



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD AND THE PRESIDENT

BY KATHRYN J. LINCOLN AND GEORGE W. McCARTHY

Celebrating 75 Years of Progress

“The association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times.”

THE POLITICAL ECONOMIST Henry George wrote those words in 1879, but they might just as easily be written today. To be sure, the enduring coexistence of great wealth and great poverty is less of an enigma than it once was, thanks to more than a century of research, policy, experience, and observation, but an undeniable gulf remains between, as George put it, “the House of Have and the House of Want.” The uneven effects of the global pandemic have made this divide both deeper and more apparent.

George’s observation that the rising tide of the Industrial Revolution simply wasn’t lifting all boats captured the imagination of the American public, including the young inventor and entrepreneur John C. Lincoln, who heard George speak in Cleveland in 1889. John cottoned to the suggestion that the solution to this pernicious problem lay in a single four-letter word: land. He launched the Lincoln Foundation in 1946 to support teaching and research related to the idea that changes to land ownership and taxation could effectively address social inequities.

Seventy-five years later, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy—which was established by John’s son David in 1974 and merged with the original entity to become a private operating foundation in 2006—carries on that legacy. Our focus has broadened, but our commitment remains largely

the same: to research and propose creative approaches to land as a solution to economic, social, and environmental challenges.

With offices in Cambridge, MA; Phoenix, AZ; Washington, DC; and Beijing, and with active programming and partners on six continents, we have become a global organization with a global impact. Whether we are teaching urban planning students about the finer points of municipal finance or advising policy makers in Latin America or China on land-based financing; whether we are convening an international network of conservation experts or guiding leaders of U.S. legacy cities through a scenario planning process, we do everything we can, everywhere we can, to promote the effective use, taxation, and stewardship of land. We demonstrate that the choices communities make about land policy can improve the quality of life for the people who call those places home.

These are uncertain times, marked by nearly unprecedented political, social, economic, and environmental turmoil. As a society, we face complex challenges that require local commitments on the ground and a coordinated global response. In this special 75th anniversary issue, we’re pleased to share more about the roots of our work, and to offer a closer look at the solutions to be found in land.

Explore the history of the Lincoln Institute in “The Life of an Idea,” page 4.