

MillerKnoll

Scenarios
March 2024

Introduction

The future of urban life is perhaps one of the most important topics presenting itself to citizens, organizations, and decision makers today. The **Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS)**, an independent non-profit think tank working with exploring and unfolding futures, and **MillerKnoll** partnered to explore possible future scenarios for urban living, resulting in four co-created scenarios for the future of urban living towards 2038.

Why urban living? By understanding what's happening in the outside world, we can make better decisions in our own worlds, and workplaces. In this presentation, we hope to inspire and provoke discussion and debate about our common urban future, and its implications on places we live, learn, work, and heal.

Futures Thinking

Futures thinking can help you act in the present by understanding the larger context in which our future unfolds, and gaining insights into what aspects can be influenced and what lies beyond our control.

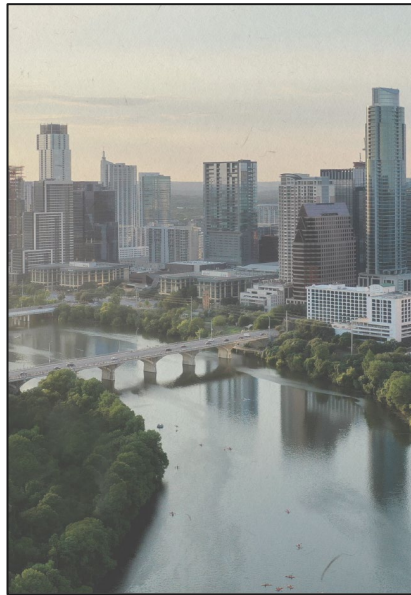
Scenarios

Scenarios are snapshots of plausible, alternative futures. The aim of scenarios is to provoke us to think about the future in new ways and plan for multiple potentialities.

“When we write stories, we also write the world—storytelling can be, as such, considered a critical act of design, transporting us to worlds beyond our own, get us excited for new alternatives, and act as an antidote to chaos.”

