

CITIES OF TOMORROW: REIMAGINING URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE



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By 2050, 68%¹ of the global population will reside in urban areas. Cities are set to become pivotal drivers of success - or failure - in key contemporary transitions (environmental, digital, energy and social), as rapid urbanisation, climate change, aging infrastructure and social inequalities converge to strain the systems on which urban life depends.

In this context, InfraVision - the think tank for sustainable infrastructure - is dedicating its 2025 annual research to the critical theme: **"Cities of Tomorrow: Reimagining Urban Infrastructure."** The findings will be compiled into a comprehensive report, to be unveiled during **Paris InfraWeek in November 2025**.

A driver of this initiative is the commitment of **Vauban Infrastructure Partners**, which has long been dedicated to financing essential public infrastructure that delivers long-term, sustainable solutions to local communities. In line with its ambition to foster inclusive and equitable infrastructure, Vauban Infrastructure Partners has conducted annual research since 2020 in partnership with Altermind and in collaboration with thought leaders, academics, policymakers, industry experts and financial stakeholders. This approach led to the creation of InfraVision in 2024 and the decision to sponsor this study to reimagine urban infrastructure in response to the evolving urban landscape.





BUILDING URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE AS RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE SYSTEMS

The forthcoming report aims to identify key challenges and propose innovative solutions. As 21st-century pressures intensify, how can infrastructure be leveraged as a transformative opportunity to build resilient, sustainable and equitable cities collaboratively?

To address this question, the report will highlight the importance of integrating cutting-edge technologies and participatory governance models to transform infrastructure into adaptive and resilient systems. It will outline a forward-looking vision and protocols for infrastructure stakeholders that not only respond to immediate pressures but also anticipate future needs through 2050 and beyond.

GOVERNANCE AND COLLABORATION AS KEY LEVERS

The research places a strong emphasis on governance. Participatory planning and decision-making, supported by robust data and digital tools, will be essential for cities to navigate uncertainty and meet citizens' evolving needs. Urban governance must evolve to bridge the gap between short-term political cycles and the long-term vision required for sustainable infrastructure development. Successful urban transformation depends on collaboration across public and private sectors, as well as active engagement with local communities.

AN INVESTOR PLAYBOOK FOR FOCUSED ACTION

Investors are identified as major stakeholders in the report. Their involvement is vital to the success of urban infrastructure transformation. To maximise returns and achieve low-carbon resilience, infrastructure investors must strategically target the right projects and technologies, prioritising those with the greatest community impact.

By 2050, investors should focus on bridging the urban finance gap, enabling cross-boundary investments, mobilising capital for impact, setting high sustainability standards and fostering innovation. Key priorities include aligning investments with national and city climate targets, de-risking and aggregating urban

projects, prioritising resilient and low-carbon assets, engaging in policy dialogue to strengthen city capacity and advancing social impact and transparency.

Infrastructure investors possess the resources, technical expertise and global reach to catalyse the urban transition — turning visions of resilient, low-carbon cities into viable realities. Without their proactive engagement, progress may stall, innovation may falter, and the equitable distribution of benefits may be compromised, affecting both economic returns and broader societal and environmental goals.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COMPETITION

Leveraging the participation of InfraVision's members, an international student competition was launched in April, inviting over 200 universities to rethink real-life projects. The focus areas include decarbonisation, inclusivity, planning, stakeholder engagement and innovation — evaluating the next generation's most ambitious ideas for transforming urban infrastructure.

The jury consists of an exceptional panel chaired by **Professor Sadie Morgan** (founding director of dRMM Architects and a champion of design excellence on the UK's National Infrastructure Commission), and includes **Dominique Alba** (CEO of Ateliers Jean Nouvel), **Dario Nardella** (Member of the European Parliament), **Fanny Bourdais de Charbonnière** (Investment Director at CalPERS) and **Paulo Moura** (Deputy Director of Innovation and Partnerships at Université Côte d'Azur/IMREDD).

IN A NUTSHELL

In 2025, as InfraVision continues its commitment to convening experts, policymakers and investors around a shared vision for urban infrastructure, we invite you to stay tuned for the release of the research: **"Cities of Tomorrow: Reimagining Urban Infrastructure."** This comprehensive study, along with the winners of the student competition, will be unveiled during a special event on **November 4th at Paris InfraWeek**, offering a platform to explore how we can collectively build resilient, sustainable and inclusive cities for future generations.

Save the date!

(1) Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision", 2018.