

# MR

MANN REPORT

THE URBAN ISSUE

NEW YORK  
LOS ANGELES  
MIAMI  
HAMPTONS  
LAS VEGAS  
ASPEN

ADAPTIVE REUSE AND THE  
BIRTH OF A NEW SPACE

THE SWEET LIFE:  
100 YEARS OF LI-LAC  
CHOCOLATES

WHAT NEW YORK  
RENTERS ARE LOOKING  
FOR IN THEIR NEXT HOME:  
TOP FEATURES AND  
MUST-HAVE AMENITIES

## Upending Urban Living:

Six Trends Reinventing and Modernizing  
American Cities

Weina Zhang, Founder and CEO of The Z Life Company





Weina Zhang (Photo by Killer Imaging)

# Upending Urban Living: Six Trends Reinventing and Modernizing American Cities

*By Merilee A. Kern*

As our world rapidly evolves with seismic shifts converging across technological, economic, political, cultural, social and familial landscapes, our cities are in a race to not just keep up with these transformations, but actually pioneer innovation amid the metamorphosis. Urban environments are at the forefront of such innovation, taking proactive measures to adapt to the changing needs and desires of their inhabitants.

While such metro modernization is being driven by a breadth of ever-evolving ideas, advancements and visionary solutions, there are a few standout catalysts that are foundational to revolutionizing cities of the future. According to Weina Zhang, founder and CEO of development firm Z Life — itself a trailblazing company pioneering sustainable and leading-edge real estate solutions prioritizing sustainability, efficiency and hyper-community-oriented living — six strategies in particular are playing a pivotal role in shaping flagship American cities like Downtown Las Vegas' new Midtown initiative. Below is Zhang's take on key trends, some new and some tried-and-true, that serve as building blocks for creating vibrant, eco-conscious

and modernized community-centric urban spaces.

## 1. A New Era in Residential Health

As urban landscapes evolve, a pioneering urban innovation is taking root — the concept of biotech wellness communities. These cutting-edge residential areas are ushering in a new era of health and wellness within city living. Accessibility to health programming and wellness facilities is at the forefront of this urban transformation. Today, biotech wellness companies are providing world-class whole-body screening and diagnostic services for patients to explore potential risk factors and identify serious illnesses early on.

Access to this advanced biotechnology is giving community residents the unique opportunity to engage in proactive health monitoring and management. Indeed, the fusion of residential living and biotech solutions creates an environment where health and wellness are seamlessly integrated into the daily routine. The emergence of biotech wellness communities heralds a promising future for urban living, where accessibility to health programming and wellness becomes



not just a convenience but rather a way of life. These communities represent a significant stride toward healthier, more connected and forward-thinking cities.

## 2. Shared Cars

Shared cars represent a promising future for urban mobility. In an era where cities are grappling with traffic congestion, limited parking and environmental concerns, the concept of shared cars is gaining traction as a sustainable solution. By pooling resources and sharing vehicles, residents reduce the overall number of cars on the road, alleviating traffic gridlock and decreasing the demand for parking spaces. This not only eases the daily commute but also leads to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Concerns about our country's car usage have been heightened over the past few years as cars are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. As reported in

individual carbon footprint. In addition to environmental benefits, shared car programs often provide economic advantages, reducing the financial burden of car ownership, including fuel, maintenance and insurance costs. This forward-thinking concept is being embraced as residents in certain communities enjoy access to shared Teslas — an exciting feature that enhances the convenience, eco-consciousness and interconnectedness of urban living.

## 3. Co-Working Spaces

Co-working spaces have emerged as a transformative force in urban areas, redefining the traditional workplace concept. These communal workspaces offer a flexible and collaborative environment that has become a driving force behind innovation in our cities.

The proximity of co-working spaces to residential areas has revolutionized the daily work routine,



aging creativity and productivity while providing an opportunity for individuals to network, learn and grow in a dynamic urban setting. As we look to the future, co-working spaces are poised to cater to the needs of multiple industries, offering access to advanced technologies and creating an upscale urban core that supports the growing tech sector and other innovative enterprises.

## 4. Walkability

Walkability is at the forefront of reshaping urban living, aligning with the concept of a 15-minute city. This transformative idea seeks to bring all essential amenities within a 15-minute walk or bike ride from one's doorstep. It's about redefining the urban landscape to minimize the reliance on personal vehicles and encourage sustainable mobility.

Cities worldwide are embracing a multi-modal approach to transportation, establishing well-connected public transit systems and comprehensive bike-sharing programs. One of the most noteworthy efforts to decrease car use is in Paris, which is leading the charge to increase walkability in their city and promote bicycling. Reports have indicated Paris hopes to

ban gas-powered cars in the city by 2030, and there are plans to spend two billion euros (\$2.2 billion) through 2027 to improve cycle infrastructure and help people buy bikes in an effort to reduce car use and boost cycling. These kinds of shifts can create vibrant urban hubs where daily necessities and amenities are within a short walk or bike ride, fostering a greater sense of community and reducing traffic congestion.

