



From  
New York  
to  
Bucharest

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FROM NEW YORK TO BUCHAREST



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# Bucharest's mayor goes to New York.

Bucharest, the capital of Romania, an ancient city in the heart of Eastern Europe is on the up. Forward-looking, confident in its recent entry into the European Union, and bullish on its future, Bucharest is emerging on the international urban scene. It is against this backdrop that earlier this year, Dr Sorin Oprescu, mayor of Bucharest, travelled to New York. While it is said that all cities remain unfinished – even a place like New York – New York is one of those cities that all can learn from. Important, urbane, cosmopolitan, New York is the world's city.

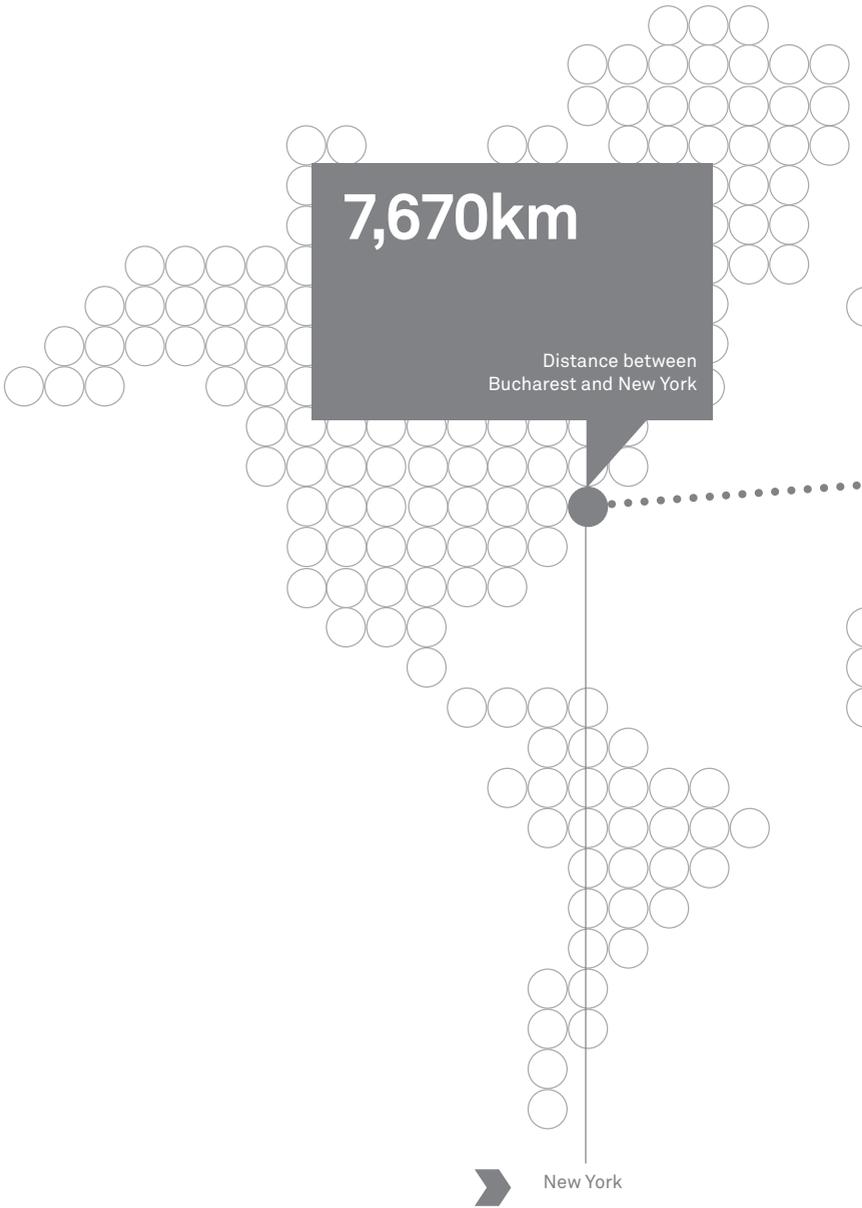
While on his visit, Mayor Oprescu met with his counterpart, Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The two mayors shared experiences about urban improvements in their respective cities. They discussed New York's recent success with its grand projects such as the Highline, the Second Avenue Subway and the redevelopment of Lower Manhattan. Looking for cross-disciplinary urban thinking, and on the suggestion of Mayor Bloomberg, Mayor Oprescu was introduced to AECOM.

