Post-Pandemic Cities

Regional Council of Mayors
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Pandemics accelerate us rapidly into the future, taking trends that existed prior to it and making them dominant and pervasive.
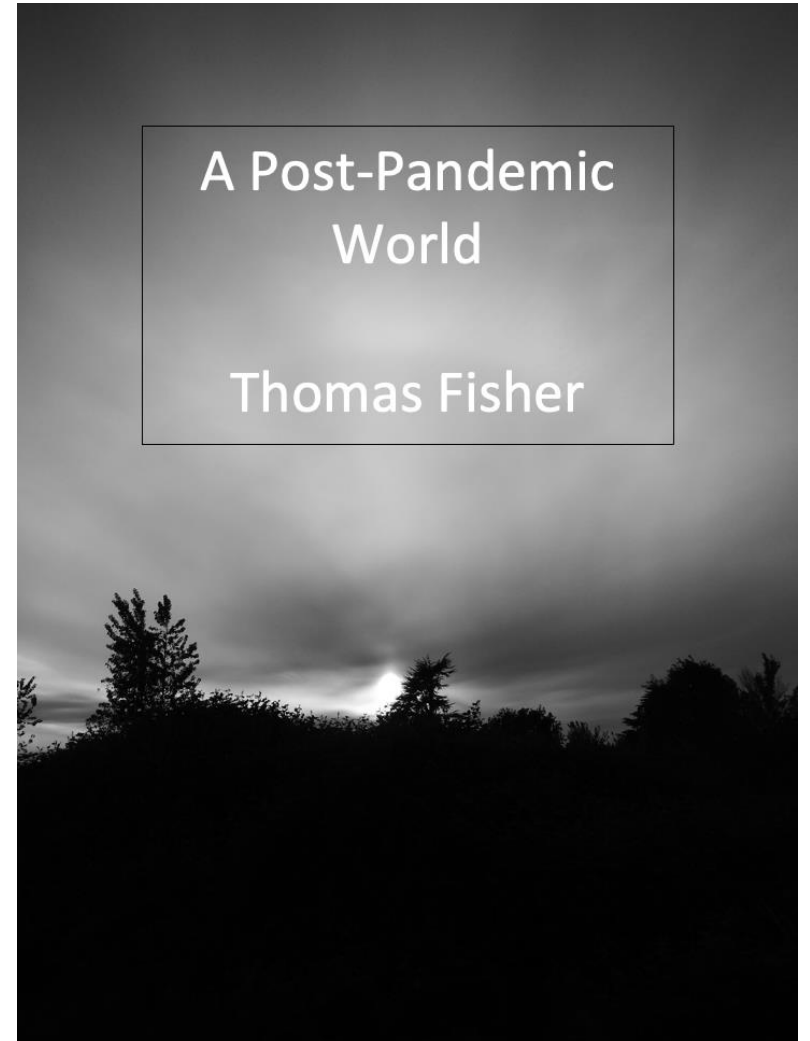

POST PANDEMIC WORLD

MINNESOTA DESIGN CENTER
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A Post-Pandemic World

Thomas Fisher

The 19th C. Cholera pandemic accelerated large cities, with indoor plumbing, sanitary sewer systems, and water utilities.

NOTICE.
PREVENTIVES OF
CHOLERA!

Published by order of the Sanatory Committee, under the sanction of the Medical Counsel.

BE TEMPERATE IN EATING & DRINKING!
Avoid Raw Vegetables and Unripe Fruit !

Abstain from COLD WATER, when heated, and above all from Ardent Spirits, and if habit have rendered them indispensable, take much less than usual.

071269 THE GHETTO, NEW YORK, N. Y.

The 1918 Flu pandemic accelerated the rise of auto-centric suburbs, as people sought to socially distance in cars and single-family houses.

COVID-19 has accelerated equally profound changes as it rebalanced the digital and physical worlds, with remote and in-person activities.

Cities have been built around the idea that we must travel to specialized buildings and districts in order to live, work, shop, and learn – which the pandemic showed to be no longer necessary.

For the first time in human history, the physical world must now compete with the digital one for virtually everything we do.
How will that affect cities? How will they compete in this new world?

