



Norman Foster says Covid-19 won't change our cities

By Tom Ravenscroft, *DeZeen*, October 13, 2020

“The coronavirus pandemic will not fundamentally change cities, but could lead to more sustainable buildings, a ‘renaissance’ for urban farming, and a ‘new future’ for monorails, says [Norman Foster](#).

“ ‘Is Covid-19 going to change our cities?’ asked the founder of London-studio [Foster + Partners](#). ‘It might seem so now, but in the wider arc of history, the answer is no. It has merely accelerated trends of change that were already apparent before the pandemic.’

- ‘The Great Fire, 1666, created building codes that led to fireproof brick construction.’
- ‘The Cholera Epidemic of the mid-nineteenth century cleaned up the Thames from an open sewer and was the birth of modern sanitization.’
- ‘Then Tuberculosis struck and helped birth the modern movement in architecture — big windows, sunlight, terraces, white, and clean.’

“ ‘But every one of those consequences — fireproof construction, sewers, green parks, modernism — would have happened anyway, and not just in London but in cities around the world, because cities learn from each other.’

...

“‘The cumulative effect of these many trends are transforming city centers and local neighborhoods, making them quieter, cleaner, safer, healthier, more friendly, walkable, bikeable and, if the opportunity is grasped, greener,’ he said. ‘The last major pandemic in 1918-20 ... heralded the social and cultural revolution of the 1920s, with big public gathering spaces, department stores, cinemas, and stadia.’

“The architect concluded that the current crisis could lead to cities being improved to become more appealing to live in and more resilient to future health issues. ‘The pandemic is a tragic event, we have all lost loved ones, and for the moment the virus continues,’ he said. ‘But stepping back, I am confident that cities will prove their resilience and appeal — they will bounce back stronger and better as a consequence.’”

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