

National League of Cities' America Works Report Examines Key Drivers That Will Shape Workplace Changes Over the Next Decade

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live — and especially the way we work. The National League of Cities (NLC) investigates the state of work in America's cities, towns and villages and key strategies that will shape workplace changes over the next 10 years in its new report, **America Works: How Entrepreneurial City Leaders Can Shape the Future of Work Now**.

The strategies and case studies outlined in this report showcase mayors and city leaders who turned bold visions for their city into actionable plans. Many of the challenges cities face, and the strategies outlined in this report, require city leaders to embrace bold ideas, allow for agility and adaptability, and test innovative solutions through policy, programs and public-private partnerships. The strategies for local leaders focus on four pillars: Opportunity, Talent, Place and Social Infrastructure. The report showcases mayors and city leaders who turned bold visions for their cities into actionable plans.

We are a nation of cities with dramatically different economies of work. The report's six city typologies, **Superstar, Rising Star, Mighty Middle, Suburban Village, Zoom Town and Rural Town**, provide a lens for understanding economic conditions and guidance on best practices for communities.

"The future of work will be defined by entrepreneurial city leaders. The challenges are real, but if the last two years have shown us anything, it's that today's local leaders are up for the challenge," said NLC CEO and Executive Director Clarence E. Anthony. "As this report shows, city leaders are ready to take the steps necessary to successfully navigate the changing nature of work and build inclusive centers of opportunity and community for years to come."

Key findings from the report:

- While robots are on the rise, U.S. population growth rate is currently at an all-time low due to a record low birth rate of 1.6 and a sharp decrease in net immigration, which declined from 1 million new Americans per year in 2016 to less than 250,000 every year since. America does not have a job shortage; it has a labor shortage. Automation is creating more jobs than it is destroying, but millions of workers will need to be trained for new roles.
- Patterns of urbanization are shaped by a reimagining of where and how work is done, leading to decentralization of the economy and economic life moving into neighborhoods. 53 percent of all workers say their jobs can be done remotely if they were allowed and 64 percent of remote workers would consider looking for a new job if they were forced back to the office every day.
- Without intervention, the housing crisis will continue to exacerbate racial and social inequalities. Thirty percent of American families spend more than 30% of their income on housing.
- Climate change will be the defining challenge and economic opportunity for cities. A growing movement to electrify, decarbonize and transition cities to 24/7 carbon-free energy is projected to create 25 million new jobs.

Many of the challenges cities face, and the strategies outlined in this report, require city leaders to embrace bold ideas, allow for agility and adaptability, and test innovative solutions through policy, programs and public-private partnerships. As conveners, employers and policymakers, city leaders can take entrepreneurial steps to successfully navigate the changing nature of work and build inclusive cities of opportunity and community for years to come. [Download the report today.](#)

Expert Quotes from the Report:

- “My advice to city leaders would be to surf the wave. Don’t be King Canute screaming at the wave to stop.” – Derek Thompson, staff writer, The Atlantic

- “Corporate concentration of power and racial and social inequality are the greatest threats to building a better American capitalism.” – Natalie Foster, president, Economic Security Project
- “Housing and childcare are workforce infrastructure. If you have no home, you have no work. If you have no childcare, you cannot work.” – Brit Fontenot, director of economic development for Bozeman, MT
- “City leaders have an opportunity to dream and reimagine the human experience of their cities through big and small innovations that will spur inclusive economic opportunity.” – Kate Wittels, partner, HR&A Advisors
- “Henry George had it right in the 1860s. The world is divided into three classes: capitalists, laborer and landlords. Who takes all the surplus? The landlords. We’ve created an economy of work where all the surplus of our labor is going to the dirt.” – Richard Florida, Founder, Creative Class Group & Professor at University of Rotman’s School of Management and School of Cities
- “We have an opportunity in this next decade to focus not only on the quantity of jobs but the quality of jobs.” – Rachel Korberg, executive director, The Families and Workers Fund
- “City leaders should be asking themselves every day: How can we make our city a laboratory for the people who are trying to create the future?” – Bryan Walsh, editor of Future Perfect @ Vox
- “Americans from diverse educational and professional backgrounds can excel in these careers, with the right playbooks for retraining: a focus on high-demand skills, impactful technical training and coaching throughout the transition.” – Rebekah Rombom, chief development officer, Flatiron School
- “City leaders need to reform antiquated zoning codes to enable flexible, adaptive and mixed use – so their communities can get creative and build housing, restaurants, office, retail, experiences and pop-ups where people actually want and need them.” – Diane Hoskins, co-CEO, Gensler
- “We need to be honest about the housing crisis our cities face. Under these current economic conditions, the cost of land, labor and materials simply makes building affordable housing impossible without government or philanthropic support.” – Cyndy Andrus, mayor of Bozeman, MT

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The [National League of Cities](#) (NLC) is the voice of America's cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people across the country. NLC works to strengthen local leadership, influence federal policy and drive innovative solutions. Stay connected with NLC on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).