

The 30 Fastest Cities—and the Five Slowest

FAST COMPANY

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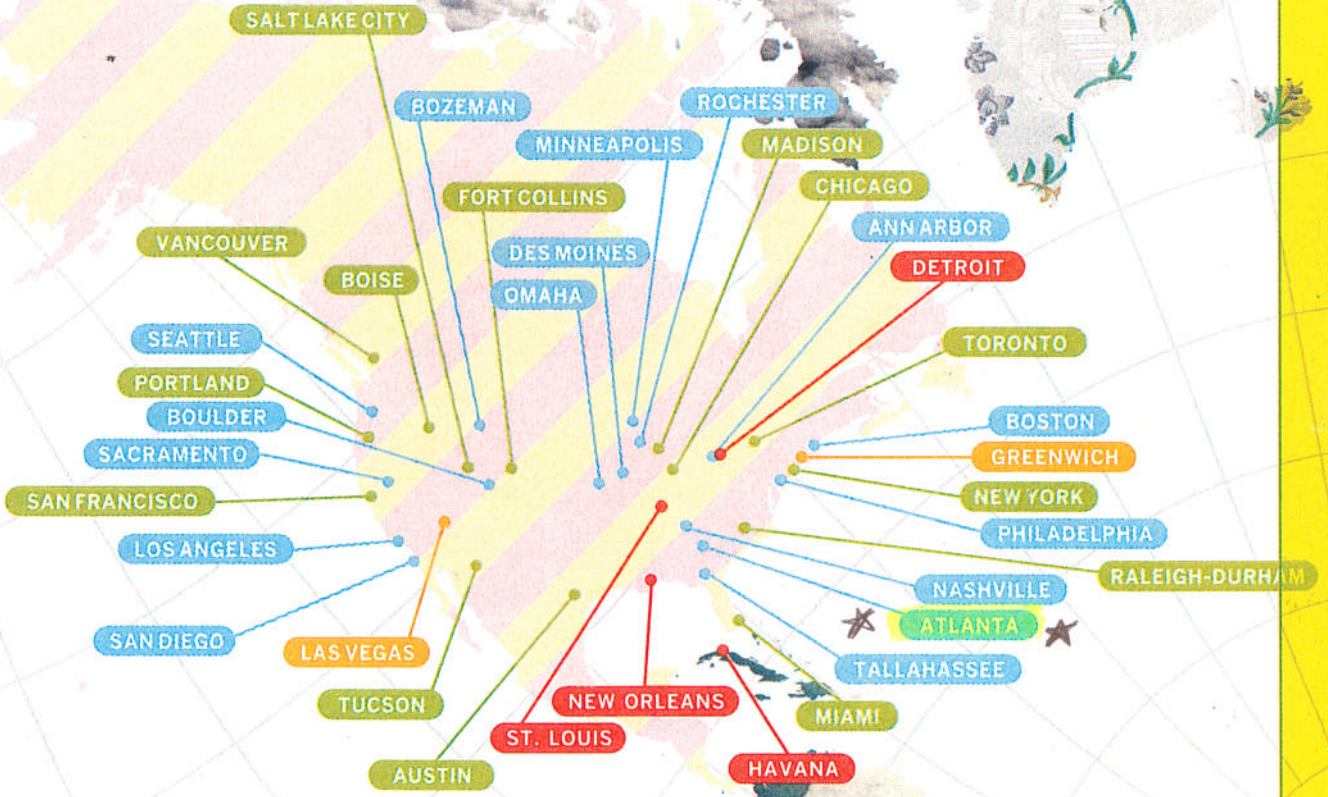


FAST CITIES



MAP ILLUSTRATION BY STUDIO SANS NOM

FROM CHICAGO TO SHANGHAI,
 URBAN CENTERS THAT ARE
 SHAPING OUR FUTURE. **PLUS:**
 THE WORLD'S SLOWEST CITIES
 AND FIVE SPOTS TOO FAST FOR
 THEIR OWN GOOD.



- FAST CITY
- ON THE VERGE
- SLOW CITY
- TOO FAST

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By Andrew Park

YOU'RE SMART, YOUNG, newly graduated from a university with the whole world before you. You could settle in a small town with well-tended lawns, pancake suppers, and life on a human scale. Or you could truck it to the big city, with all its din and dog-eat-dog lunacy. Your choice?

Fuhgedaboutit: There is no choice. For all the challenges cities face—congestion, crime, crumbling infrastructure, environmental decay, plus occasional issues with basic civility—they are still where jobs and youth gather, where energy begets even greater energy, where talent masses and collides. Worldwide, the pace of urbanization is only accelerating. This year, for the first time, more of the earth's population will live in cities than in rural areas—a cool 3.2 billion, according to United Nations estimates. “In a world where we can now work anywhere, we’re tending to concentrate in fewer and fewer places,” says Carol Colletta, president of CEOs for Cities, an advocacy group. “Smart people are choosing to live near smart people.”

