their operations can help their bottom line and the environment, CALSTART is forging a more environmentally friendly future for transportation in America.

### 53\_PRIVATELY RUN PUBLIC SPACES

Because public parks are public, they're subject to the sorts of limited funding and management issues that public agencies have been struggling through in recent years. That means a potential for neglect and poor maintenance. But if you sprinkle a little private sector into the public park equation, many of the problems can fade away.

A handful of new urban parks that have opened over the last year show how private management and maintenance of space — but not actual private ownership — can vastly improve the level of service parks can provide to communities. In Philadelphia, the new Sister Cities Park is a 1.75-acre park space downtown that's managed and maintained by the [Center City District](#), a community development corporation that also manages a handful of other park spaces in the Center City neighborhood. In Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, the [Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation](#) led a \$48 million makeover of Washington Park, a key part of the non-profit developer's efforts to revitalize the neighborhood. And in New York, the newly opened Brooklyn Bridge Park was planned, built and is now maintained by a non-profit.

### 54\_HOSTEL DETROIT

Sure, you have the typical fancy hotels downtown. There are even a few cheesy casino hotels around. But for a city where you can buy a house for \$5,000, there weren't a lot of cheap options for overnight accommodations in Detroit. And so, with community support and a healthy dose of bravery, then-26-year-old Emily Doerr opened the city's first hostel in 2011. Located in the Corktown neighborhood, [Hostel Detroit](#) has become a popular destination for a steady stream of tourists coming to see the city. For backpackers, college students or European youth, it's pretty much the only way to crash in Detroit for less than \$50 a night.

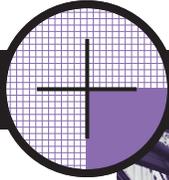
Though a seemingly small venture in a big city, Hostel Detroit represents a significant milestone for Detroit. Almost symbolic in its import, the hostel is a sign that the city is open for tourists — especially those on the younger, less affluent and more adventurous end of the spectrum. And it's also good for Motor City; by providing a place for tourists to stay, Hostel Detroit is enabling the local tourism industry to diversify. It's an idea other cities, or their entrepreneurs, would be wise to consider.

# ESTABLISHMENT / NOT-FOR-PROFIT

55\_Mitchell Silver  
56\_Gabe Klein  
57\_Parks Tau  
58\_Sarah Wartell  
59\_Evergreen Cooperatives  
60\_Brownsville  
Partnership  
61\_Waller Creek  
Conservancy  
62\_Rahm Emanuel  
63\_Chattanooga Police  
Department

64\_Hariett Tregoning  
65\_University Park  
Alliance  
66\_Big Car  
67\_National Mall  
68\_Svante Myrick  
69\_The War on Soda  
70\_Jerold Kayden  
71\_Central Falls  
72\_Progressive Texas  
73\_Philip Yang  
74\_Ayanna Pressley

75\_Olajide Williams  
76\_Sudhir Vankatesh  
77\_Happiness as a Metric



## INSTITUTIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT



### 55\_MITCHELL SILVER

Not often is one faced with the dilemma of guerrilla wayfinding. But when helpful (though technically illegal) directional signs began popping up on telephone poles and streetlights throughout Raleigh, N.C. in February, pedestrians noticed. So did the city.

Instigated by a group calling itself [Walk Raleigh](#), the signs told people at downtown intersections how long it would take them to walk to various sites and neighborhoods in town. Posted without city permits or input, the signs were deemed illegal and taken down. But, for Mitchell Silver, they also represented a really good idea. As Raleigh's chief planning and economic development officer, not to mention president of the American Planning Association, Silver recognized that the signs meshed with the city's own goal of encouraging multimodal transportation and lobbied to have them reinstalled. Widespread community support and a city council vote in March put the signs back on the street, turning a guerrilla intervention into a city-sanctioned wayfinding effort. Silver's decision shows the importance of having officials who are able to see good ideas outside the codebooks.