Walkability encompasses factors such as pedestrian infrastructure, sidewalk quality, street design, safety, accessibility to amenities and the overall pedestrian-friendliness of a neighborhood or city. Walkability is often associated with reduced reliance on cars, increased physical activity, decreased traffic congestion and a more vibrant and livable urban environment.

Pioneering developers across the U.S. are striving to enhance walkability through urban planning and infrastructure improvements to create more pedestrian-friendly communities. Walkability is not just a step toward a greener and healthier urban future; it's the foundation upon which our cities will be built for generations to come.



"Global Citizen," in some cities like Houston and San Francisco, transportation accounted for nearly half of their total emissions in the past few years, as cars are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Shared cars promote a sense of community and collaboration, encouraging residents to share the ride and reduce their

eliminating the need for lengthy commutes and creating a vibrant atmosphere where diverse professionals converge. It's a place where freelancers, entrepreneurs and remote workers can thrive, fostering a sense of community and cross-industry collaboration. These spaces have disrupted the traditional office model, encour-

## 5. Micro Retail

Micro retail is a dynamic and innovative concept that is reshaping the retail landscape in urban areas. These small-format retail spaces, characterized by their compact storefronts or kiosks, offer a unique shopping experience to both entrepreneurs and customers. With a footprint typically ranging from a few square feet to a few hundred square feet, micro-retail spaces often feature flexible lease terms, making them an attractive option for local artisans, startups and entrepreneurs. They provide an accessible platform for these businesses to showcase their products without the hefty investment required for a full-scale store. Beyond serving as a launchpad for local talent, micro-retail contributes to the vitality of neighborhoods by diversifying the range of offerings available and encouraging foot traffic. In these intimate settings, businesses are challenged to be creative and efficient, fostering innovation as they maximize the use of limited space.

## 6. Eco-Luxe Living

Eco-luxury living is the embodiment of a sustainable and harmonious urban lifestyle. It's a visionary concept that focuses on reducing the



carbon footprint while enhancing the quality of life for urban dwellers. Imagine a city where residents can walk or bike within 15 minutes to meet their daily needs, minimizing the reliance on cars and reducing emissions. In this urban oasis, trees line the sidewalks, providing shade and reducing the temperature to create a pleasant climate. Responsible landscaping with water-smart designs creates a beautiful yet eco-conscious urban environment. Abundant natural light, streaming through strategically placed windows, not only illuminates every corner but also promotes energy efficiency and a warm, inviting atmosphere by reducing reliance on artificial lighting. This urban landscape doesn't feel like the middle of a desert; instead, it's an oasis of greenery and light. The result is a long-term-minded, health-conscious and community-centric urban environment that redefines the essence of luxury living while contributing to a greener and brighter future.

Breaking barriers is something Zhang herself has done throughout her entire career. With a track record in some of the largest U.S. construction projects over the past decade, and a specialty in unitized construction and ground-breaking cost-saving methods, Zhang has shattered the proverbial glass ceiling in a highly competitive and male-dominant industry. Among her many accomplishments at the helm of Z Life was the unveiling of M8trix — a proprietary system that, drawing upon over 15 years of engineering expertise, “presents an innovative approach for the Midtown Vegas project is a proprietary system that allows us to achieve affordable buildings with high design and sustainable resources — bucking current norms amid an omnipresent ‘either-or’ paradigm. Our properties are uniquely designed to elevate the quality of living to enrich the typical urban environment,” she said.

The six urban trends Zhang cites above are not only reshaping the physical landscape of our cities but also fostering a sense of community, inclusivity and sustainability. As we continue to grapple with the

challenges and opportunities of urbanization, these elements guide us toward a future where cities are not just hubs of activity but also models of environmental sustainability and well-being for all their residents.

Ultimately, these communities can transform into urban “blue zones” where residents can live exceedingly long lives, the next high-tech “Silicon Valley,” highly accessible biohacking wellness hubs ... or all of the above.

The journey toward these future cities is a collective effort, one that holds immense promise for a brighter, more connected and more resilient urban world.



Merilee Kern is an internationally regarded brand strategist and analyst who reports on noteworthy industry change makers, movers, shakers and innovators across all B2B and B2C categories. This



Merilee Kern

includes field experts and thought leaders, brands, products, services, destinations and events. She is founder, executive editor and producer of “The Luxe List” as well as Host of the “Savvy Ventures” business TV show that airs nationally on Fox Business TV and Bloomberg TV and the “Savvy Living” lifestyle TV show that airs in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, Atlanta and other major markets on CBS, Fox and other networks.