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The Commercial Real Estate Business Solutions & Technology Resource

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## World Visionaries Attend MIT's New Century Cities Symposium

*Something special happens when you get a good number of smart people with similar visions into the same room. The discussions are passionate, the ideas outside of the box, the possibilities endless and the potential for the future limitless. This was the experience at the first day of a special Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) meeting called "New Century Cities".*

The goal of the meeting was to bring many of today's most **visionary leaders together to discuss and debate the status and future of some of the most progressive Real Estate projects and cities around the world.** One by one, they filled the MIT lecture hall, Helsinki, Seoul, Cannes, New York City, Singapore, and many more. The various Commercial Real Estate projects, mostly large scale, where not your average projects. Typical conversations of square footage and location gave way to interesting ideas and concepts involving a digital 21st century vision.

The first question one might ask of a group of this stature is, "**What is a New Century City**"? The reality is that you could get as many different answers as the people who were asked. Although this might lead one to conclude that this lack of definition might indicate confusion, the other side of the coin might suggest that this variety of opinion means the discussion is robust and the answer to how we may live, work, play and use Commercial Real Estate differently in the future is closer than ever.

When you think about it, our office, retail, multifamily and other unique types of specialty Real Estate have not changed much in the last 50-75 years. Most of the changes that have occurred were more tactical and did not represent the magnitude of change being discussed by this prestigious group. When one considers all the new possibilities that technology will present in the future, and the impact to how we design, construct, operate, transact and use Commercial Real Estate, it is not hard to understand why there are such a large number of varying opinions. It would be like talking to a group of people who built barns for a long period of time and watching them wrestle with the issues, many unknown, and the ramifications of manufacturing to the urban landscape.

The ideas and visions were nothing short of grand. Digital Media City, a visionary city being built in Seoul, South Korea (one of the projects on the upcoming **Realcomm Asia NextGen Tour**), spoke of a Media street where light posts connected to the Internet reacted to crowds and weather in ways never imagined. It was also interesting to listen to conversations regarding digital signage standards in respect to size and proximity to public access areas. These are topics that are simply not being discussed by the majority of the development community anywhere in the world, but someday will. Can you imagine the look of a city planner when you tell them you want to connect the streetlights to the Internet? You may get the same look the Wright brothers got when they told people man could fly.

There were many encouraging aspects of this conference, which clearly demonstrated that these futuristic mega projects are no longer just ideas but are actually underway..they are real. There are still skeptics that point out that these projects are in their early stages and that the jury is still out. The majority of the people in attendance would argue that technology is not going to stop evolving and, for that matter, impacting our lives. They believe that those who have begun to

### TOPIC

NextGen Cities  
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- MIT Show Me Yours
- MIT Project Booklet

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- Digital Business Strategy (DBS)
- Intelligent Community

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envision a new kind of future, continuously being impacted by changing technology, will be in a much better position to identify and solve the problems of the 21st century.

A special thanks to David Gensler, Director, and Tony Ciochetti, Chairman, of the MIT Center for Real Estate, Michael Joroff, Senior Lecturer, MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning and Dennis Frenchman, Director, MIT City Design and Development, William Mitchell, Head of MIT Media Lab and Lawrence Vale, Chairman, Urban Studies and Planning for the outstanding job they did in organizing this event. **There is no doubt that the ideas presented in this world-class event will change the landscape in cities around the globe.** It is also safe to say, based on the progress of these visionary projects, that there is no turning back -- Commercial Real Estate projects large and small are changing and those who ignore these enormous changes may find themselves trying to lease vacant barns to the people interested in opening factories. Next week we will discuss the kind of features that are being introduced in these visionary projects.

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## New Century Cities - Digital Lifestyle Defined

*As we communicated last week, trying to get a consensus on what exactly a "New Century City" is can prove a very difficult task. The most consistent response is a city (or building, for that matter) where real estate and technology intersect to provide a new way of doing things. A basic example of this would be a smaller library with significantly less books being replaced by computer terminals and interactive signage, accessing the world of information available on the Internet. In essence, the advancement of technology and the subsequent impact on our lives will force us to rethink the best uses for our Commercial Real Estate. Another example: on a very basic level, RFID will force us to rethink the space allocated for customer checkout at retail facilities, especially grocery stores.*

So, where do you start? The concept of trying to understand how cities will change as a result of this digital emergence is a daunting task. Just imagine how difficult it would have been for the city planners of farming communities to even imagine, let alone plan for the changes brought about by the manufacturing processes that helped define the industrial revolution. Based on this premise, we could see an abundant amount of Commercial Real Estate needing to be redefined in the context of a New Century City.

The following represent just a few of the ideas and concepts presented at last week's New Century Symposium at MIT:

### Philadelphia

- Wireless network throughout the city, making it very easy for anyone to access the Internet
- A school computer program bringing the Internet to even the most economically disadvantaged

### New York City

- A wireless infrastructure above the city providing for robust communications redundancy
- "Ride New York", a new digital, mobile production that takes theater to a new interactive level

### Singapore

- One North, a project looking to provide advanced infrastructure, as well as attracting like thinking tenants
- Suntec City, office infrastructure serving small through large tenants with comprehensive digital tools

### Seoul

- Digital Media City, a combination of Silicon Valley and Hollywood, creating a new century media city
- A digital lifestyle infrastructure which will provide 20 MBPS to every home, office, school, store, etc.

### Copenhagen

- Crossroads Copenhagen -- where culture, media and communication technology will define new cities
- Exploring and defining new concepts in virtual concierge, mobile gaming and advanced applications

#### TOPIC

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#### RELATED LINKS

- Digital Media City
- One North
- Copenhagen

#### RELATED TERMS

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- Intelligent Community
- Digital Signage

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### **Helsinki**

- Arabianranta is looking to become the leading center of art and design in the Baltic Area
- With over 10,000 residents, 8,000 jobs and 6,000 students a 7/24/365 vibrant community will emerge

### **Bristol**

- Using CitySpace, citizens will have live access to transportation info from kiosks and mobile devices
- The UK's first "Hospitality HotZone", provides free Internet access to almost 100 bars, cafes, pubs, etc

These represent just a brief summary of the ideas and concepts being presented by this visionary group of city planners and developers. The following are just a few of the technical applications that were also discussed:

- Street lights connected to the Internet, change colors, managed remotely, could include cameras
- Vehicle management systems that automatically charge for tolls, parking, etc. -- no booths, meters
- RFID tagging systems in all retail outlets, redefining the shopping experience
- Integrated, complex digital signage networks providing for marketing and emergency communications
- Advanced movie theaters that also act as school classrooms, gaming centers, etc., 24 hour use
- Commercial spaces that provide for nextgen experiences through the use of advanced technology

The most exciting aspect of this event was not just the details of each of these extraordinary projects, but rather the fact that the conversation of "what's next" were being had at all. A few years ago, you would have been hard pressed to locate even one project with such bold new visions. To have such a large number of mega projects represented, and not projects simply on the drawing boards but actually under-construction, is a sure sign that we are moving into a new paradigm. There is no longer any doubt that the intersection of real estate and technology will produce a new kind of place that is in line with a 21st century digital lifestyle. The question is no longer if, but rather when. Based on the conversations last week, when is now. One can only imagine the enthusiasm and excitement of those visionaries who knew that the industrial revolution was upon them and would forever change their lives.

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