### 56\_GABE KLEIN

Within just the first few weeks of taking office in May 2011, Chicago's new transportation commissioner, Gabe Klein, was already letting his inner cyclist shine. He opened the first section of protected bikeway in the city, part of 100 miles promised to be installed within the first term of his new boss, Mayor Rahm Emanuel. The quickness of this bike lane's installation is indicative not only of Klein's early career in the bike business, but also of where his priorities will lie as he guides transportation policy in the city.

Klein, who previously served as the head of transportation in Washington, D.C., has already been instrumental in shifting Chicago's transportation diet away from cars and toward walking, cycling and transit. He has pushed an ambitious 10-year plan to end all road fatalities in the city, released the city's first-ever pedestrian plan in September, and been at the front of a push to add bus rapid transit service to the city's already extensive transit network.

That this is only Klein's second job in government in his now four-year career as a bureaucrat makes his accomplishments so far somewhat surprising. Or, alternatively, this outsider's perspective may be the best way to explain his success.

### 57\_PARKS TAU

Johannesburg is a city that, in the [words](#) of Executive Mayor Parks Tau, "bears the spatial scars of the unjust and immoral system of Apartheid." This is an important lens through which the city can be understood. But that's not the only narrative. What's maybe more important than the effects of the past, Tau argues, is the potential for the future.

Upon taking office in 2011, Tau immediately set out to reform the city's growth and development strategy. This led to [Joburg 2040](#), a blueprint for creating a livable, sustainable and economically vibrant city within three decades. Tau's plan calls for efforts to improve the city at the neighborhood level, emphasizing the importance of quality of life in planning and governance decisions. Human and social developments are placed atop all other goals for this city of nearly 4 million.

But Tau's administration is also focusing on the more basic amenities of modern life: Expanding electricity and sanitation, serving the needs of those living in informal settlements, and mending the torn social fabric created by generations of inequality. The city's scars are still there, undoubtedly. But they are starting to heal.



## 58\_SARAH WARTELL

In the mid-1960s, President Lyndon Johnson decided that America's cities needed a little more attention. More and more people were living in these places, and there seemed to be more and more problems in them. To find out what was going on, Johnson's administration established the [Urban Institute](#) in 1968 to perform independent analysis on the nation's cities and urbanites — an effort to at least try to understand the state of urban America, if not to really do much about it.

The Urban Institute still stands today, and as urban populations have dramatically grown, its purpose has become even more important. Enter Sarah Wartell, who came on as the Institute's president in the beginning of 2012. A former HUD employee, Clinton administration policymaker and, more recently, co-founder of the liberal-leaning think tank Center for American Progress, Wartell is an expert on housing and public policy and brings a wealth of knowledge to the Institute.

Perhaps more importantly, she knows how to move ideas and research into the policymaking realm and, ultimately, into the public realm. Right out of the gate, Wartell began to break down the silos that have for too long isolated researchers and reduced the effectiveness of their work. Moving into a D.C. institution that will celebrate its 45th birthday in the coming year, Wartell has reinvigorated systems that were beginning to show signs of age. She's pledged to ensure that its research is relevant to the latest policy conversations and more readily accessible to the people having those conversations. The big picture is an urban research institute that will not only understand urban America, but will help ensure that something is done about it.



## 59\_ EVERGREEN COOPERATIVES

The neighborhoods in and around Cleveland's University Circle area are among the poorest in the city. With more than 40,000 residents, the area's median income is just \$18,500. It's no surprise to find widespread urban poverty in such a dense concentration in this city or any other. But what's surprising is how a group of local institutions have joined forces to try and fight it.

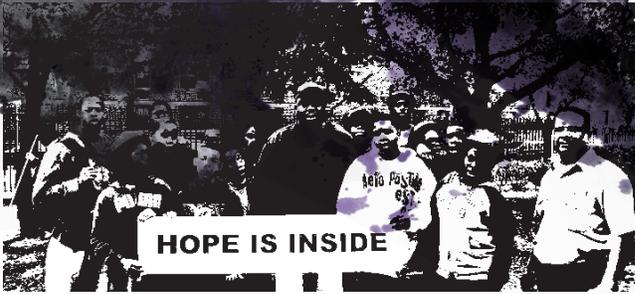
The city government has teamed up with the Cleveland Foundation, the Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals and Case Western Reserve University to grow jobs in these neighborhoods for the people who need them most. Instead of trying to lure jobs to the

area, the group creates small companies — a commercial medical bed linen laundry, a solar energy installation company, a large-scale urban farm — and trains locals to do the work. The companies become employee owned, keeping as much wealth as possible right in the neighborhood.