Of course, not all “urban agglomerations,” in the parlance of demographers, are created equal. Rapid growth has a way of laying bare the gap between cities that merely get bigger and those that actually flourish. For every Karachi,

professor Kevin Stolarick, the numbers guru behind Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class*, which helped define what makes great cities tick. We relied on CEOs for Cities' CityVitals survey, authored by Joseph Cortright of Portland, Oregon-based Impresa Inc.; sustainability data from SustainLane; and insights from the Institute for the Future in Palo Alto.

What makes a Fast City? It starts with opportunity. Not just bald economic capacity, but a culture that nurtures creative action and game-changing enterprise. Fast Cities are places where entrepreneurs and employees alike can maximize their potential—where the number of patents filed is high, for instance, or where the high-tech sector is expanding.

The second component: innovation. Fast Cities invest in physical, cultural, and intellectual infrastructure that will sustain growth. “The real forces for change in America and around the world are the mayors and the local communities,” says Florida, now a professor of public policy at George Mason University.

Finally, Fast Cities have energy, that ethereal thing that happens when creative people collect in one place. The indicators can seem obscure: number of ethnic restaurants, or the ratio of live-music lovers to cable-TV subscrib-

CREATIVE-CLASS MECCAS 93 • GLOBAL VILLAGES 94 • R&D CLUSTERS 95 • GREEN LEADERS 96 • HIGH-TECH HOT SPOTS 97 • URBAN INNOVATORS 98 • CULTURE CENTERS 100 • UNEXPECTED OASES 101 • STARTUP HUBS 102 PLUS: TOO-FAST CITIES 98 • SLOW CITIES 99

which is on pace to double its population every 20 years but mired in poverty and violence, there's a Shanghai, the emerging creative engine for an entire continent. For every Havana, which looks pretty much the same as it did 40 years ago (except worse), there's a Curitiba, which has spent 40 years mapping its extremely livable future. For every St. Louis, a spot as bland as a flat Bud Light, there's a hip joint like Fort Collins, Colorado, a high-tech hub that's also the microbrew capital of America.

In other words, there are winners in this battle for the future. **We call them Fast Cities. They are cauldrons of creativity where the most important ideas and the organizations of tomorrow are centered. They attract the best and brightest. They are great places to work and live.**

To find them, we started with data from Carnegie Mellon assistant pro-

fers. But they point to environments where fresh thinking stimulates action and, by the way, attracts new talent in a virtuous cycle of creativity.

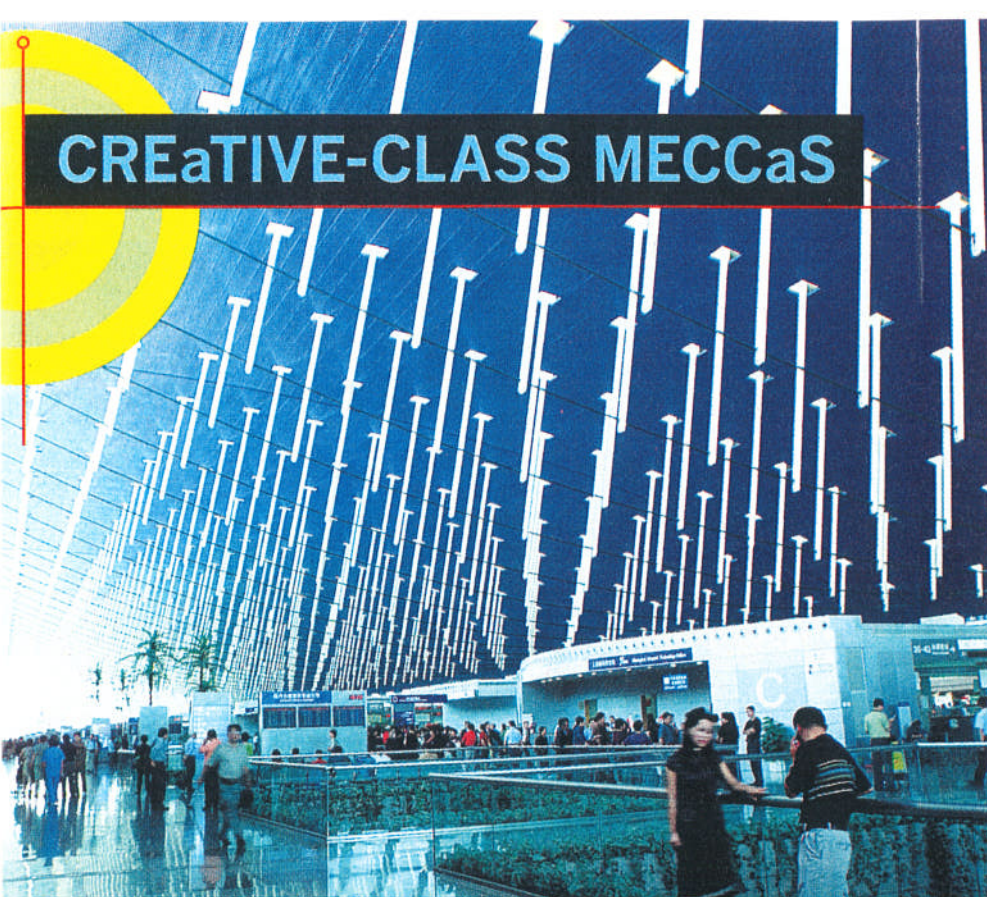
Sifting through the data, we identified 30 Fast Cities around the globe, which we're presenting in nine categories, from Creative-Class Meccas (see opposite) to Green Leaders. We've also noted 20 locales on the verge of Fast City status, plus 5 Slow Cities—and 5 too fast for their own good.