Commercial Corridors:

What will we do with commercial corridors as bricks and mortar retail needs much less space – or no space at all – in a future of online shopping? What does the mean for tax revenues, land use policies, and parking demand?


"A recent study … found that the underutilized commercial land lining the Bay Area's 540 miles of arterials totaled 16,000 acres. If redeveloped, this land could provide close to 1.6 million new houses close to jobs and existing services."

https://www.livablecalifornia.org/famed-urbanist-peter-calthorpe-is-against-upzoning-put-housing-in-commercial-areas-dont-bulldoze-neighborhoods/

Parking Requirements:

What will we do with the 30% of the land, on average, that cities devote to parking, as online shopping, hybrid work, and mobility services become the norm? How can cities incentivize a higher and better use for that land and what impacts might that have on tax revenues and other city goals?
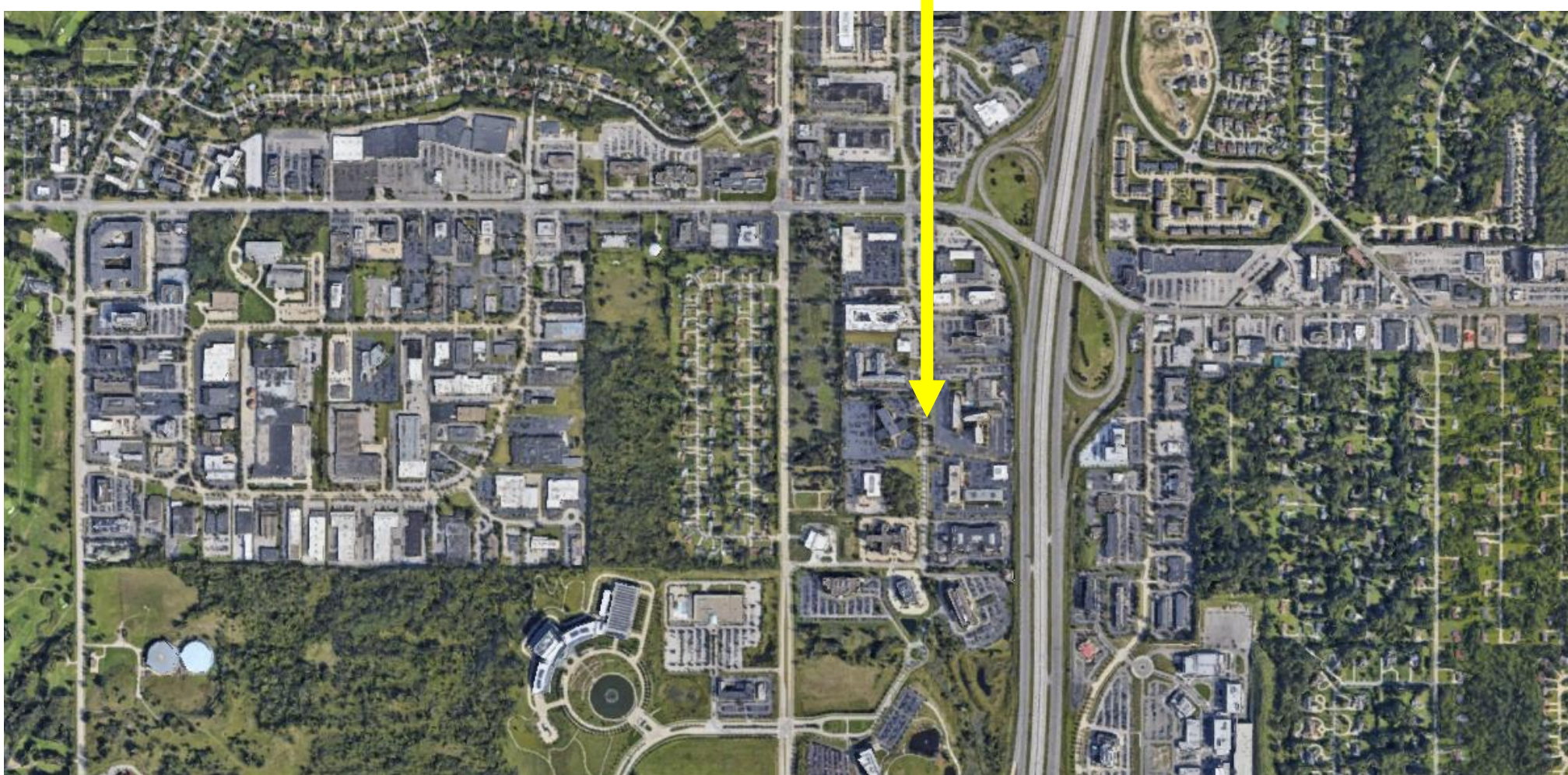
"America's 250 million cars have an estimated 2 billion parking spots and spend 95% of their time parked... Stop requiring off-street parking, price parking according to market value, and spend that revenue to better neighborhoods."