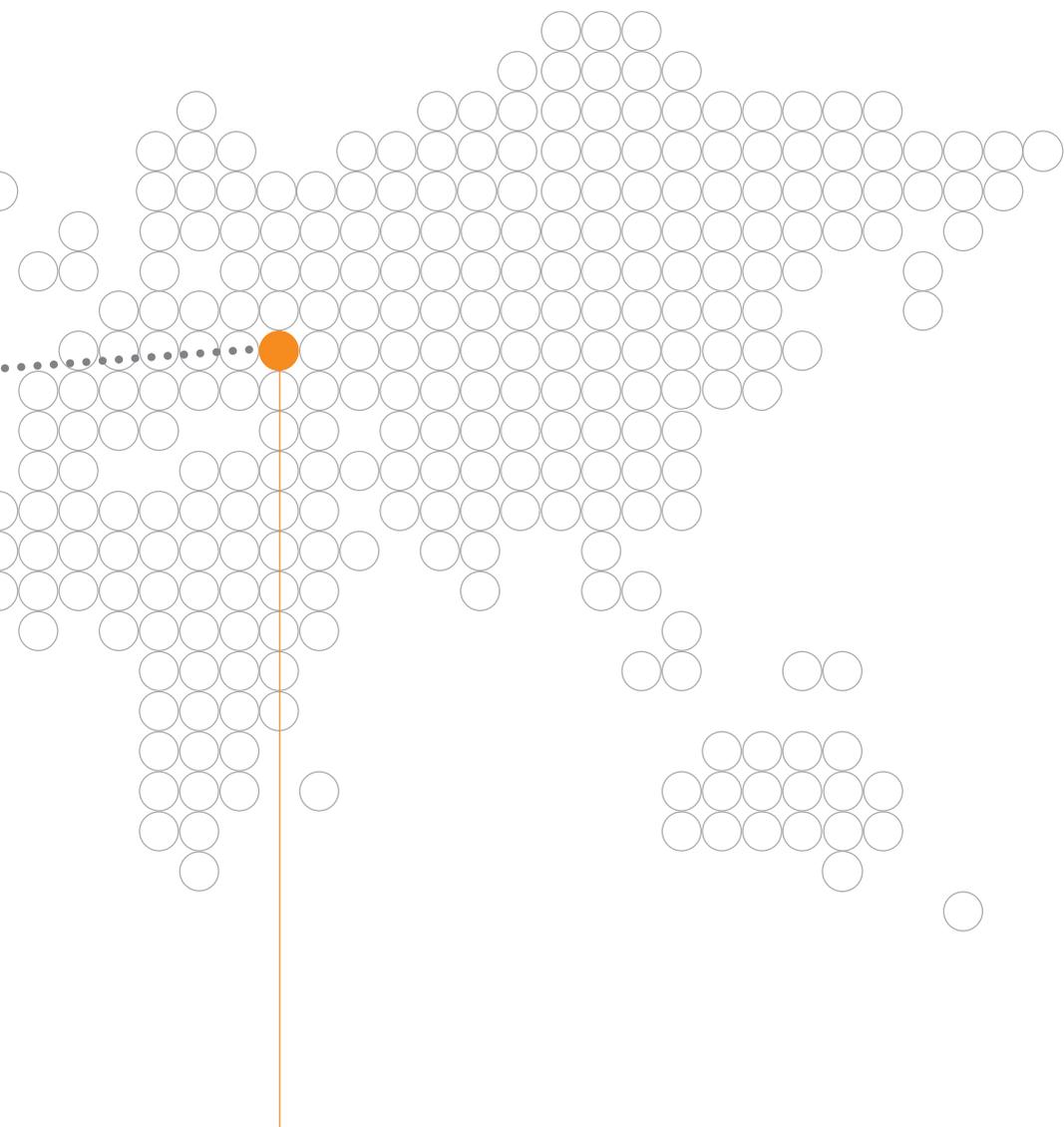
Bucharest's Mayor met with Fred Werner, AECOM's president of business lines. Out of that session came an invitation from Mayor Oprescu to AECOM to have a team of specialists to come to his city to assess and present their vision for the city's urban development.