Known as the [Evergreen Cooperatives](#), the program has become a huge success in Cleveland since launching in 2006. The three businesses have created more than 100 jobs for locals, and the organizers have plans to bring that total to 500 within the next five years. And while the project has made a huge impact in Cleveland, its organizers aren't greedy: They're hoping other groups in other cities will follow their lead.



## INSTITUTIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT



### 60\_BROWNSVILLE PARTNERSHIP

Though only 13 miles separate the Midtown Manhattan offices of the Municipal Arts Society of New York and Brooklyn's Brownsville neighborhood, the two are worlds apart from one another in so many ways.

Brownsville has some of the highest rates of violent crime in the city, and the single highest concentration of public housing units. Empty storefronts and overflowing trash cans dot the streets. The neighborhood is exactly the kind of place that many well-heeled New Yorkers never experience and rarely consider, especially when thinking about issues like design and preservation. For that reason, it is especially exciting to see MAS, a non-profit urban planning, design and preservation advocacy group, step away from its Manhattan base to join a coalition called the [Brownsville](#)

[Partnership](#), led by the homelessness and housing non-profit Community Partners. In addition to MAS, the partnership includes the New York City Housing Authority, public service providers and individual building operators and residents. Since the project launched in 2008, more than 500 families have been assisted through its housing programs, as well as hundreds more who've benefited from its early childhood programs, charter schools and job training centers.

Through these collaborative efforts, the neighborhood is finally beginning to get the kind of attention it needs, and long-needed economic development is finally starting to happen. Hopefully, this cross-borough collaboration will be the start of a trend that has more New Yorkers moving outside their own communities to engage for a city that is better for all its inhabitants.

### 61\_WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

Waller Creek sneaks its way through Austin, winding through the University of Texas and slipping past the nearby statehouse, eventually ending up in Lady Bird Lake at the edge of downtown. For much of its run, Waller Creek is hidden and underutilized. But for more than a decade, groups led by the Waller Creek Conservancy have been rallying to connect it to surrounding neighborhoods and make it a more cohesive part of the city. With the recent completion of a high-profile competition, a renewed

Waller Creek is a lot closer to reality.

In October, the conservancy announced the winners of its [international design competition](#): Landscape architecture firm Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates and architects Thomas Phifer and Partners. Their design for the creek reimagines the waterway as a means to connect the city, linking two halves of Austin currently divided by an interstate highway. The design improves access by widening its path and shoreline, and features a jungle-like lattice of footbridges over the water. For Austin, it represents a guiding way toward weaving the creek back into the fabric of the city.

### 62\_RAHM EMANUEL

Anyone expecting Rahm Emanuel to come quietly into Chicago's mayoral seat clearly does not know Rahm Emanuel. The brash, cocky and often profane former White House chief of staff has taken the reins tightly in Chicago since being elected mayor in 2011. After more than a year in office, Emanuel's aggressive character is being reflected in his early policies. From focusing on non-motorized transportation initiatives to a revamp of the city's garbage collection, Emanuel has not been shy about asserting himself in office. For the most part, these efforts have been well received, though a messy weeklong teacher strike in September served as a reminder that governing a city is about much more than a singular strong personality.

Emanuel's boldest move in terms of urban policy is his proposal to create an infrastructure bank that will bring in private investors to provide the city money. And it's a lot of money. Emanuel's administration is eyeing more than \$7 billion in projects and maintenance, and has already secured a handful of major investors. It's a different approach to funding urban infrastructure, and Emanuel is hoping Chicago will offer a large-scale success for other cities to follow.



