

20 BEST TOWNS OF THE FUTURE

Change your zip code. These forward-thinking places are where to live now

BY CHRISTINE CIARMELLO AND SAMANTHA SCHOECH

All you need to do is take a tour of the West to be hopeful about the future. Here, young entrepreneurs are not hesitant to try something new, city halls are taking on the environment at a grassroots level, and universities are challenging old ways of thinking. In other words, towns are where the blueprint of the future is being written.

“If there’s one thing that towns and cities should be doing right now, it’s experimenting,” says futurist Jamais Cascio, whose full interview is on the next page. “The more we experiment and try new solutions, the more likely we are to have interesting and effective results. If you look at the [successful] cities of the future, what you will see are those that are actively producing energy and food and information,” he explains. “It’s a change in our relationship with our environment, and that’s likely a key theme of life in the West over the next decades.”

That said, we declare the Twenty Tens the Decade of Experimentation and the West its laboratory. These 20 cities are leading the way. Be part of the revolution.



LEFT: DAVID FENTON



So what will the future look like?

Jamais Cascio, founder of Open the Future and author of *Hacking the Earth*, is a futurist, someone who helps companies and institutions think through surprising possibilities. He's not in the prediction business, but nonetheless he gave us a peek.

What do you think the West will look like in 2020? The biggest differences will be those related to resource scarcity: People will still drive to work, but most of the cars will be hybrids or electrics. People will still be living in detached houses, but nobody will have lawns. It's probable that more people will be telecommuting or using teleoperation systems (technologies that allow you to use a physical tool remotely). And far fewer people will be flying; the cost will very likely be much higher due to carbon regulations and fuel costs.

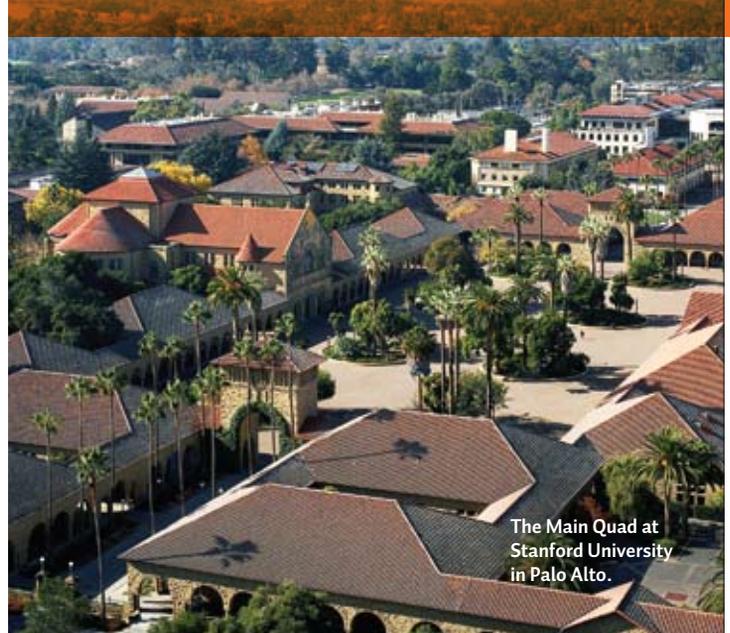
There may be more delivery services for everyday needs, such as groceries and errands, simply because well-planned deliveries are much more fuel-efficient than individual trips. Autonomous electric delivery vehicles (robot deliveries) will begin to show up. By 2020? Maybe.

What are the careers of the future? Mixing a "hard science" degree with an arts or humanities degree will be good training for the multidisciplinary, flexible world we're building. Also: design, which is starting to be applied far beyond industrial products. I wouldn't be surprised to see the emergence of a Master of Business Design degree replacing the Master of Business Administration. And, of course, elder-care services, as Baby Boomers roar into retirement.

If you could invent a gadget for the future, what would it be? I'd want something that would capture carbon quickly and cheaply. Something like that would be the most important invention you could have.

Why so much innovation in the West? It's a combination of immigrant mentality—people who come here are adventurous enough to pull up stakes and try something new—and the density of good universities that celebrate science and experimentation and foster a culture of curiosity.

1 Palo Alto



The Main Quad at Stanford University in Palo Alto.