Liam Young

Four Scenarios on the Future of Urban Living



Scenario A:
Homegrown Urbanism



Scenario B:
Urban Togetherness



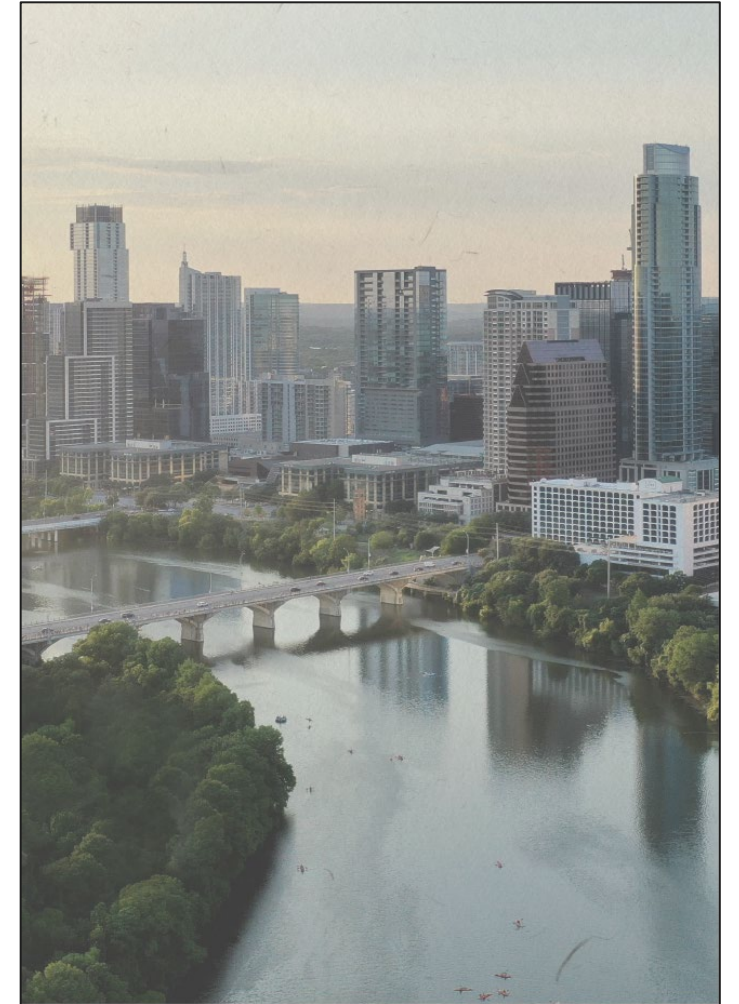
Scenario C:
No Friction, No Serendipity



Scenario D:
Balancing Act

Scenario A: Homegrown Urbanism

While neighborhoods flourish, invisible lines of exclusion have also formed. The organic growth and individualization has created complexities and contrasting forms of urban living. Some areas thrive with resources, attracting talent and innovation, while other areas struggle to keep up with the new forces and playing field shaping the city. The divide between the privileged and the disadvantaged has widened, highlighting the challenges of meeting individual needs while striving for inclusivity, equity, and essential services for all the city's citizens.



Scenario A: Homegrown Urbanism

The Human Experience

Physical

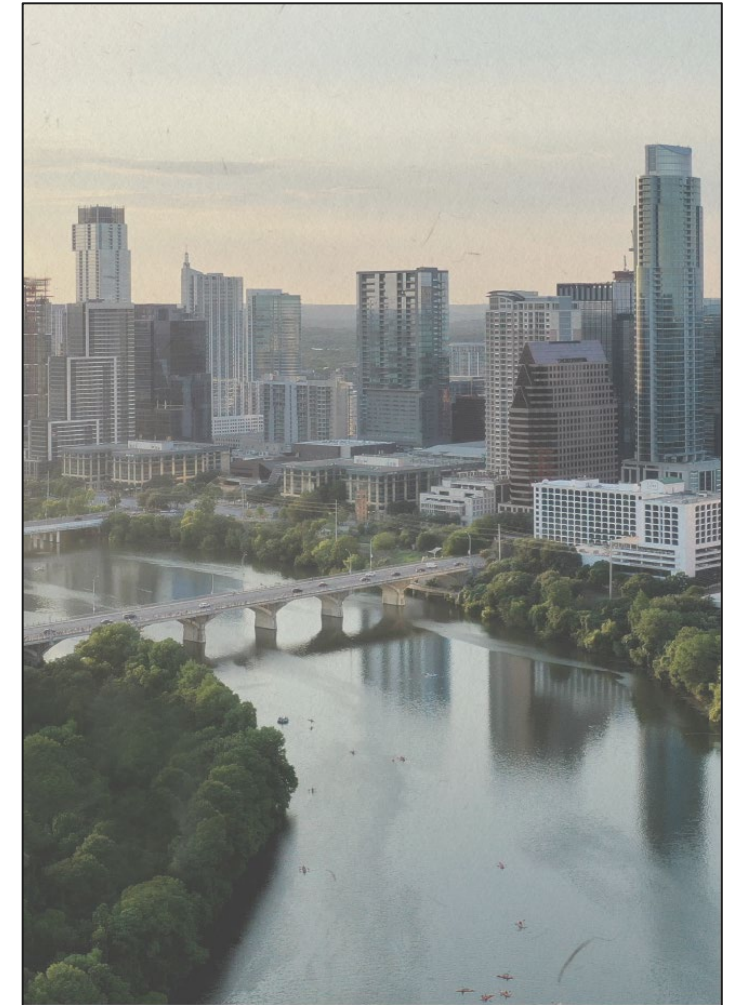
- Organic model allows city to grow naturally
- Self-generating
- Urban sprawl is never ending
- Shared housing economically necessary for some to live in more desirable neighborhood
- Contrasting narratives: celebration of continuous change and development but struggle with urban divide

Psychological

- Emphasis on individual choice
- Seeking to harness the complexity and vibrancy
- City living has become beacon of hope for those who are thriving in community, but fragmented social connections contribute to isolation
- Staying safe and climate change are concerns