### 63\_CHATTANOOGA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Super high-speed Internet is becoming the world's most wanted infrastructure. Faster connections are seen as a major lure for businesses increasingly reliant on connectivity and the transfer of digital information, from online retailers to digital creative agencies to medical imaging. Higher speed connections can also be a boon beyond business. In Chattanooga, the city's police force is showing that a better Internet connection can mean a better police force.

In 2010, the city installed a fiber optic network that provided what was at the time the fastest Internet connection in the U.S. Shortly thereafter, the city's police department tapped into that speed. It installed cameras throughout the city, enhanced police cars with better computer systems and put fancier phones in officers' pockets. Now, Chattanooga cops can, at any time, tap into a live video feed from one of the 200 cameras around town either on their computer or their phone. A crime scene scanner can quickly create a precise digital model of a murder site or break-in and get it into the computers of detectives before they even arrive on the scene. Chattanooga officials brush off the Big Brother comparisons, arguing that the new Internet connection is making the police force more effective and the city itself safer.

### 64\_HARRIET TREGONING

The walkable, livable District of Columbia. There's a concept that probably wouldn't have come to anyone's mind just a decade ago. But now, the nation's capital is rapidly pushing its way to the top of the class in terms of creating a city that's appealing, efficient and enjoyable to be in. And there's probably no one making as big an impact on the changing shape of the city than Harriet Tregoning.

Five years into her appointed job as the city's planning director, Tregoning has worn her Smart Growth affinity like a badge, and has not been shy about using it to play the enforcer. In her time, the city has laid down a series of rule changes that have — to the chagrin of some drivers — limited parking options and vastly expanded local preference for mobility options that don't involve a lone



person behind a wheel. From plans for streetcars to expanding cycling infrastructure to launching the nation's largest bike share program to aggressive historic preservation efforts, Tregoning has ushered in urban policies that are changing D.C.'s form for the better. Looking to the future, there are plans in the works to create a tech/medical hub at the mostly abandoned St. Elizabeth's Hospital site in Ward 8, a section of the District that hasn't seen much development in decades. Though the city still hasn't figured out what to do about its long-debated building height limitations, Tregoning's principled work is setting D.C. as an example for the nation to follow.



### 65\_UNIVERSITY PARK ALLIANCE

Civic leaders in Akron, Ohio looked at its central University Park neighborhood and saw all the pieces it needed to succeed. But there was no glue to hold it all together. Equipped with a major university, three hospitals, numerous research and development facilities and other businesses, University Park is one of the largest employment centers in the county. But once the workday was over, everyone would pretty much leave.

To try to build more of a neighborhood around this jobs center, a multisector group of civic-minded organizations banded together to reimagine University Park. What's

resulted is an ambitious plan to dramatically reshape the neighborhood, adding thousands of new housing units, hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space and millions of square feet of retail. The concept is to make University Park a place where people can live, work and play. The group behind these plans, [University Park Alliance](#), recognizes the challenge of rejuvenating the core of a post-industrial Rust Belt city, but is steadfast in its efforts. It's already broken ground on a handful of projects with the goal that, over the next few years, University Park will turn into a completely different neighborhood, with emphasis on "neighborhood."



## INSTITUTIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT

### 66\_BIG CAR

An empty tire shop in the parking lot of a suburban shopping mall might seem to some like an eyesore. But to the Indianapolis-based arts and community development group [Big Car](#), that empty tire shop was an opportunity. The group, founded in 2004, has been working to spread art and community centers throughout the city. In the tire shop, Big Car saw the chance to fill a

void in the neighborhood, which had been lacking any sort of cultural amenities (aside from, y'know, the shopping mall). So Big Car has been steadily converting the shop into a community gathering space, offering room for events, gallery space for local artists, a library and computers, and a community garden in what used to be a vast asphalt parking lot.

The community center is also engaging with the neighborhood, organizing events to bring neighbors together and to support local businesses. One recent effort created a restaurant guide to the largely immigrant-run eateries in the area. For Big Car, focusing on neighborhoods in need and celebrating the assets they have is a key part of improving Indianapolis.



