

5 BENCHMARK CITIES IN URBAN INNOVATION

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A panel of experts in urbanism, architecture and planning assembled by the [Wall Street Journal](#) answered the question of which cities currently stand out for their urban development policies. Among the participating experts is Edward Glaeser, Harvard economist author of "The Triumph of the Cities." The panel has chosen five cities, clarifying that none of them does everything right and that the list could be broader - they appreciated that it could include, for example,

London, as the "most dynamic" city in the world, or Seoul and Amsterdam for to be leaders in putting Smart City tools in the hands of citizens-.

In any case, the five cities they chose are as follows, serve as an example of the main urban challenges facing the future, from a certain American prism.

Singapore: The city-state has been noted for how it manages very limited resources. Nearly all of its water comes from neighboring Malaysia and it imports 90% of its food. Its economy is largely dependent on a population of non-permanent residents (30%). According to Glaeser, Singapore is a city that "innovates on restraint" that has to make sure it doesn't waste its "limited territory." To deal with water scarcity, two desalination plants provide 25% of the city's consumption, and they also have advanced systems to harness rainwater and reuse and purify wastewater. Regarding traffic, they were pioneers in introducing congestion tolls and want to adjust tolls depending on traffic by installing a connected GPS in each vehicle.

Houston: While in many growing cities like London, it is common for people to conclude that they cannot financially afford to live there, in Houston they have coped with rapid population growth - between 2010 and 2014 it increased by 6.7% - without noticing inflation in real estate prices. In that period, building permits were granted for 189,000 new homes. 60% of housing in its metropolitan area is affordable for middle-income families, compared to 15% in the Los Angeles area.

Medellín: The Colombian city has carried out large construction projects to regenerate itself, like other cities in the world; The difference is that some of the most emblematic urban projects have been carried out in the most vulnerable and disadvantaged neighborhoods with the idea

of improving the economy of their residents, and thus helping the city as a whole. Among these projects, the Metrocable cable car public transport system, which connects the poor neighborhoods of the mountains, or the Spain Library, an icon on the hillside of one of the districts most affected by drug violence. Perhaps the most ambitious is, however, the escalator system built in the poorest district, internationally recognized by various innovation awards.

Detroit: The once-capital of American motorsports filed for bankruptcy in 2013, and has plenty of ghost buildings and venues. The authorities propose to convert a handful of these abandoned areas into "pink zones" where the necessary procedures for the establishment of small businesses are less, and with this to revive the commercial streets. The idea of the broader urban vision behind it, advocated by Andrés Duany in the US, is to create neighborhoods with a mix of housing, employment and shops where residents move between home and work on foot.

Vancouver: The Canadian city, regularly highlighted as one of the green cities in the world, has made it one of its priorities to become a pedestrian city, making it easier, safer and more pleasant to move around foot. Roadways are being redesigned to favor pedestrians and the attractiveness of the streets for walking is increased. Since 1996, the number of vehicles entering the city has decreased by 20%.

There are no comments yet.