https://www.bloomberg.com/

Infrastructure Investments:

How much of the coming infrastructure money should be spent on traditional roads, bridges, and highways and what might better prepare cities and their residents for the new economy? What does post-pandemic infrastructure look like?

"The federal government … is only funding (over the course of a decade) 12% of our highway maintenance backlog and 22% of our bridge maintenance backlog?"

https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2021/10/4/will-we-have-an-infrastructure-bill-who-cares

Residential Districts:

What is a residential district when more than half the small businesses and 2/3rd of the U.S. economy now come out of people's homes? Does single-use zoning make sense anymore in an economy in which people now increasingly live, work, and produce in the same locations?

"More than half of all workers, accounting for more than two-thirds of all U.S. economic activity... (are) working from home full-time... only 26 percent of the U.S. labor force continues to work from their job's premises."

https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/economic-effects-working-home

Inequities:

How can cities address the inequities that the pandemic revealed and increase wealth-building and upward mobility opportunities among under-served communities and communities of color?
How can we avoid a two-class economy of "essential" and "remote" workers?

"The Black homeownership rate stood at 44.1 percent by the end of 2020. In comparison, the white homeownership rate rose from 73.7 percent to 74.5 percent during the same time period."

https://www.americanprogress.org/
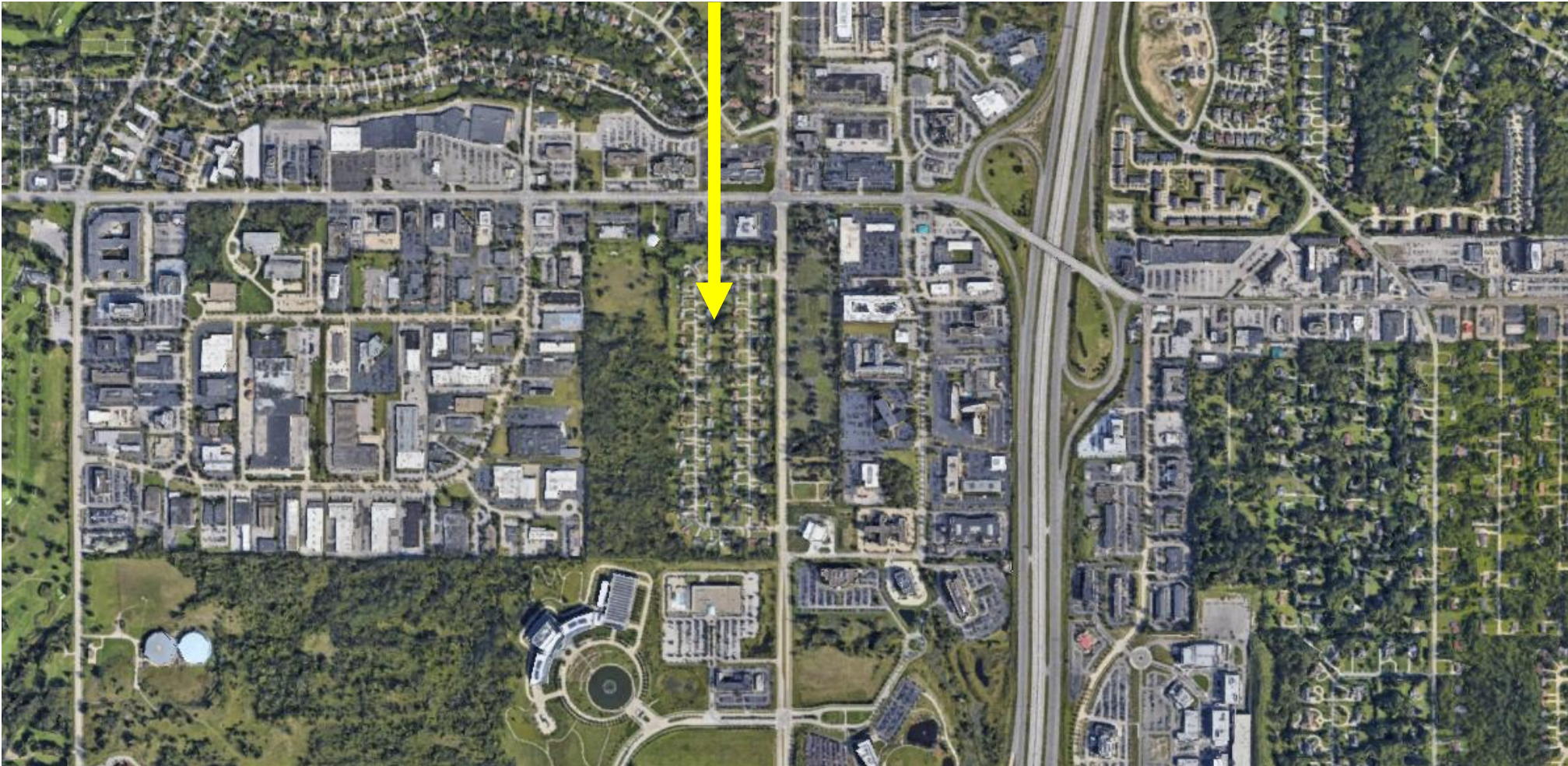
New Facilities:

What new kinds of facilities might emerge in the post-pandemic world, like micro-coworking spaces within walking distance of houses where people can go to access technology, childcare facilities, meeting space, and to simply get out of their home-office for a while?
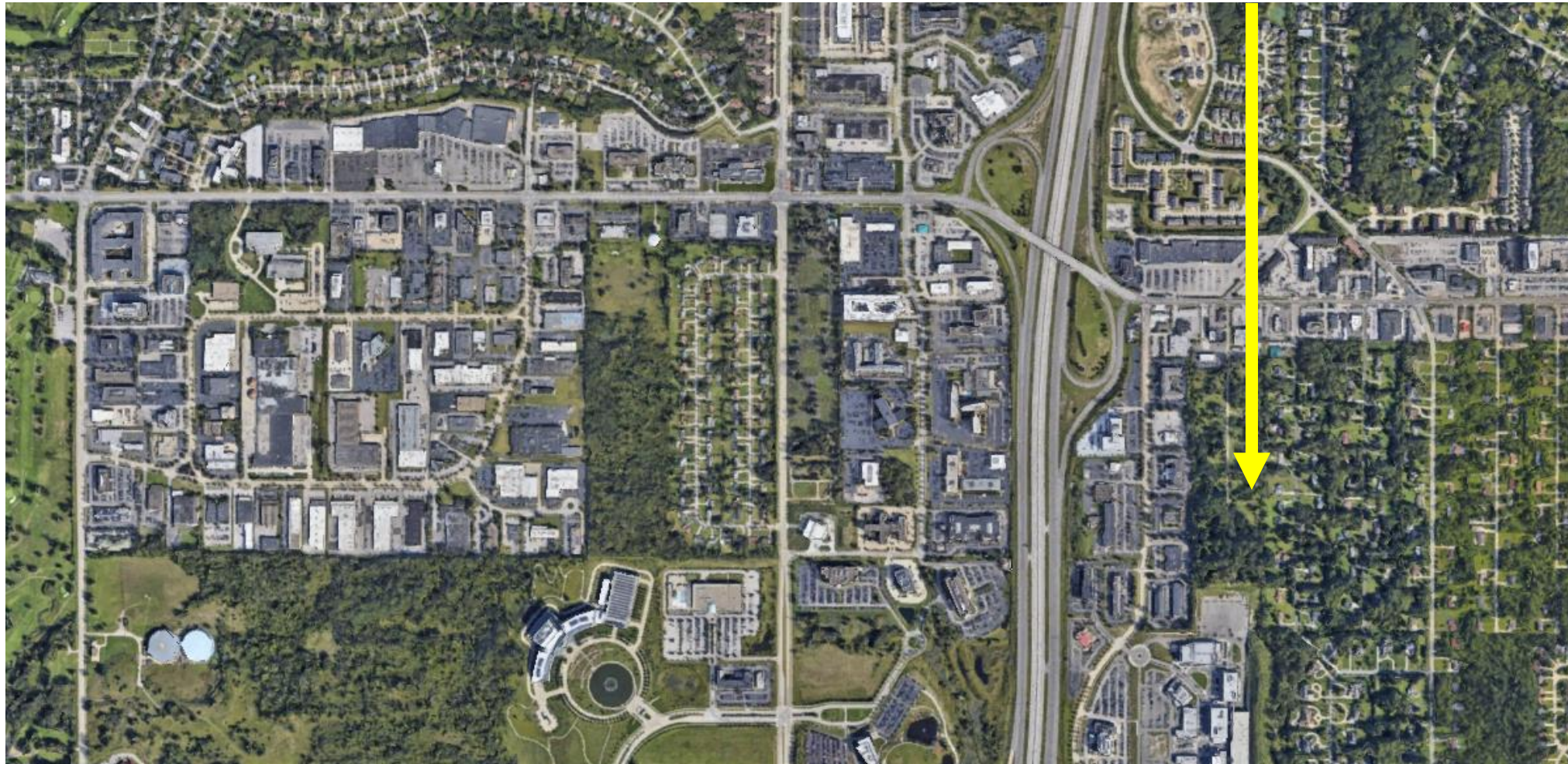
"There's a gap in the workspace ecosystem between home offices, coffee shops, and co-working spaces. The gap is in location, function, and pricing models and the neighborhood clubhouse is emerging to fill this void."

https://astudentoftherealestategame.com/

Public Land:

How might public land given over to golf courses, for example, have a higher and better use, serving a broader segment of the community, especially as people seek to more activities outdoors?


"There are more golf courses in the U.S. than anywhere else - about 2 million acres of green space all told. But there aren't enough golfers …. Across the U.S., courses began to close - 10% of them since 2006…. especially … the 11,000 courses open to the public."

Office Complexes:

How much corporate office space is needed as most companies move to hybrid work arrangements, with many staff working permanently from home? How can cities enable more mixed-use adaptations of existing buildings and campuses?
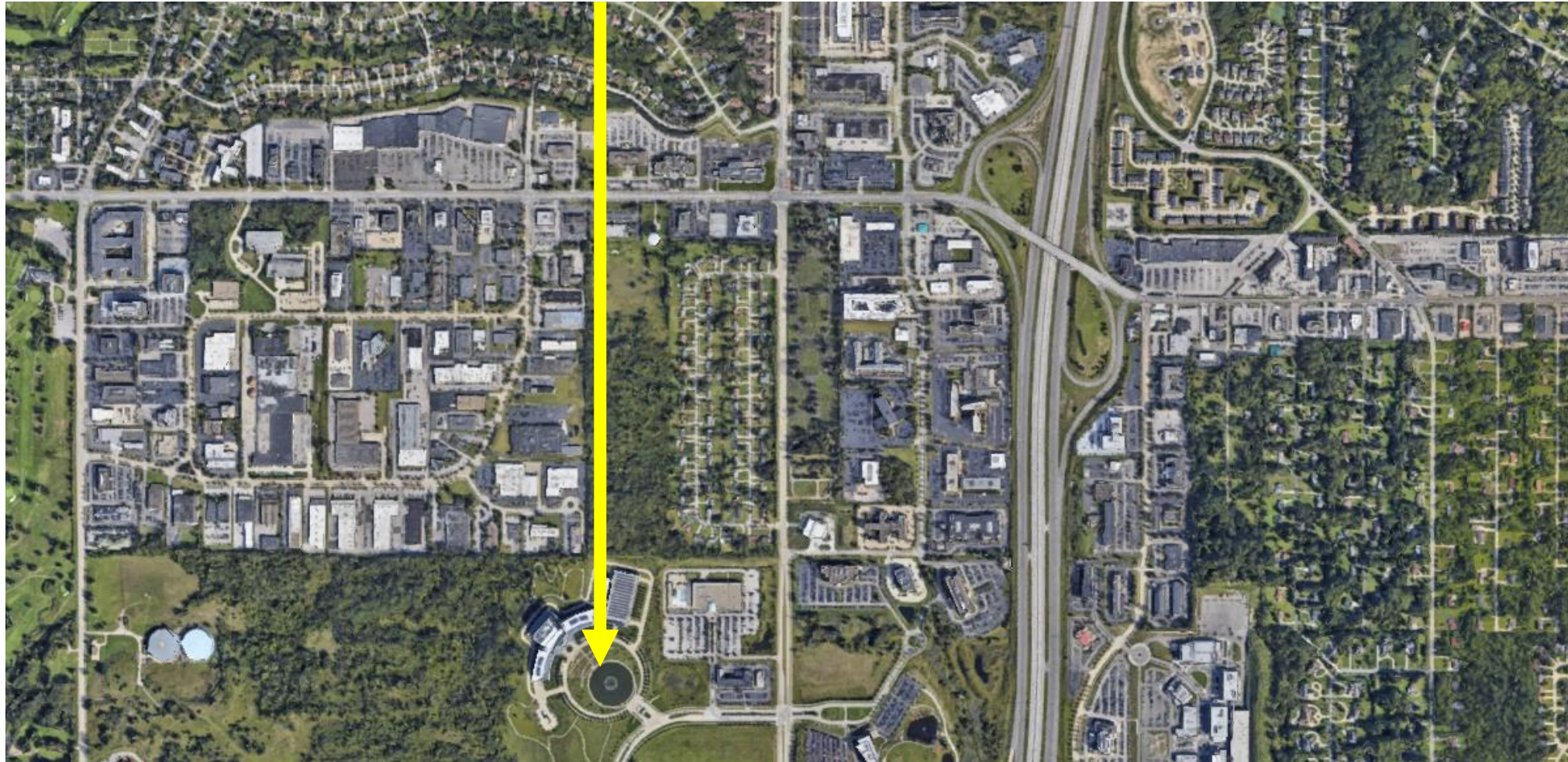
"According to McKinsey research, 80 percent of people questioned report that they enjoy working from home. Forty-one percent say that they are more productive than before and 28 percent that they are as productive."

https://www.mckinsey.com/

Small-Business Incubators:

How can cities help small businesses recover from the pandemic and allow the flexible use of space, be it bricks-and-mortar or pop-up space? And how might we allow live-work opportunities, in residential/industrial zones, for example, that many start-up businesses need?

"56% of small firms report (in September 2021) that they may not survive past three months without additional funding or market changes."

Small Business Majority, 09/14/2021

Industrial Districts:

How can industrial districts become more sustainable as production becomes more automated and the just-in-time, on-demand delivery of goods becomes an increasingly dominant mode?


"The eco-industrial park (EIP) concept calls for resource-efficient and cost-effective industrial parks that are more competitive, attractive for investment and risk resilient. Collaboration among industrial park stakeholders … is key."

https://businessfacilities.com/

Resilience:

How can we design our cities to handle increasingly frequent and extreme weather events? How can we leverage ecosystem services to protect our cities?
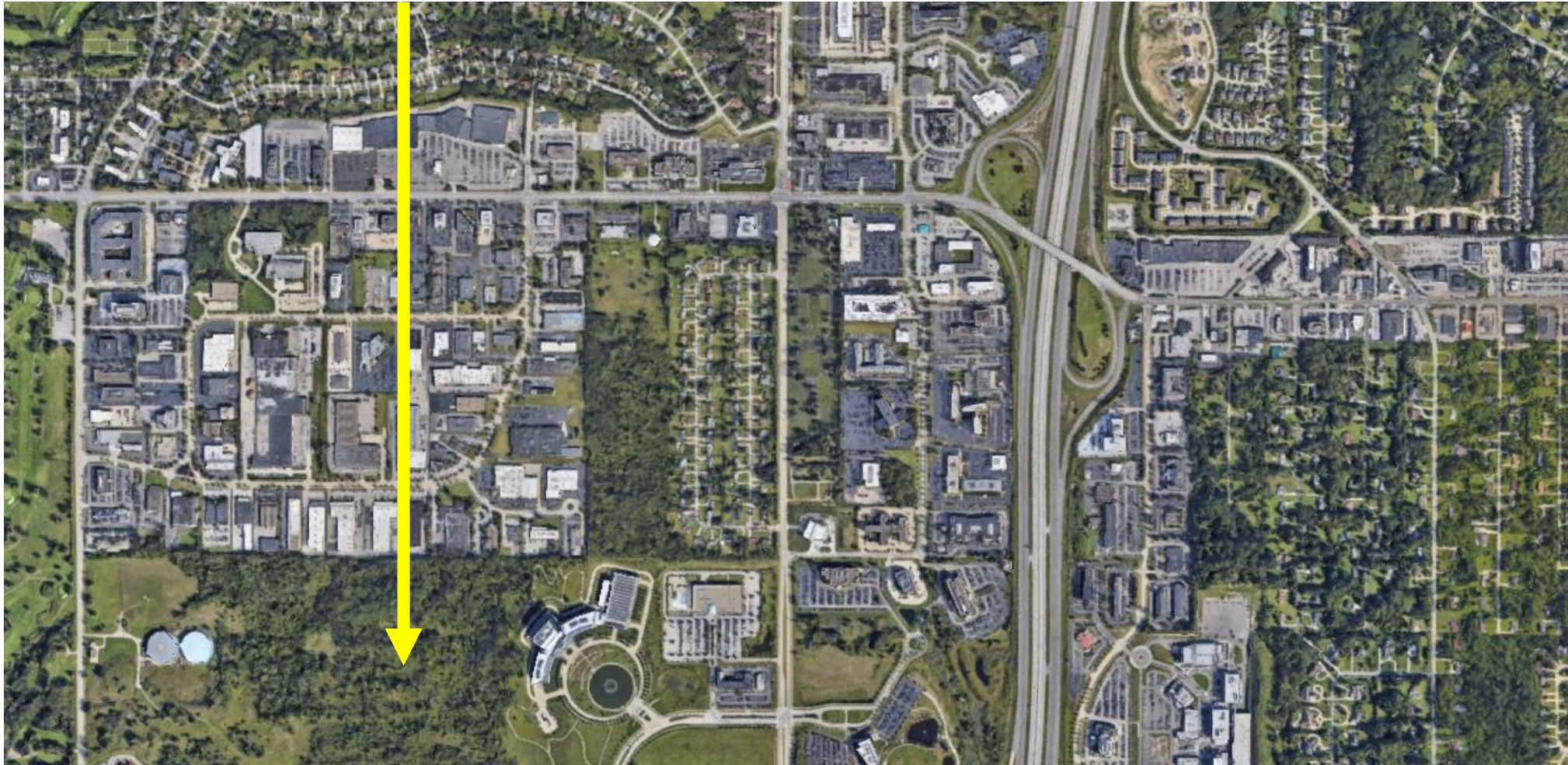
"Cities are already enacting policies to build resilience with flood mapping (167 cities), crisis management (126 cities), community engagement (106 cities), tree planting (99 cities) and long-term planning (88 cities) being the most reported actions."