**When I visited your office in New York, I knew that this was the beginning of a great collaboration.**

Mayor Oprescu

On 23 February 2012, a team of AECOM experts held a two day-long workshop with the Mayor and Bucharest city leaders. The group analyzed the issues facing Bucharest, assessing opportunities for improvement. They diagnosed problems and proposed implementable answers to help Bucharest move forward as a thriving, dynamic European city.





 Bucharest

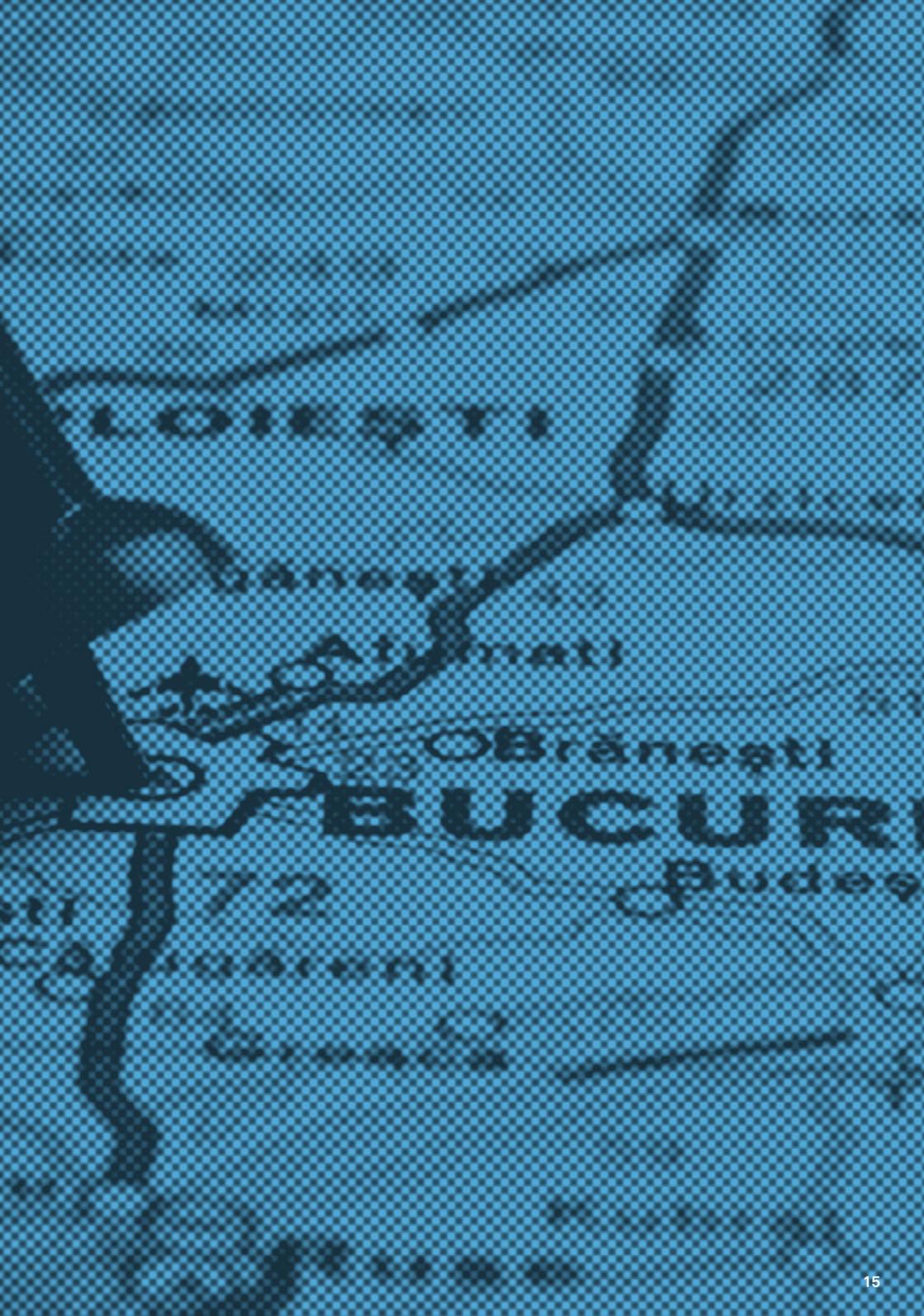
**Our world is changing, and cities interact directly with each other more than ever before. We must find solutions to make Bucharest that make it more attractive in an increasingly competitive and interconnected world.**

