

THE LIFE OF AN IDEA

**THE ORIGINS AND IMPACT OF THE
LINCOLN INSTITUTE OF LAND POLICY**

By Anthony Flint

FOR A YOUNG John Lincoln, growing up in the countryside of Michigan and Ohio, a knack for fixing and inventing things was as readily apparent as his entrepreneurial spirit. He enrolled in Ohio State University but left in his third year, having read nearly all the engineering books in the library, and went to work in the emerging field of electricity at the end of the 19th century, in the same era as Edison, Westinghouse, and Tesla.

In his twenties, working for a series of small companies based in Cleveland, Lincoln invented an electric brake for streetcars, securing the first of 55 patents. He also invented an electric motor. And one of the nation's first electric cars. And ultimately, a system for joining metals through arc welding that would help power the extraordinary industrial mobilization at the start of the 20th century.

In 1895, with \$200 of his own savings, he founded the Lincoln Electric Company, which would grow into a multibillion-dollar global enterprise that transformed the design and construction of buildings, bridges, ships, manufacturing machinery, and military armaments. Along with his younger brother, James, he established progressive employee policies including incentives, paid leave, health care, and a lifelong employment guarantee.

For a young John Lincoln, growing up in the countryside of Michigan and Ohio, a knack for fixing and inventing things was as readily apparent as his entrepreneurial spirit.

Tomato fields, north central Ohio. Credit: Alex MacLean.



1866

John Cromwell Lincoln born in Painesville, Ohio, to Louisa Lincoln, an educator and trained physician, and William E. Lincoln, a preacher focused on temperance and abolition.

1888

John Lincoln moves to the industrial hub of Cleveland and finds work electrifying city streetcar systems.

1889

Lincoln attends a speech by Henry George decrying the inequities of the Gilded Age. He later reads George's seminal work *Progress and Poverty*, igniting a lifelong interest in land use and policy.

1891

Lincoln invents an electric streetcar brake, securing the first of 55 lifetime patents.

1895

With \$200 in capital, John Lincoln founds Lincoln Electric to develop and commercialize an electric motor. He also debuts one of the world's first electric cars.

1906

Lincoln Electric is incorporated. John soon hands the reins of the company—which would become known for its unique arc welding process and progressive employment policies—to his younger brother, James.

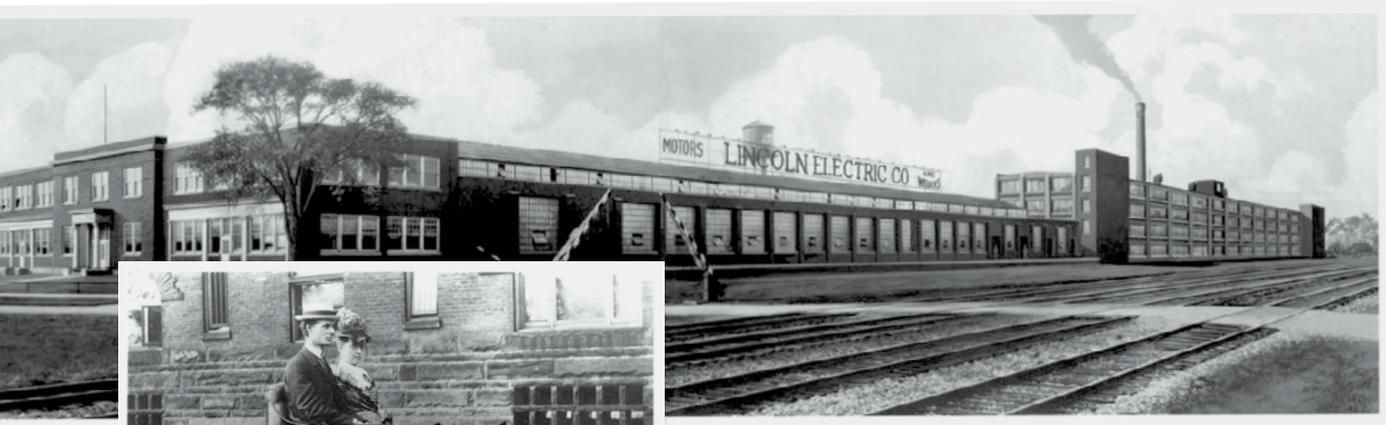
1913

John Lincoln earns an honorary degree from Ohio State, predated to 1888.