https://www.cdp.net
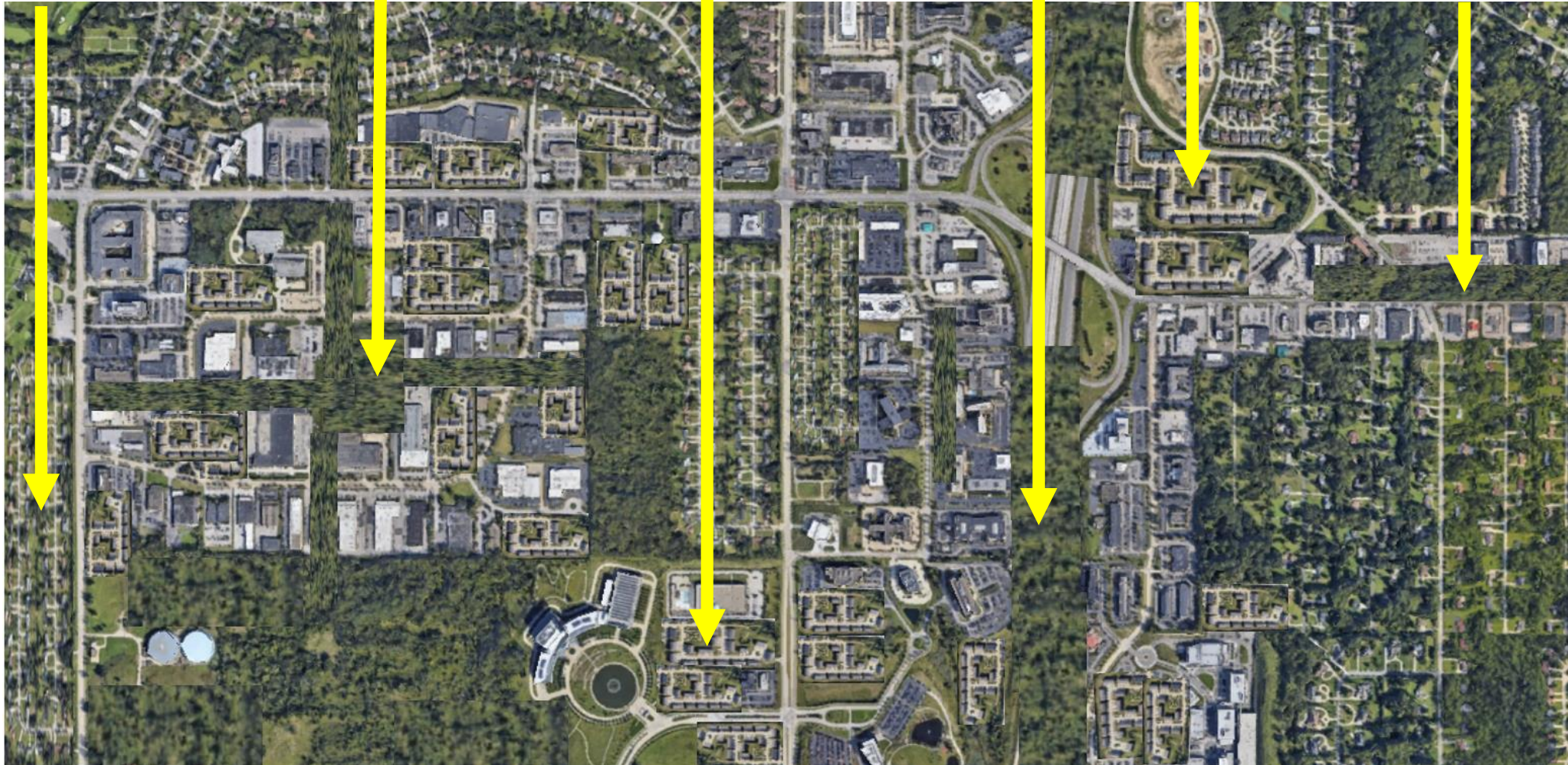
What the Post-Pandemic City Might Be Like:

More housing

More green space

More mixed use

Greener infrastructure

Development in parking lots

More walkable neighborhoods

"As people are untethered from their commutes, they are looking for something more than just bigger houses and bigger yards... they are still looking for those "place amenities" — parks, restaurants, walkability, charm — that they found in cities."

https://kinder.rice.edu/