### 67\_NATIONAL MALL

There's a lot of weight resting on the shoulders of the National Mall. It's the most visited national park in the country, and it's got the responsibility of representing the ideals and principles of the entire nation to both domestic and foreign visitors. But keeping the place fresh and vibrant for its 25 million annual visitors is a challenge, and many think it's time for an upgrade, chief among them the governing [Trust for the National Mall](#).

To pursue a new future for the Mall, the Trust organized a de-

sign competition for U.S.-based firms in 2011. In May it announced the winning designs, submitted by some of the top architecture and landscape architecture firms in the country. The designers ingeniously reimagined three sites along the Mall, and work is expected to begin by 2014. The new face of the National Mall could be greeting visitors by 2016. Through the leadership of the Trust and its partners at the National Park Service, America's front door will soon be getting the makeover it deserves.

### 68\_SVANTE MYRICK

One of the perks of being the top dog in a city is a primo parking spot at City Hall. Or at least it used to be. For Svante Myrick, the new mayor of Ithaca, N.Y., the nice parking spot is a perk of the past. Upon taking office in January, Myrick promptly bucked tradition and gave up both his car and his parking spot, opting instead to take advantage of a local car sharing service. And in a move right out of Park(ing) Day, he's converted his now unused parking spot into a tiny public park with seating and planters.

It's the sort of unconventional move you'd expect from a mayor like Myrick, who at 25 is one of the youngest mayors in America. When he first announced his parking space-to-park conversion in May — on [Facebook](#), naturally — he invited locals to “stop by and hang out!” And the young mayor *has* been hanging out, frequently meeting with community members in his new mini-park. The parking space is technically still his, and the sign above his spot still stands, reading “Reserved For Mayor” with a caveat added below: “And Friends.”



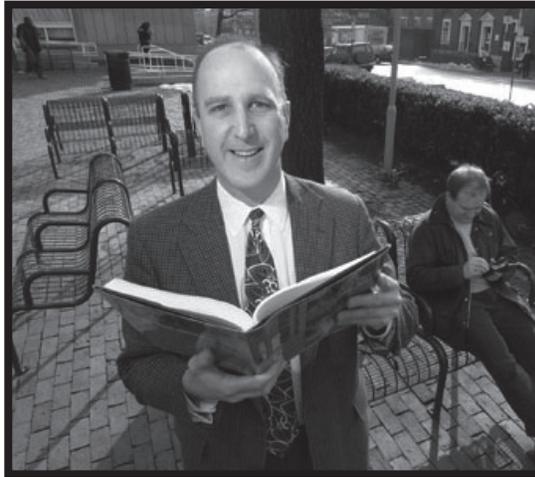


## INSTITUTIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT

### 69 THE WAR ON SODA

The war against urban obesity moved to a new battlefield this year, as New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg put his significant power behind a proposal to ban the sale of sugary drinks and sodas larger than 16 ounces. The idea perplexed some residents, who argued that Bloomberg was butting into their personal lives and choices. But he stood behind the proposal, saying that the sugar in excessively large drinks is fueling the epidemic of obesity in New York and other urban areas. Bloomberg has equated the move with smoking bans, arguing that the public health benefits far outweigh whatever perceived inconvenience it may cause.

Other cities are paying attention. Washington, D.C. is apparently considering a similar ban on large sugary drinks. But not everyone is convinced that soda is the bad guy. Voters in the California cities of Richmond and El Monte recently shot down proposed taxes on business that sell sodas and sugary drinks. The anti-soda movement isn't exactly a countrywide game-changer, but its high-profile emergence in New York City has undeniably made regulating sugary drinks an item on the urban agenda this year.



### 70 JEROLD KAYDEN

The Occupy movement brought many issues to the world's political consciousness. In New York, one of the unexpected revelations was the rediscovery of the odd case of privately owned public spaces. Zuccotti Park, the adopted home of New York's Occupy Wall Street encampment, is not actually a park in the traditional sense. Rather, it's

a private plaza created as a sort of tradeoff between city zoning officials and real estate developers that allows a building to grow taller in exchange for some publicly accessible space on the ground.

