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Urbanization: A Force for Sustainable Consumption

Breakout Session Summary
Wednesday, November 3, 2010 | 2:45-3:45 p.m.

Speakers

- » **Scott Barnette**, Vice President, Corporate Business Development, Hitachi, Ltd.
- » **Adam Freed**, Deputy Director, Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability, City of New York
- » **Virginia Terry**, Manager, Advisory Services, BSR (moderator)

Highlights

- » For the first time in history, the world is an urban planet. By 2050, 70 percent of the world's population will be living in cities, which will require thinking about how to design innovative policies, hard infrastructure for energy and water, and soft infrastructure such as systems for communication, education, and culture.
- » Japan has information communications technology (ICT) embedded in its infrastructure for grids, transportation, water, and industry. The country is now looking at how to export those large-scale systems and knowledge to the global market to help modernize emerging cities.
- » There are approximately 250 commonly known cities in the world, but there are an additional 500 unknown cities that will emerge over the next 20 years. They will play a huge role in contributing to GDP and creating tremendous growth opportunities. The prosperity of these cities is linked to sustainable development.

Memorable Quotes

"Cities are responsible for 75 percent of GHGs globally. We are also going to be disproportionately impacted by climate change." —Adam Freed, City of New York

"Without great leadership, urban sustainability can't materialize because there are multiple stakeholders." —Scott Barnette, Hitachi, Ltd.

"It doesn't matter what New York does to tackle carbon, or if it becomes carbon neutral in the future, if the new emerging cities are not built sustainably now." —Adam Freed, City of New York

"There is no generic template for how to urbanize a city. ... The level of infrastructure, population, and social norms are all unique and different. You really have to look at the city and figure out what works for it." —Scott Barnette, Hitachi, Ltd.

Overview

Terry started the session by discussing the future of cities and how the design of cities can lead to more sustainable lifestyles and outcomes. She talked about how climate change, future energy needs, increasing populations, water scarcity, poverty, and more sustainable lifestyles all come together when thinking about the future of cities.



Freed began with an overview of PlaNYC, New York City's long-term sustainability plan, which was prompted by a prediction that by 2030 New York's population would reach 9.1 million. Though New Yorkers have a comparatively small per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) footprint, New York faces several challenges as its population grows, its infrastructure ages, and climate change worsens.

Since launching, PlaNYC has spurred 127 initiatives. The 20-year plan includes goals such as creating green spaces and reducing carbon emissions. Schoolyards are being converted into community playgrounds to meet the goal of locating parks within a 10-minute walk of every New Yorker, and more than 400,000 trees have been planted in an effort to plant 1 million total.

Next, Freed addressed issues such as water quality, transportation, and green infrastructure. New York has some of the cleanest water in the world, due in part to a gravity-fed system enabled by a tunnel connecting a reservoir in upstate New York to New York City. In addition, 30,000 acres of land were purchased to protect New York's watershed to ensure clean water.

In addition, travel times have decreased due to improved transit capacity. New York adopted elements from Bogota, Colombia's mass transit system for its own low-cost rapid bus transit line, which has decreased travel times by 20 percent and has significantly increased ridership. New York has adopted other ideas from developing countries, such as group taxi rides.

Landmark legislation was enacted to ensure ongoing energy efficiency of buildings in New York. Through this plan, New York can achieve up to a 5-percent reduction in GHG emissions overall, making it the most comprehensive green building package in the country. Barnette stated New York's GHG reduction goal of 30 percent by 2030, and added that to date, New York has achieved a 13-percent decrease in city-wide emissions.

Barnette spoke next about Hitachi's strategy for creating social infrastructure and social innovation. Hitachi is addressing some of the urban needs of cities all over the world through ICT and infrastructure, particularly for power, rail, road, and water. Hitachi's focus on the growth of urban cities is well-placed because of its 100-year history helping Japan evolve its urban landscape. Japan's latest growth model is to shepherd corporations outside the country in a coordinated effort to bring their technology to the rest of the world.

Barnette cited examples of some of Hitachi's public-private partnerships to develop sustainable urban cities. The Tianjin Eco City international joint project is an example of a new US\$4.5 billion urban city being built in China and scheduled for completion by 2020. The plan involves building a huge urban center from a green field, and will include some of Hitachi's latest technology. In India, Hitachi is partnering in Dahej, Gujarat, to integrate electric, water, and transportation systems into an existing city.

During the Q&A session, Terry asked each of the speakers to address private-public partnerships. Barnette stressed the fact that substantial transformations are impossible without all stakeholders signed on and brought in at the beginning. Often, there is no central decision maker, which means partners need to work from the bottom up to achieve sustained progress.

For Freed, it's critical to agree on a common goal. Partnerships were critical to recommissioning buildings in New York. For example, New York's Green Codes Task Force brought together 200 experts on green buildings to review building codes and deliver recommendations.

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