Chris Choa, AIA  
Principal, Design + Planning, AECOM

**We all know that a city can never be completed, and compared with other capitals, Bucharest has experienced sharp growth. However, it is clear that the city has major gaps in terms of its infrastructure compared with its European peers. It is very much a work in progress here in Bucharest.**

Gheorghe Patrascu  
Chief Architect, Bucharest City Hall





# We are living in an urban age.

As city-makers, we are living in an extraordinary age – the urban age. Nearly 60% of the world's population is now urban, and making continues to urbanize at a rapid rate.

Cities generate the majority of global wealth, and are home to virtually 100 percent of global innovation.

18th/19th Century	The Age of Empires:	Pre-Modern Bucharest
20th Century	The Age of Nations: The Age of Ideologies:	Liberal Bucharest Socialist Bucharest
21st Century	The Age of Cities:	Regenerated Bucharest?

As cities grow and grow, so does their importance in geo-political, socio-economic and cultural terms. Due to globalization, the influence of nations is decreasing as the prominence of cities increases. Cities are connecting with one another, mimicking the web-like metaphors we see in our global economy and mediascape. And as the planet faces increasing environmental pressures, it is the template of the city that we will need to use to solve many of these pressing issues such as energy and greenhouse gas reduction, smarter transport and socio-economic balance.

What does this all mean for the future Bucharest? As the Romanian capital integrates into the global web of cities, it will become more like other

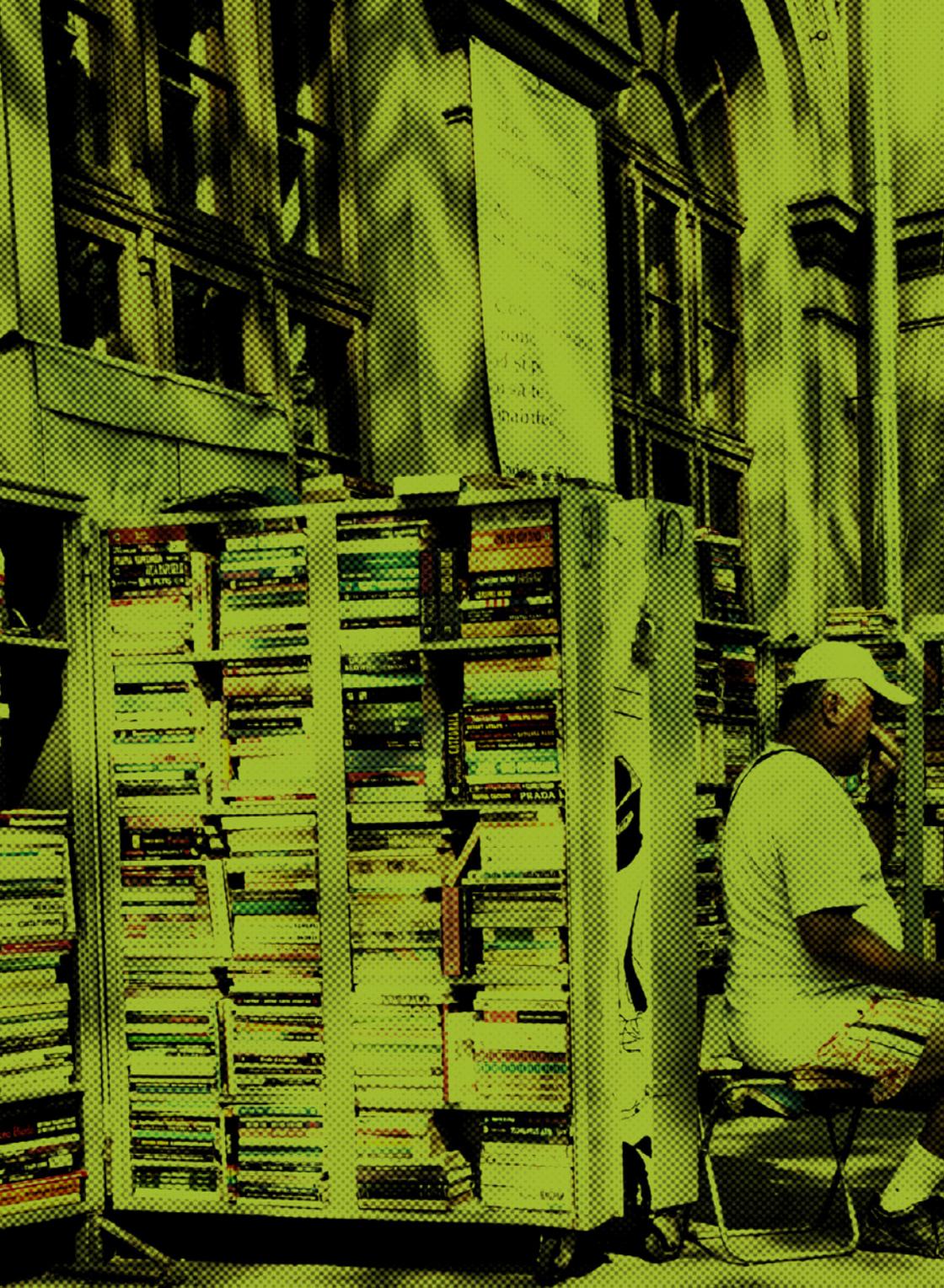
international cities than other parts of Romania. As evidenced in Mayor Oprescu's visit, it is already looking abroad to comparable cities, forging relationships and learning best practices with its peers. As this integration moves apace, the future Bucharest will be in regional and global competition in the race for capital, people, ideas and talent. Cities fundamentally exist for trade and exchange, which is what supports all other characteristics. This is why successful modern cities need to make themselves attractive to others to survive and thrive. It is also why infrastructure and transport capacity of cities are now often dictating their ability to grow and evolve. As Romania and Eastern Europe develops, Bucharest will not be immune to this.



