The Beyond Series

Ideas for the next era of economic and civic leadership

Big investments change more than the balance sheet. They can change the place.

Transformational change exposes weaknesses in institutions, measures, organizational structures, and economic-development practices built for a less complex era. The Beyond Series asks what comes next—from the investment bargain to enduring civic capacity.

01 Beyond Incentives

Building the Social License for Transformational Development

A transformational project cannot secure lasting legitimacy with a permit, an incentive, or an economic-impact forecast. Social license rests on a continuing bargain that creates measurable value for the stakeholders who live with the project while allocating costs and risks honestly. That bargain must hold through approval, construction, operation, expansion, and eventual transfer or closure, when promises are tested rather than announced. Incentives are justified only when they change behavior, protect the public against downside, and produce net public value.

THE QUESTION What measurable value will stakeholders receive—and who bears the costs and risks?

02 Beyond Recruitment

Governing the Transformational Opportunity

The arrival of a transformational project is not the end of economic development; it is the beginning of a governing test. Energy, utilities, land, housing, workforce, public finance, and community legitimacy must be brought into one decision even when authority is scattered across institutions. Communities need an operating model capable of choosing, structuring, delivering, measuring, and adapting major investment over time. Without that capacity, a community may win a project it cannot govern.

THE QUESTION Can the community govern the opportunity it is trying to win?

03 Beyond the Deal

From Economic Development Recruiter to Community Strategist

A groundbreaking can conceal a strategic failure: the deal may close while the community remains unprepared for what follows. Economic developers can no longer succeed solely by selling a site, negotiating terms, and announcing jobs. Their emerging role is community strategist, connecting recruitment to talent, infrastructure, housing, entrepreneurship, resilience, and quality of place. The measure of success is not merely what arrives, but what the community becomes capable of sustaining.

THE QUESTION What must the profession become when the deal is only the beginning?

04 Beyond Jobs

From Job Creation to Durable Community Prosperity

Job counts and capital investment are visible; the most important returns may emerge years later—or not at all. A community that commits resources and accepts risk should seek durable prosperity: stronger earnings and fiscal health, portable skills, capable suppliers, shared infrastructure, ownership, and future options. This paper challenges public leaders to measure what remains after the announcement fades. A transformational project should leave the place more capable than it found it.

THE QUESTION What can the community do, produce, own, and earn because the investment occurred?

Building the capacity to govern what comes next

05 Beyond Silos The Executive Capacity Gap

Transformational decisions rarely arrive inside one executive's job description. They cross technical systems, public finance, politics, infrastructure, and communities faster than a traditional management pyramid can assemble judgment. The executive capacity gap is structural, not simply a shortage of talented people. This paper examines how leaders can integrate specialized expertise and independent institutions without losing clear authority or accountability.

THE QUESTION How should leaders organize when the problem spans institutions?

06 Beyond Transparency The Next Generation of Open Government in the Age of AI

A government can release every required document and still leave citizens unable to understand a consequential choice before it is made. Truly Open Government lets people trace answers to evidence, see what remains uncertain, test competing claims, and intervene while participation still matters. Artificial intelligence could make complex public records more navigable, but only if its explanations remain inspectable rather than becoming another black box. The measure of openness is not the volume of disclosure; it is the public's practical capacity to scrutinize power.

THE QUESTION Can citizens inspect the evidence and influence the decision in time?

07 Beyond Government The Case for Civic Capitalism

As AI and other transformational technologies generate wealth and disruption, government cannot carry the full societal burden alone. Capitalism has responsibilities beyond shareholder returns and conventional philanthropy because markets depend on capable people, functioning communities, trusted institutions, infrastructure, and broadly shared opportunity. Civic Capitalism treats investment in those foundations as economic infrastructure, not a charitable afterthought. Businesses that benefit most from transformation have both a duty and a long-term interest in strengthening the society that makes their success possible—without displacing democratic authority.

THE QUESTION What must capitalism contribute when government cannot carry transformation alone?

08 Beyond Taxes The Civic Responsibilities of the Transformational Corporation

When a corporation becomes one of a place's defining institutions, paying taxes is the floor, not the full measure of its obligations. Its success draws on workers, infrastructure, civic trust, public capacity, and democratic systems it did not create alone. Beyond Taxes asks how such a company should strengthen those foundations through its conduct and long-term participation—not merely through philanthropy—while respecting elected authority. Corporations should participate in civic life without purchasing civic power.

THE QUESTION What does a defining corporation owe the place that sustains it?

Bring these questions to your next consequential decision.

Connect with Bear Strategies to discuss what communities should measure, govern, and build.