These spaces have been around since the 1960s, and no one knows them better than Jerold Kayden, a professor of urban planning and design at Harvard. His 2000 guidebook to all the privately owned public spaces in New York

has garnered new attention, as urbanists and city officials try to understand just how public-but-not-public places fit into the urban realm. And now, Kayden has started a group to pay even closer attention to these spaces: [Advocates for Privately Owned Public Spaces](#) is aiming to create a set of guidelines to try to revitalize these underutilized spaces and make them better and more accessible in New York and other cities. Kayden's long-held expertise is finally being recognized.



## 71\_CENTRAL FALLS

Pension payments in Central Falls, R.I. had gotten out of hand. The city simply owed way more than it could possibly pay. With few options left, in August 2011, it filed for bankruptcy protection.

But a little more than a year later, Central Falls has brushed away the cloud over its head and emerged from bankruptcy. It's one of the fastest recoveries from municipal bankruptcy in American history, and could prove instructive to the increasing number of places in similar binds. This year, the California cities of Stockton, Mammoth Lakes and San Bernardino filed for bankruptcy while another 10 Michi-

gan cities have taken emergency steps in that direction. In Pennsylvania, the state capital of Harrisburg continues to teeter on the edge of bankruptcy more than a year after a first petition for Chapter 9 protection failed due to political factors.

Central Falls was able to dig itself of the hole by taking strong, decisive steps. The town of about 19,000 just outside Providence moved quickly to devise a debt adjustment plan. Officials agreed to sharp pension cuts, layoffs and hikes to local taxes. Some pensioners are not happy with the plan, which cuts their

pension by more than 50 percent, but officials argue that something drastic had to be done to prevent the city from falling even deeper in debt. It was a tough, unpopular move but one that bodes well for the city's future.



## 72\_PROGRESSIVE TEXAS

The future of progressive urban policy, apparently, is deep in the heart of Texas. This may sound a bit surprising, given the Lone Star State's reputation as a gun-slinging, freedom-loving land of big ranches and small government. And yet there are a handful of people and projects in Texas demonstrating that the state is as enthusiastic about a new future as it is reverent of its simpler past.

In Dallas, for example, city officials just cut the ribbon on a new park that was literally built on top of a freeway. The 5.2-acre park is a cap over the Woodall Rodgers Freeway running near downtown Dallas; it's the sort of project cities across the country have been considering for the dead space above highways and interstates. Over in Austin, the state capital is establishing itself as an anti-sprawl crusader with recently completed plans that favor compact development. In Houston, the Mayor's Office of Environmental Policy is making sustainability a key citywide goal. And San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro stepped boldly into the national spotlight during the Democratic National Convention this year, proving himself to be a charismatic politician with the sort of mainstream appeal that could translate into higher office. This is the new Texas.