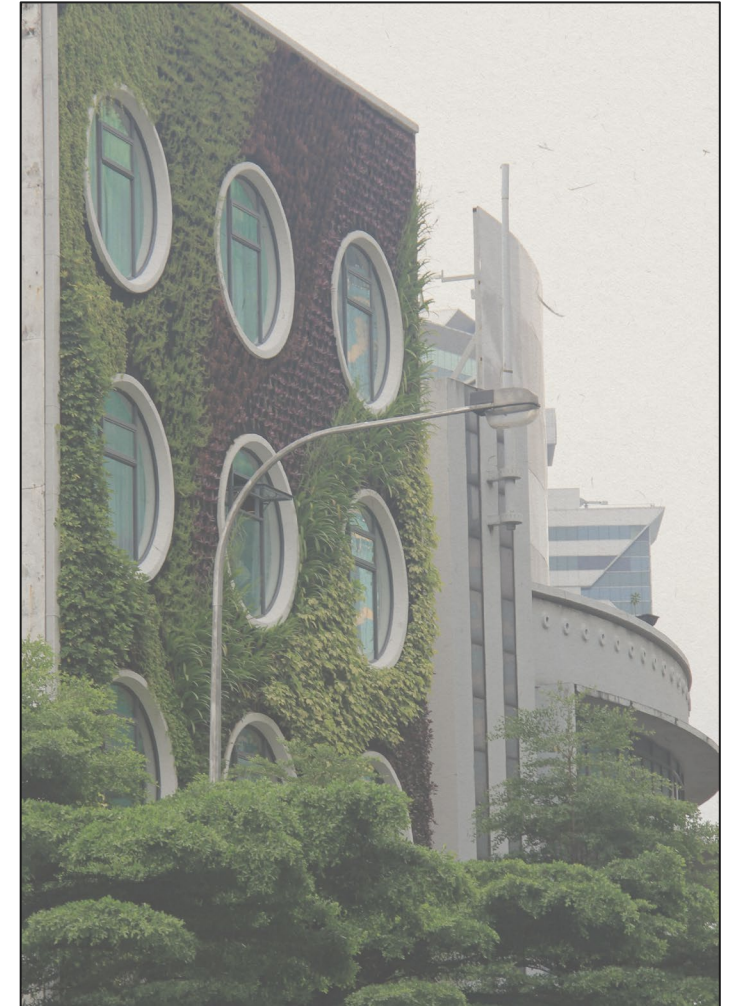
Social

- Individuals seek connections and relationships that align with their preferences
- Citizens form self-selected communities with like-minded people, but this contributes to exclusion
- Social networks are based on shared values, interests, or ambitions
- Diversity takes center stage



Scenario B: Urban Togetherness

The city has become an entity that recognizes and affirms its evolving dynamic complexity. It's not always efficient, but it's a city where intentional messiness and tribalism coexist. The residents have come to embrace resilience, decentralized control, and community-driven practices while prioritizing human connection and social cohesion to create an urban life of participation and coexistent on an individual, community, and urban level.



Scenario B: Urban Togetherness

The Human Experience

Physical

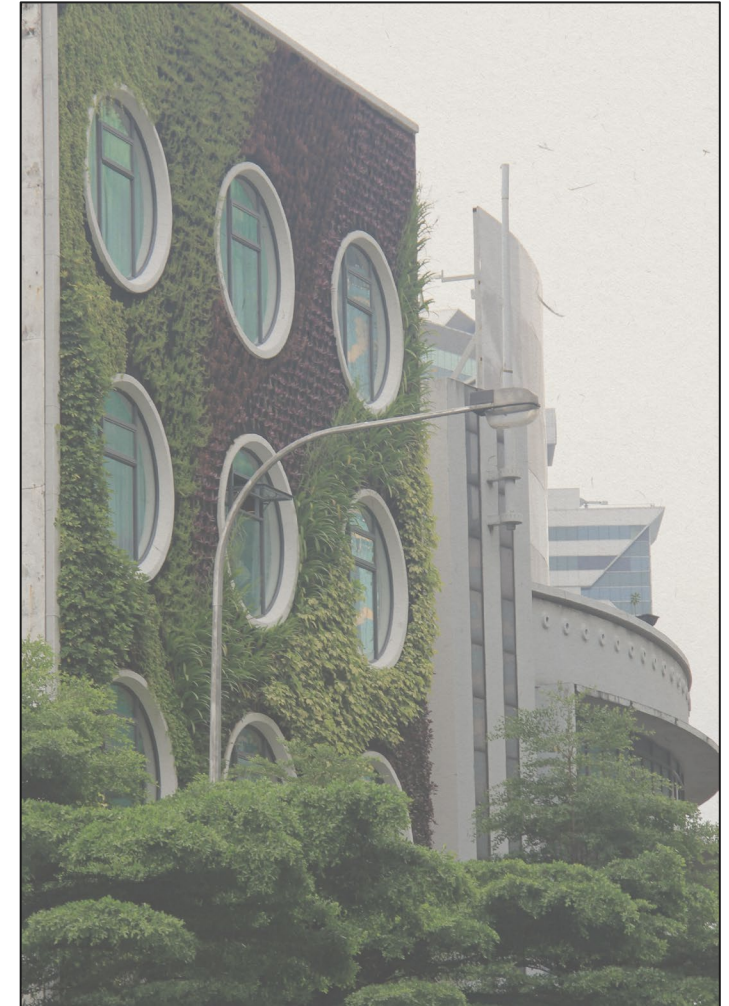
- City has succumbed to messiness instead of planning
- Prioritize social and environmental resiliency over profit
- Public doesn't support strategies for infrastructure like efficient transportation

