

CENTER FOR OPPORTUNITY URBANISM



Non-Profit Think Tank

Creating Cities for Upward Mobility

The Center for Opportunity Urbanism will change the urban policy conversation in America and globally by creating and giving voice to a new model of “people oriented urbanism” focused on opportunity, governance, job creation, upward mobility and sustained broad-based economic growth that reduces poverty and enhances the quality of life for all.

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CREATING CITIES FOR UPWARD MOBILITY

THE CENTER

The Center for Opportunity Urbanism (COU) launched in November of 2014 as a national think-tank of scholars and writers, directly by business and civic leaders. COU is already establishing partnerships throughout America and is actively seeking leaders and board members. COU is headquartered in Houston, Texas and is able to remotely handle day-to-day operations by a supporting staff (for at least the first 36-months).



Joel Kotkin serves as the Executive Director of COU and oversees the development and production of new research projects produced by COU. Mr. Kotkin is the Roger Hobbs Distinguished Fellow in Urban Studies at Chapman University in Orange, California. He is the Executive Editor of the widely read website Newgeography.com and writes the weekly “New Geographer” column for Forbes.com. Over the past decade, Mr. Kotkin has completed studies focusing on several major cities, including a worldwide Legatum study focusing on the future of London, Mumbai and Mexico City; as well as other studies of New York, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Houston and St. Louis, among others. Mr. Kotkin’s most recent publication is a book titled *The New Class Conflict* which describes the changing dynamics of class in America.

BACKGROUND

As a society, we are failing to deliver what it is that people really want – a sense of opportunity and the prospect of upward mobility, particularly for the middle, and working class.

This failure results from a confluence of factors that are driving up housing costs and rents in both urban and suburban spaces. Longer term, lack of affordable housing presents a serious demographic problem. More and more people are opting against forming families due to ever-higher housing costs, failing schools and lack of faith in future economy opportunity. As family size decreases, countries across the world – as is already evident in Japan and most of Europe – face the increasingly likely prospect of demographic implosion, with ever-greater pension costs, a diminished workforce and declining consumer base.

To reverse this trend, urban areas need to do a better job of providing people with the best economic and educational opportunities. We need to refocus urban policy in ways that stimulate long-term growth, not hamper it. The overregulation and over planning of urban and suburban space restricts supply and makes residential areas unnecessarily expensive, which negatively affects the middle class.

**“A city comes into being for the sake of life, but exists for the sake of living well.” Aristotle
Opportunity urbanism rests on the notion that cities serve, first and foremost, as engines to create
better lives for its residents.**

COU will not simply be critiquing flawed policies, but also look into how cutting edge technology can help achieve many of our environmental goals without effectively gutting the “American dream” of homeownership and upward mobility. These include such things as promoting home-based work, autonomous vehicles, taxi and buses combined with phone apps to enable more efficient and less environmentally damaging vehicle use. Investment in new road infrastructure --- particularly using new “smart”, traffic reducing technology --- should be a priority of metropolitan region.

A group of Houston-based leaders began working on these issues nearly a decade ago through Houstonians for Responsible Growth and in cooperation with The Greater Houston Partnership. COU represents an extension of those efforts on to the national stage.

PUBLICATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Producing a steady stream of content is critical to the mission of COU.

PAST

- Best Cities for Minorities (2015) Featured- WSJ, Washington Post, forbes.com, newgeography.com
- Maximizing Opportunity Urbanism with Robin Hood Planning (2015)
- Putting People First (2015) Featured- ncpa.org, www.builderonline.com

2015

- Housing Crisis Study
- Opportunity Urbanism as defined by Housing and Regulatory Issues
- Planning study
- Cities for People- Partners: Chapman University and Searle Foundation

2016

- The Texas Way of Urbanism- Partners: Houston and Dallas Business Journals, University of Texas, Southern Methodist University, Terra Associates, Inc.
- The Reindustrialization of America- Partners: Site Selection Magazine, Cleveland State University
- The End of Localism- Partners: Fieldstead Foundation
- Best Cities for the Middle Class- Partners: Chapman University by Searle Foundation
- Africans in America- Partners: In discussions with a student at Chapman University
- *The Human City* - book to be released in April by Joel Kotkin

2017

- Exploring a possible study on inner ring suburbs
- New Technologies for Transportation and Dispersed Work
- Infinite suburbia conference is in March 31, but book will be out a year later. We are looking at a Houston Installation of the project either late 2016 or early 2017