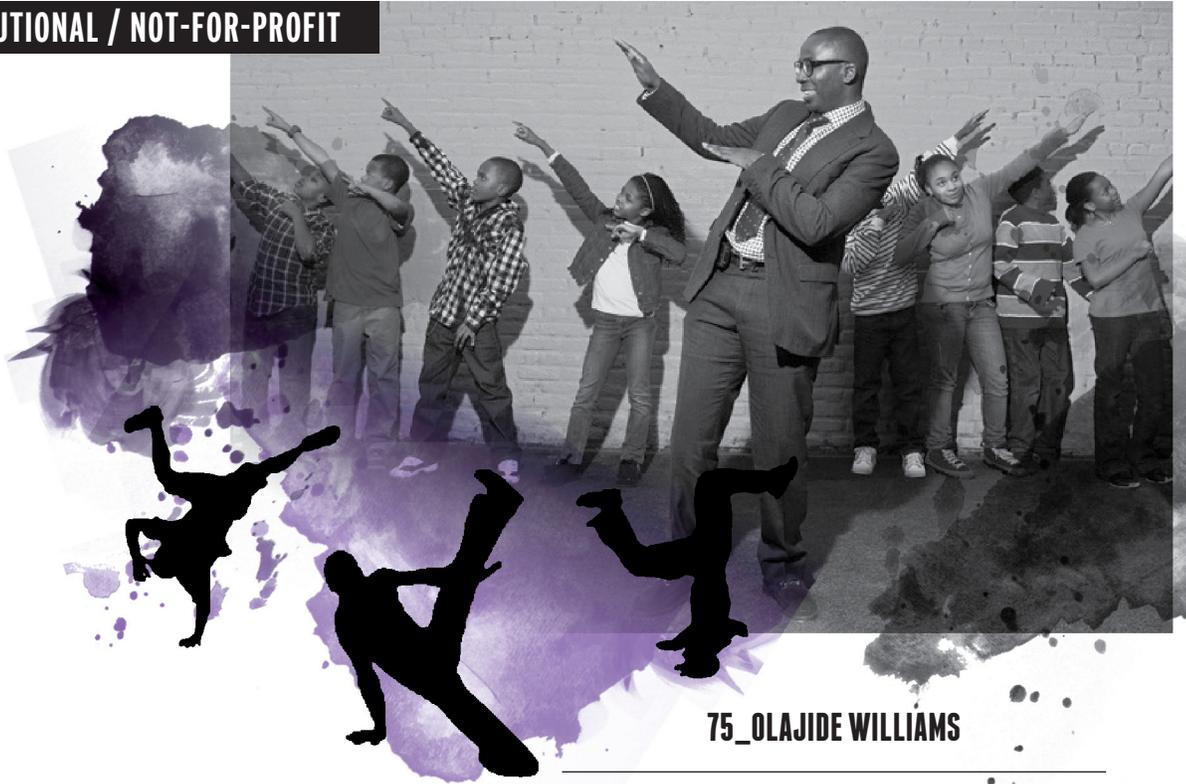
## 73\_PHILIP YANG

A former Brazilian diplomat and the founder of a gas and oil company, Philip Yang has gone from global politics and business to looking more carefully at the urban environment of Sao Paulo, Brazil. He recently founded Urbem, a non-profit that aims to channel some of the oil company's revenues into public sector projects to improve the Sao Paulo public realm. But he's not just putting his own company's money into it. Yang is also trying to convince other businesses and industries to recirculate some of their profits back into city projects.

Urbem is particularly focused on neighborhood-level projects, such as parks, sidewalks and bicycle paths. The goal here is to make the city a more humane place while also improving mobility and livability. Urbem is also hoping to bring about larger-scale infrastructure projects to help improve neighborhoods in the city. As a metropolitan area with nearly 20 million people, Sao Paulo gives a wide canvas in which to work. By encouraging businesses in the city to give back, Yang is helping to make the sort of urban scale upgrades the city needs.



## INSTITUTIONAL / NOT-FOR-PROFIT



**75\_OLAJIDE WILLIAMS**

### **74\_AYANNA PRESSLEY**

There's a new and fast-rising star in Boston politics. Elected in 2009 and overwhelmingly reelected in 2011, Ayanna Pressley is the first African-American woman to serve on Boston's City Council. She's already making waves in the city, taking on entrenched issues like poverty, violence and inequality. She's also created a council standing committee focused on women and healthy communities, further helping to elevate matters that tend to drift out of the radar of big city politicians.

And 2012 has been an important year in office for Pressley. She's been a vocal advocate behind ensuring equal pay for women in the workforce, and also for efforts to spread local business into some of the city's poorer neighborhoods. And she's been a strong voice behind an effort to stop redistricting plans from tearing apart the city's largely minority Jamaica Plain neighborhood. Many have suggested that higher office is in her future. And if her record is any indicator, that future will include plenty of status-quo shakeups.

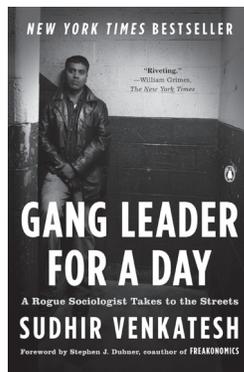
Diabetes. Obesity. Asthma. These are the health problems that plague urban communities. But for health care providers, educating people about the risk factors in their lives has been a challenge. So neurologist Dr. Olajide Williams turned to an unconventional ally: hip hop. With the help of eminent hip hop artists like Doug E. Fresh and Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, Williams started the [Hip Hop Public Health Network](#), a program that, using performance and video, teaches children about medical conditions through music. For example, the "Hip Hop Stroke" program uses music to educate children about the signs of stroke and what to do if someone around them experiences one.