Psychological

- Citizens recognize the need to adapt and build resilience
- Risk of being insulated from real world problems
- Trend towards isolationist mindset

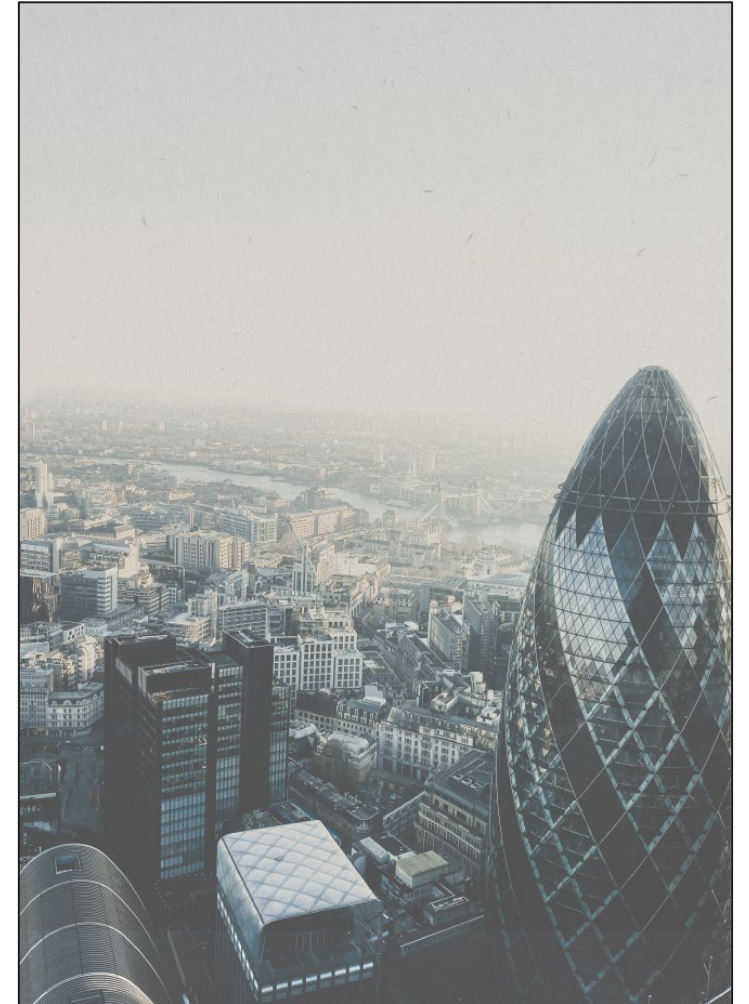
Social

- Feeling of being at home, being seen, part of something bigger is foundational to community life
- Residents embrace resilience, decentralized control, and community-driven practices
- Prioritize human connection and social cohesion
- Modestly-growing, locally-sourced economy has suppressed many types of job growth



Scenario C: No Friction, No Serendipity

No one can argue – life is good in the city. It is frictionless and the everyday unfolds without delay. The needs of its citizens are an integral part of the design for the city; yet within the measured, monitored, and maximized city, something has slowly disappeared. The serendipity that plays such a significant role in urban life has become an exception rather than a rule.



