

## INTELLIGENT CITIES INITIATIVE

How did you decide where to live? Was it the city? The size of your place? Its appearance? The neighborhood? The commute? Would you make the same decision today? These questions are behind the National Building Museum's *Intelligent Cities* ([www.nbm.org/intelligentcities](http://www.nbm.org/intelligentcities)), a year-long initiative formulated in partnership with TIME, supported by IBM, and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. The initiative, which was launched on November 1st, is expected to produce data, analysis, and ideas on how new technologies are shaping cities and make them thrive.

"It's the grassroots input about people's perceptions of and priorities for the built environment around them that makes *Intelligent Cities* particularly significant for us," said Chase W. Rynd, National Building Museum president and executive director. "Technology and access to information has reached a point where non-professionals can generate data and think deeply about where they live. Through *Intelligent Cities*, we have the means to share their viewpoints with experts in the design and building industries so that there is a true give-and-take between constituencies. Experts need input from the community to make the planning and design process more open, participatory, and democratic."

Vast amounts of data exist about everything from housing costs to water usage. *Intelligent Cities'* goal is to make technology and data more useful to urban planners, professionals in the design and building industries, and the public. The crux is the interrelationship between information sets. For example, *Intelligent Cities* will make connections between the size of our homes and the energy we consume as a nation, walkable neighborhoods and our health, and where we work and our infrastructure. These insights may surprise us and change our perception of the built environment around us, and, perhaps, even our behavior.

"For as long as we have lived in cities we have reflected on their form, feel, and function," said Susan Piedmont-Paladino, Museum curator. From the launch of the first hot air balloon to Google maps, we have developed technologies to see what we have done, what we are doing, and what we wish to do. Today, the scale and complexity of neighborhoods, towns, and cities are unprecedented, and so are our tools for understanding them."

"By the middle of this century, more than three quarters of the world's population will live in a city," says Rockefeller Foundation associate director Benjamin de la Pena. "Can we use the growing data and technology about cities to address the issues of equity and sustainability and to improve the lives of all urban dwellers?" We can, and we should is the message behind "Intelligent Cities". — Carol Abrams and Tara Miller. [Public inquiries: 202.272.2448 or visit [www.nbm.org](http://www.nbm.org).]