But Williams isn't expecting to create an army of pint-sized emergency responders. Instead, he's hoping that the children will bring their knowledge into their homes to better inform their parents and grandparents — the people more likely to face medical emergencies. Over the coming year, Williams plans to take his program on the road, working with communities in cities around the country. By using hip hop, Williams has been able to engage with and educate culturally diverse groups about their health in a way that's accessible and effective. He has also changed the paradigm of medical communication, providing a model for how to spread health practices across cultural boundaries and, potentially, transforming the way knowledge is shared in diverse urban communities.



## 76\_SUDHIR VENKATESH

You likely know him best as a contributor to the 2005 book *Freakonomics*, but Sudhir Venkatesh's work goes well beyond bestsellers. The Indian-born Columbia University sociologist has focused his research on gangs, the drug trade and street prostitution, actually befriending a gang leader and getting the sort of inside look at the drug trade that most civilians don't ever live to see. He chronicled nearly a decade of observations from this world in 2008's [Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets](#) (two previous books tackle housing projects and the urban poor). But in 2010, Venkatesh moved beyond the written world to infiltrate another world most civilians never see: the FBI. Drawing on his knowledge of drug and gang crime, the sociologist



advised local law enforcement agencies to handle these ills, helping to rethink local approaches to reducing crime. Now turning his attention to policing, Venkatesh brings with him many years of unconventional urban ethnography and a thorough, unflinching way of looking at the systems that shape our cities. With his deep understanding of informal economies, Venkatesh has a lot to offer urban law enforcement agencies and to their credit, it looks like they are listening. Earlier this month, the leather-jacket-wearing sociologist came under fire. In response, he "plead guilty" for operating outside of the norms of mainstream academic sociology. We agree. Venkatesh has vacated the Ivory Tower and in doing so, succeeded in bringing academic thought closer to the urban realities that it too often soars above.

## 77\_HAPPINESS AS A METRIC

Poverty tends to concentrate and reinforce itself. This is no surprise to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which has watched for decades as its housing projects devolved into pits of criminality and hopelessness. In the 1990s, the department decided to try something new. As a sort of test, it launched a program called [Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing](#) that relocated public housing residents from high-poverty areas to low-poverty areas to see what would happen. HUD figured this would help bring people out the downward cycle of poverty. But research published this year in the journal *Science* found that moving didn't really result in any economic gains. However, it did greatly improve the mental and physical health of the people who moved, as well as their sense of personal wellbeing.

Some discounted the effort as a failure; poor people stay poor even if you move them to richer neighborhoods, the findings suggest. But Xavier de Souza Briggs, a professor of sociology and urban planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and co-author of the book *Moving to Opportunity*, says the results are actually important signs that the program, in some ways, is a success. "'Quality of life' sounds like a consolation prize until you think about what it would be like to raise your kids in an urban war zone," Briggs says, "which is what these neighborhoods were, especially at the height of the crack epidemic in the early 1990s, when the experiment launched."



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A final thank you to our supporters. We would have included you all in this list if it wouldn't have raised suspicion about Next City's motivations for doing so! Your risk-taking approach to philanthropy, your impact in cities, and your strategic influence on non-profits have disrupted the status quo in the best possible ways. This year would not have been possible without your support and faith; and for that we're deeply grateful.

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### ABOUT THE DESIGNER

**Danni Sinisi** is a designer and artist focusing on the connections between humans, sustainability and the urban realm. Her work has been exhibited at the *National Building Museum*, *Leonard Pearlstein Gallery*, *Masthead Print Studio*, and many more. Most recently, she designed a campaign to promote microalgae as a sustainable energy source, which premiered at the *Philadelphia Art Alliance*. She has been recognized for her creative efforts by the *American Graphic Design & Advertising Association* and *Creativity International*. Sinisi is currently lead designer for *Grid* magazine.