1924

John Lincoln is nominated by the Commonwealth Land Party to run for vice president of the United States, a mostly symbolic candidacy intended to bring attention to Georgist principles.





John C. Lincoln founded the Lincoln Electric Company in 1895 with \$200 and “more nerve than knowledge.” Among his inventions was a motor for an electric car (left). The company expanded quickly, moving into a former Cleveland automobile factory in 1923 (above). Lincoln Electric now has 58 facilities in 18 countries. Credits: LECO archives.

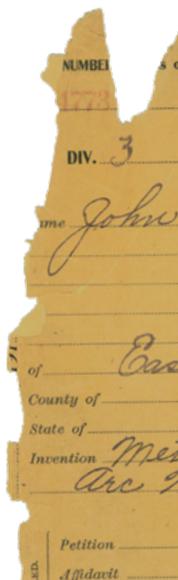
In any other biography, all of that would have been enough—the accomplishments of a lifetime. But Lincoln had another side, as a thinker, writer, and proponent of socioeconomic fairness in all its forms. Inspired by the political economist Henry George, he sought to address the growing gap between rich and poor. It was a rift fueled, to his mind, not so much by manufacturing and factories, but by his Gilded Age contemporaries enriching themselves through real estate speculation.

And so he turned his inventive mind to something else: establishing a tradition of education and research on land use and ownership, guided by principles of fairness. In 1946, he established the Lincoln Foundation, which later became the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

The audacious proposition underlying the Lincoln Institute—bringing together scholars and practitioners to investigate the unique importance of land in economies, government, and society at large—would live on through Lincoln’s son and granddaughter, who became stewards of his legacy and innovators in their own right. Along the way, their vision has been

embraced and advanced by dozens of board members, including fellow members of the Lincoln family; five chief executives; a faculty and staff that grew from a handful of scholars to a workforce of nearly 100 today; and a constellation of planners, authors, educators, and other partners. The Lincoln Institute has evolved to take on issues its founder could not have foreseen, from the climate crisis to the rapid urbanization of China. So it was that an idea sparked at the end of the 19th century became remarkably applicable for the 21st.

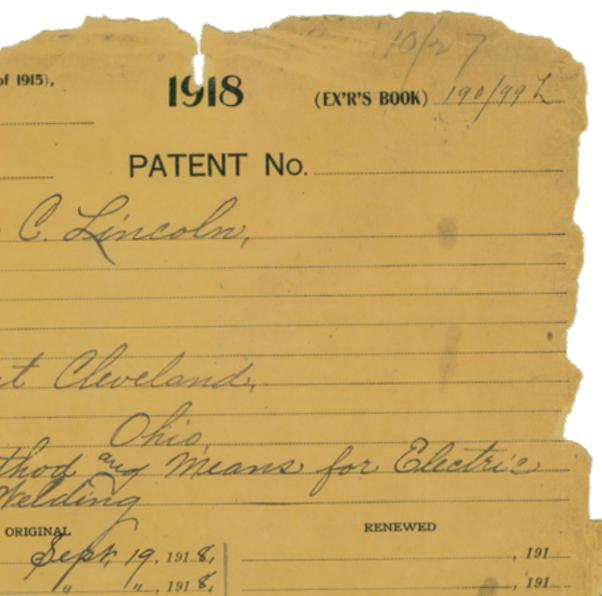
The niche that the Lincoln Institute works in—the role of land in society—is not always readily understood, says former Arizona governor, U.S. Department of the Interior secretary, and longtime Lincoln Institute board member Bruce Babbitt. “America does not have much of a land planning tradition,” says Babbitt, for whom the Lincoln Institute’s Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy is named. The Lincoln Institute “is working on the frontiers of economics, science, conservation, and development . . . where innovation and risk-taking are essential to success.”