Sci-Fi Valley

With an average of more than 180,000 patents issued by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office each year, Silicon Valley is a breeding ground of ideas. Having **Stanford University** in Palo Alto at its heart, the valley has attracted top thinkers from around the world, including the minds behind **Apple**, **Google**, and **Facebook**. In addition to social models and new gadgets, creative techies are focusing on how to make our lives greener and healthier.

On the horizon are more efficient, inexpensive solar panels that easily stick to laptop bags, cars, and roofs, turning urban areas from passive energy consumers into energy producers. At-home DNA testing, such as **23andMe**, lets people gain a deeper insight into their ancestry and peek at their genetic risk for some diseases. The only electric vehicle for sale today is from the valley's **Tesla Motors**, and Palo Alto-based **Better Place** is creating infrastructure for mass adoption of EVs, including building "charge spots." Augmented reality is taking leaps too. Right now, you can point your iPhone at a building, and GPS technology IDs where you are. Tomorrow? Think eyeglasses that recognize people.



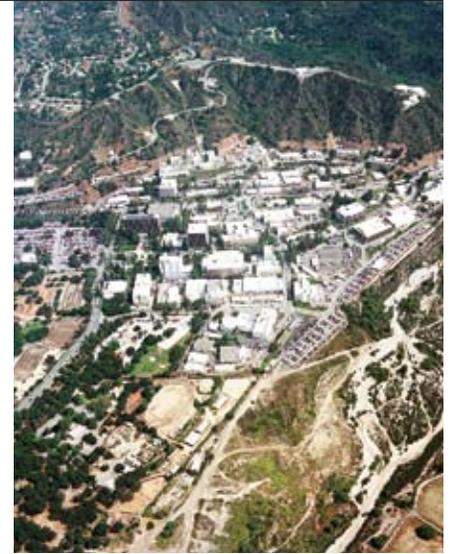
The \$109,000 Tesla Roadster is powered by a 400-volt battery pack and runs at least 200 miles before it needs to be plugged in for a recharge.



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Golden Hill, San Diego

Architects Mike Burnett and Craig Abenilla's futuristic version of Main Street, mxd830, is re-energizing San Diego's previously overlooked southeast side. It may be only a building, but the design of mxd830 (short for "mixed use" plus the street address, 830) has nurtured community with an honest-to-god night buzz because of two tenants: Counterpoint, a connecting spot for those who love good beer, wine, and cheese boards; and Nest Vintage Home, a furniture and home accessories store. With its energy spreading down the once-derelict 25th Street corridor, mxd830 is a complex of creativity.



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Pasadena

In this San Gabriel foothills city, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory is keeping tabs on the final frontier by building and operating the robotic spacecraft that are launched into the far reaches of the universe. JPL's corridors must echo with the static of deep-space communication. It could be here that we'll discover whether another planet is fit for colonization: JPL currently has 20 spacecraft and has explored all known planets within—and many planets beyond—our solar system. And while we're on the subject of science, another lauded institute—Caltech—is located in Pasadena.



Hot spots for renewable energy

| WHERE | WHAT IT'S DOING RIGHT | WHAT'S NEXT |
|------------------------|---|--|
| 3 Eugene, OR | Getting more than 85% of energy from renewable sources. | Eugene plans to cut its total fossil fuel consumption by 50% by 2030. |
| 4 Corvallis, OR | Oregon State University is experimenting with using the rise and fall of ocean waves to generate electricity. | Prototypes by Ocean Power Technologies (collaborating with OSU) are being designed and built; the first installations will appear next year. |
| 5 Lamar, CO | The wind farms in Lamar are helping make Colorado one of the most wind-powered states in the West. The Colorado Green wind project's 108 turbines are enough to power about 52,000 homes. | Colorado law requires that the state get 15% of its energy from renewables by 2015. The state's wind potential alone could supply 9% of the entire country's energy—that's 67 million homes. |
| 6 Phoenix, AZ | It has the nation's largest city-sponsored residential solar financing program. Translation: Up to 1,000 residents signed on for solar panels with no up-front costs and a monthly payment that's lower than their regular energy bill. | Repeating the city program and trying to get as many homes as possible to go solar with zero down. |