The 10th largest  
city in the  
European Union

- 1 London
- 2 Berlin
- 3 Madrid
- 4 Rome
- 5 Paris
- 6 Hamburg
- 7 Budapest
- 8 Vienna
- 9 Warsaw
- 10 Bucharest**
- 11 Barcelona
- 12 Munich
- 13 Milan
- 14 Prague
- 15 Sofia
- 16 Brussels
- 17 Birmingham
- 18 Cologne
- 19 Naples
- 20 Turin
- 21 Stockholm
- 22 Marseilles
- 23 Valencia
- 24 Leeds
- 25 Krakow
- 26 Amsterdam
- 27 Lodz
- 28 Athens
- 29 Riga
- 30 Seville







## In order to compete, Bucharest needs to focus on:

- Recognizable global Identity
- Urban population density
- Mixed land uses
- Multi-modal connectivity
- High-quality open space
- Proactive governance





# Gravitating to Bucharest.

A review of trends relating to urban areas around the world indicates that Bucharest is facing many of the same challenges and issues that face other cities. Increasing life expectancies are impacting work environments, accommodation requirements and healthcare needs, as the population ages. Average household sizes are changing too, as smaller families require more diverse types of accommodation, supported by appropriate security and amenity provision. This is intensified by the continued migration from countryside to city, which is still having an impact in developing contexts such as Romania. As people seek work, education and urban lifestyles, they are naturally gravitating to the city.

**As Bucharest grows and the wider region develops, the changes in economy are impacting the city's physical form.**

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Changing profiles in employment patterns are taking place as an economy such as Romania's transitions away from agriculture, through manufacturing and towards the service sector. All this increases the pressure on the use of urban space, which needs to be used more efficiently as land values, property prices, rental rates, and (last but certainly not least) aggregate environmental impacts rise.

There are other impacts as well: socio-economic changes as middle-classes develop with aspirations of both car and home ownership and a desire to have a more leisurely lifestyle. These have both economic and ecological implications. Rising pressure on urban systems manifests in increased traffic congestion and rising passenger numbers on public transport networks. Rising international air transportation (both freight and passenger movements) brings up the need for airport-related development.