Scenario C: No Friction, No Serendipity

The Human Experience

Physical

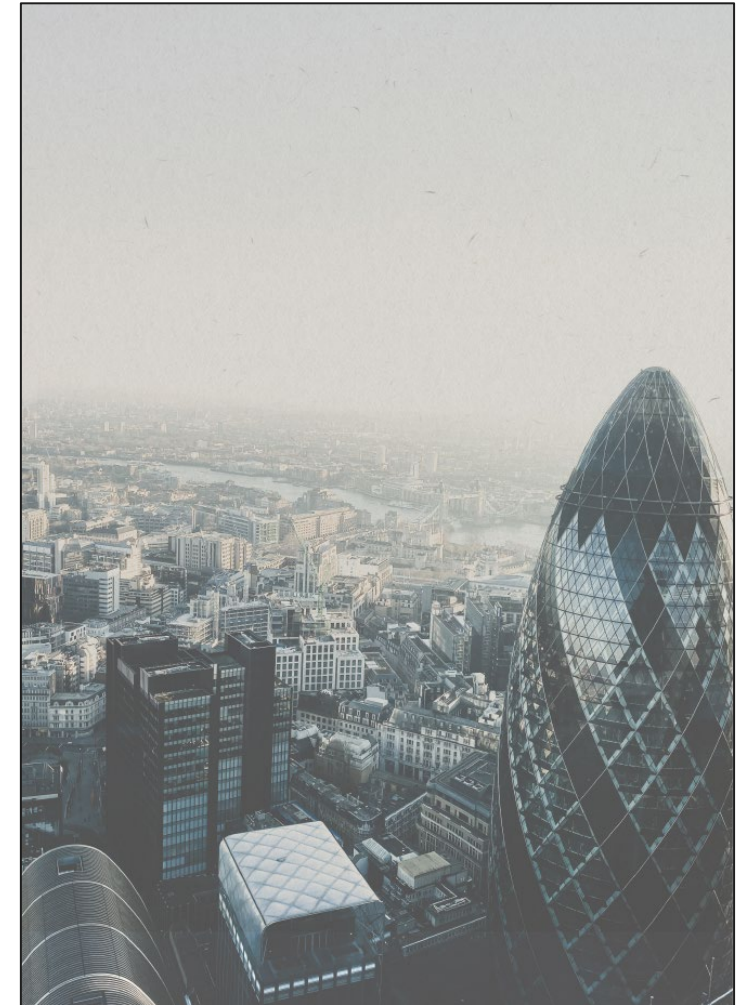
- Needs of citizens are integral part of design for the city
- Meticulously managed urban hub
- Large-scale developments and commercial interests
- City living is always supremely convenient
- Feeling of eco sabotage and the city as a villain in the fight against climate change

Psychological

- Every individual tailors their life to their own needs and wellbeing
- City is collecting data on citizens movements to make life easier, but surveillance is creating a Big Brother feeling
- The impact of reduced social cohesion is isolation

Social

- Citizens live together in frictionless system
- Citizens and surroundings have become numbers in a greater urban system
- Every person is an island
- People are hyper-connected digitally, but individuals are isolated in real life



Scenario D: **Balancing Act**

Environmental and climate concerns have prompted action to secure the city's future. Mixed-use neighborhoods with a focus on human-scale development and sustainability have been created. Such initiatives symbolize the city's desire to form vibrant communities where people can live, work, and play within a close proximity, fostering a sense of local community. Yet, some citizens are beginning to take action to ensure a balance between top-down decision-making, community participation, and the individual freedoms of citizens.



Scenario D: Balancing Act

The Human Experience

Physical

- Centralizing resources and services to ensure equitable access for all citizens
- Focusing on restoration and adding to existing structures and solutions
- Prioritizing livability for all inhabitants
- Environmental and climate concerns have prompted lockdown action

Psychological

- Standardization imposed on communities creates policies that are not always in line with local demand and desires
- Not much individual control over what happens in the city
- Tension between new and old cultural traditions colliding as the city has grown

Social

- Adopting human-centered approach towards designing policies and infrastructure
- Citizens support each other's personal development and well-being
- Rebellion is looming amongst citizens unwilling to live within the set boundaries of city administration's plans
- Intergenerational housing
- Safety and trust in communities



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