Don't agree with our choices? Go to fastcompany.com/cities and vote for the places you think are most shaping our future. We'll share the results in a subsequent issue.

Reporting by Fara Warner in Shanghai; Ian Wylie in London; Michael Dumiak in Berlin; Anupam Mukerji in Mumbai; Bill Breen in Boston; and Ruthie Ackerman, Lisa LaMotta, Ellen McGirt, Alex C. Pasquariello, Linda Tischler, and Jennifer Vilaga in New York.

Rate our fast cities—or nominate your own—at fastcompany.com

CREATIVE-CLASS MECCaS



* SHANGHAI, China

Population > 14.5 million

Leading indicator > In the last decade, foreign investors have sunk \$73 billion into Shanghai-based projects

Fast companies > China Display; China East Airlines

CHAOTIC, CROWDED, NOISY—and wildly, crazily creative. China's historic center for innovation has emerged more recently as a magnet for Western-owned corporate design centers and research labs. The clash of old and new—from the city's shabby elegant French Concession to the austere art galleries of Suzhou Creek to its hundreds of skyscrapers—gives rise to an exhilarating sense of possibility.

* NEW YORK, New York

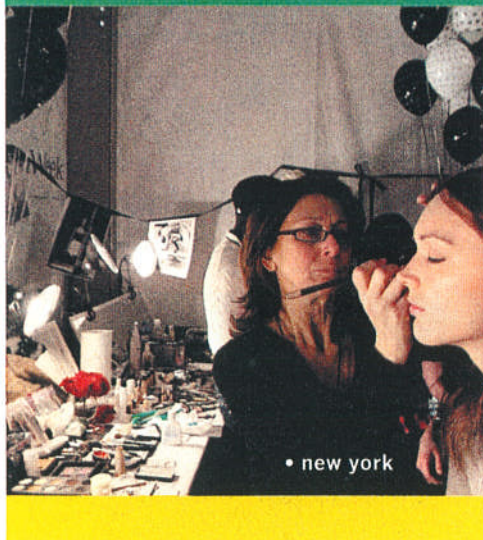
Population > 18.8 million

Leading indicator > Nation's highest per capita income in the urban core

Fast companies > Viacom; JetBlue Airways; Goldman Sachs

LOVE IT OR NOT, New York is sui generis. It has among the highest proportions in the nation of college-educated foreign residents, of ethnic restaurants, and of small businesses, according to CityVitals. It also has 42 million tourists, a reinvigorated stock market, and a plan from Mayor Michael Bloomberg to make the city more eco-friendly.

• shanghai: pudong international airport



• new york



• san francisco

* SAN FRANCISCO, California

Population > 4.2 million

Leading indicator > No. 1 in the world in scientist citations

Fast companies > Lucasfilm; Wild Brain; and nearby, the whole Silicon Valley crowd

IS THERE A MORE continuously creative city in the world? The epicenter of U.S. entrepreneurship is still tied to Silicon Valley's fortunes, but it's also hatching its own digital-media sector and a biotech and biomedical hub around UCSF.



• buenos aires

* BUENOS AIRES, Argentina

Population > 12.6 million

Leading indicators > Named UNESCO's first-ever City of Design; more than 14,000 students are enrolled in the University of Buenos Aires's design and architecture programs

Fast company > Pol-ka Producciones

IT TOOK AN ECONOMIC catastrophe for Argentina's capital to realize its creative destiny. Since 2001, the nation has played down historic ties to Europe in favor of homegrown culture. So Buenos Aires's Palermo SOHO district has emerged as a design hub, with more than 300 new shops and studios and a slew of upstart film- and television-production companies. The Centro Metropolitano de Diseño promotes and funds innovators in art and design.

on the verge > atlanta, ga • los angeles, ca • mumbai, india