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This year, I attended the ULI Fall meeting in Washington, D.C. as a student for the first time, thanks to the Philadelphia chapter's generous Etkin Johnson program. Prior to graduate school, I spent the majority of my career working with a variety of breakthrough technologies, many of which stand a chance of disrupting business as usual for the real estate industry today. At this year's Fall Meeting, I chose to attend concurrent sessions focused primarily on real estate technology and asset futureproofing, two topics essential to creating value in development in the short-term and quality of life in the long-term. The following is a summary of the trends and soundbites that stood out most to me over the course of the week.

- **Smart cities are really just a "strategic group hug."** George Karayannis of Panasonic SmartCityNOW joined a panel of urban development experts to discuss the trends and feasibility of smart cities and their promise of revitalizing life in urban spaces. Karayannis emphasized that the term "smart city" is often not the best to refer to the benefits citizens will receive from living in one, or the best to describe the tasks it takes to create one. Instead, he referred to smart cities as a "strategic group hug" between developers, cities, and utilities. George asserted that creating shared goals and objectives is core to success, and cited the Toronto Fleet electrification and Fujisawa projects as clear winners of this strategy.
- **Adaptive use will prevent further environmental damage.** Construction produces 9,800,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually, while demolition produces, on average, 4000 tons of carbon dioxide waste per 50,000 square feet demolished. Adaptive reuse will not only provide short-term economic relief, as local economies will be able to pivot their real estate assets to support shifting economies and trends, but also environmental relief. In 2014, 534 million tons of debris were produced; 90% came from demolition. Adaptive reuse has the ability to eliminate unnecessary demolition and the potential to extend the useful life of certain real assets, and, therefore, requires attention and investment from the real estate community.
- **Real estate technology investment is ahead of adoption.** Mark Grinis of EY's Global Real Estate, Hospitality & Construction practice declared that the term "PropTech" is too generalized to be meaningful, as is "innovation." Real estate as an asset class and the solutions it needs are very compartmentalized at this time, and there are many technology firms (both mature and start-up) that are trying to figure out where they fit in the ecosystem and can add value. The identity crisis analogy went a step further, as Grinis noted that the country's largest developers are unsure how to address innovation on the whole, outsourcing many of their concerns about futureproofing and differentiation to tech firms.
- **"You can never be too rich, too thin, or have too much fiber."** Connectivity remains king, as multiple panelists cited the need for more robust fiber and 5G networks in America. At the Smart Buildings 101 panel, Ben Grippi of MetLife discussed the importance of keeping buildings wired and tenants connected to internet: "Twenty years ago it was my job to lease up a building, now it's my job to make sure someone had a good day at work."