As urban society evolves so do its infrastructure needs.

**The future Bucharest will have to do more with less and do it more intelligently.**

A city of Bucharest's profile – emerging on an international stage and in transition – bring it into the international network of cities with consequences of an increasingly interdependent global economic and political environment. This has led cities in a similar position to pay more attention to the growing market and financial interest in environmental sustainability and more efficient typologies of urban planning and building design. In more recent years, the added knock-on effects of the global economic downturn have revealed just how interconnected cities are today with the pressure that reduced budgets have placed on public services, real estate economics and society as a whole.



The existing hardware is there to make for a great European city.

Future development plans for Bucharest must consider all these, especially the implications of changing economic conditions and markets, in order to outperform its competitors. It means Bucharest will need to get smarter at attracting business, sustaining jobs in the city and providing an attractive quality of life for its residents.

There will always be unanticipated changes that require a responsive attitude to development but many of the issues facing the world's cities today can be planned for and are the result of gradual on-going change. Taking a proactive approach to urban planning and design is essential. The future Bucharest will have to do more with less and do it more intelligently.

Bucharest is still an unfinished city. Poor macro-planning led to general neglect in the period following the 1989 Revolution. Increases in the country's GDP have not necessarily filtered down to the average citizens. Bucharest has the opportunity to be a good regional pole, but does not yet have the focus to do so. Moreover, there is a governance challenge. There are seven distinct city councils with independent administrative budgets that require greater coordination and alignment. Political and cross-authority dialogue often fails to come to terms with long-term consequences and decision-making.

These challenges are difficult, but certainly not impossible. Much of Bucharest's potential is found in its regional and European connections. It remains at the centre of important pan-European corridors and has the existing hardware to make for a great European city. Bucharest has many opportunities before it, and Bucharest's time is now.

Much of Bucharest's potential is found in its regional and European connections.



## Possible opportunity areas include:

### Existing primary heavy infrastructure

- Unoccupied land intervention areas
- Restructuring of communist neighbourhoods
- Boulevard regeneration
- Metro extension
- Bucharest 2000 plan
- Sports park
- Research park near Politehnica University
- Canal Danube
- South airport
- Southern extension road (connects to airport)









# How do we make the most of Bucharest's opportunities? Where to begin?

Workshop participants organized into three groups, reviewed projects selected for long-term social, economic, environmental value.

Each group was charged with prioritizing no more than three or four technically sound projects that communicated value in the following political terms:

- Initiatives likely to be most popular;
- Initiatives likely to create most jobs;
- Initiatives that would be easiest to implement in the short term.

# Most popular

Discussion focused on value, source of funding, quality of life, improved mobility, deliverability

- **Metro:**  
improves quality of commute
- **R&D centre at Politehnica University:**  
supports emerging creative class
- **Green Corridor:**  
demonstrates commitment to quality of life
- **Energy Efficiency Measures:**  
economic benefits to consumers and city

## Conclusion

Upgrades and harmonization of public transit will generate comprehensive benefits to Bucharest's urban development, and will have long-lasting public support.



# Most jobs

Discussion focused on job creation through tourism, emerging industries, transport strategies

- **Danube Canal:** economic engine for tourism and logistics
- **Politehnica University:** “Internet City” develops city’s competitive advantages
- **Road Upgrades:** improving connectivity supports emerging service sectors.
- **Airport Corridor:** supports logistics/ new industries, connects with other cities

## Conclusion:

As a first priority, an incubator and seed tenant (e.g. MIT Media Lab) at the Politehnica University would spur economic innovation. A close second would be the development of an airport corridor based around the metro and an enterprise zone.

# Early wins

Discussion focused on obtaining rapid benefits that still support long-term value Emphasis on high visibility, minimal investment, lowest economic risks

- **Vitoria Road Improvement:** emphasizes commitment to improving urban identity
- **TransUrban Bucharest:** emphasizes quality of urban life through public realm
- **“Smart Ticketing” for public transport:** time vs. trip segment charging simplifies travel
- **“Smart Payment” for car parking:** helps reduce traffic congestion

## Conclusion:

The “Smart Payment” car parking system is an easy-to-implement system that would generate significant income for the city and increase the efficiency of the existing road network.

**Upgrades and harmonization  
of public transit will generate  
comprehensive benefits to  
Bucharest's urban development,  
and will have long-lasting public  
support.**

If Bucharest is an unfinished city, then how do we help make it more 'complete?' In a context of economic challenge, political complexity and environmental responsibility, what is feasible? This isn't an era for pie-in-the-sky thinking, but one of concrete action. Bucharest must emphasize functionality to become more competitive. That which can be done will more likely get done.



From our discussions and studies, several ideas for concrete solutions emerged that provide jobs, improve the existing urban fabric, and advance the tourism industry. We developed three key steps that offer a direct roadmap advancing urban progress in Bucharest. These three steps can bring Bucharest to the status of European hub that it aspires to, and can achieve.

## SPECIFIC ISSUES

1. Create a **Bucharest Urban Development Agency**, to prepare development sites and unlock investment assets
2. Develop a **comprehensive transport strategy**, tied to economic growth, that increases capacity by 50%, supports job growth, and improves the public realm network by 2020
3. Retain **PPP advisory**, optimizing PPP laws and preparing competitive funding strategies

## PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

### PPP is most appropriate when:

- Public sector doesn't have independent funds
- Private sector has required expertise
- Public sector can clearly define performance criteria

Funding level must justify cost of procurement and risks must be allocated.

### Projects are appropriate for PPP funding when:

- Required investment is big enough
- Project is clearly defined and limited.
- Delivery of project contributes to larger integrated strategy
- Project guarantees a specified revenue stream
- Overall financial performance can be defined, measured, and monitored



# A more cohesive public realm.

High quality public realm in Bucharest creates vibrant and accessible places within the city. However, these special places would benefit from a comprehensive public realm network that would tie all of Bucharest together. Pedestrian, cycle, and public transport links that connect key public spaces create a sense of mobility that

encourages residents and tourists to visit more of the city. Well used public spaces are safer and create more jobs while impacting substantially on the quality of the experience. Linking existing high quality public spaces in the city through strategic regeneration will create identity, jobs, and lift Bucharest as a destination.



# A smarter approach to transportation.

“Smart Ticketing” is already in place in Bucharest for most public transport systems. However linking the Metro, through “Smart Ticketing,” to busses and other forms of public transport would significantly increase efficiency and frequency of use and potentially lower costs for citizens. Closing the loop on “Smart Ticketing” will make the existing Metro system more attractive and usable. Car usage goes down, congestion improves, and urban life is healthier and more pleasant.

Every major European and American city charges for parking in their city centre. A comprehensive parking strategy including zoned street parking, dedicated parking garages, and “Smart Payment” is well within reach for Bucharest. The introduction of a zoned and

chargeable parking network would decrease congested streets, increase revenue to the city, and could be developed by a private partner through a PPP programme. With the cities guidance, the private developer would action the scheme, and both would share the profit.

Improving public transport through “Smart Ticketing” and strategic parking solutions that benefit from “Smart Payment” together create substantial revenue, many jobs, and a healthier urban environment that is less dependent on private car ownership. PPP can be used to implement both strategies easily and efficiently, benefiting the city as well as private development in Bucharest.



# An inspiring focus for urban regeneration.

Existing underutilized industrial sites in Bucharest put the city at a distinct advantage for future development. These sites are well placed close to the city centre and aligned with public transport. Mixed use development, of a sustainable density, is appropriate for the community and existing building fabric around these sites. Many of the vacant industrial sites benefit from existing transport links that are scheduled for important improvements. The Gara de Nord, for example, is the station that links Henri Coanda International Airport by rail to the centre of Bucharest.

The multi-modal global transit available to these industrial sites, with a few key improvements, would unlock substantial asset value and encourage the international standard of development Bucharest needs.

**All cities – from Bucharest to New York – are a constant work in progress. Over more than two decades, Bucharest’s story has been one of challenge and opportunity – from revolution to membership in the European Union. The conditions of life in post-1989 Bucharest have led the city on a new journey, a new chapter for Bucharest in the age of cities. Bucharest is taking its place in metropolitan Europe, connecting to the world and taking the steps towards better liveability.**

# Bucharest is moving forward

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the world's built, natural and social  
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