“America does not have much of a land planning tradition. The Lincoln Institute is working on the frontiers of economics, science, conservation, and development . . . where innovation and risk-taking are essential to success.”

Practitioners have taken notice. The former chair of the planning and zoning commission in Hartford, Connecticut—a city that has wrestled with the loss of population and manufacturing jobs—says the Lincoln Institute has helped the city conjure a new future, one defined by assets like regional high-speed rail. The Lincoln Institute “framed the policy discussions that can transform the way we use land,” says Sara Bronin, who now leads the land use equity coalition Desegregate Connecticut. It has been invaluable to have the insight and support of an organization that helps kindle greater ambitions, says Bronin: “It just expands everybody’s thinking.”

Copy of a 1918 patent application for the arc welding process pioneered by Lincoln Electric. The patent, one of 55 earned by John Lincoln during his lifetime, was granted in 1929. Credit: LECO archives.



1925

David Colvill Lincoln, future president of the Lincoln Foundation and founding chair of the Lincoln Institute, is born. He is the third child of John C. and Helen Colvill, who married in 1918.

1931

Lincoln family moves from Cleveland to Phoenix. John Lincoln is active in the area’s early development and begins a long tradition of local philanthropy.

1936

John Lincoln becomes the single largest funder of the Henry George School of Social Science in New York City.

1946

The Lincoln Foundation is incorporated in Arizona to promote education and research on land ownership and taxation.

1952

Former FDR adviser Ray Moley becomes involved with the Lincoln Foundation. He would later write the biography *The American Century of John C. Lincoln*.

1959

John C. Lincoln dies at 92. David C. Lincoln takes the reins of the Lincoln Foundation.

1962

David Lincoln establishes Lincoln School of Public Finance at Claremont Men’s College, beginning a long partnership with California higher-education institutions.

1966

John C. Lincoln Institute for Research in Land Economics, Public Finance, and Taxation is established at the University of Hartford in Connecticut.

WHEN JOHN C. LINCOLN arrived in Cleveland in 1888, the city was a hub of technological innovation, not unlike Silicon Valley a century later. Lincoln started a family and his company there and, after he turned the operations of Lincoln Electric over to James and returned to the workbench, produced everything from a meat-curing apparatus to a wire-bending method for springs. And he read, and reread, *Progress and Poverty* by Henry George.

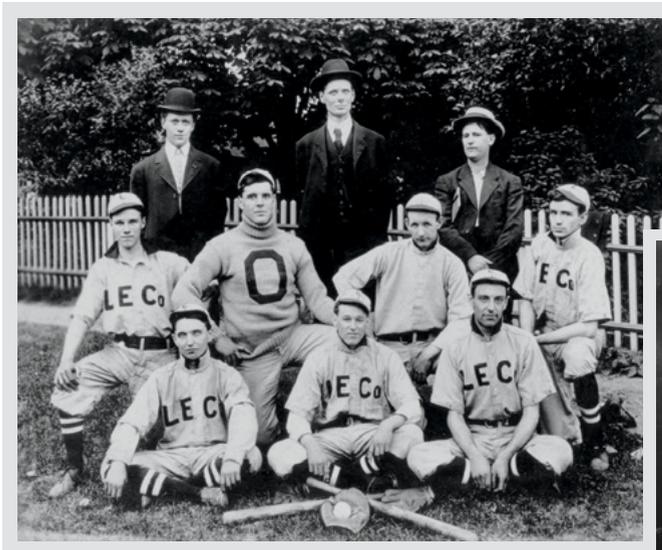
He had heard George speak in 1889, at a lecture he'd been invited to by a fellow inventor, Tom Johnson, who would later become mayor of Cleveland. He left that lecture hall convinced of a fundamental injustice: that landowners realized windfalls not by doing anything special or producing goods, but simply by holding land that increased in value because of government actions—like putting in a railroad line.

“The land value created by the community belongs to the community, just as surely as the wheat raised by the farmer belongs to the farmer,” Lincoln wrote decades later in one of several pamphlets he published, this one titled “Stop Legal Stealing.”

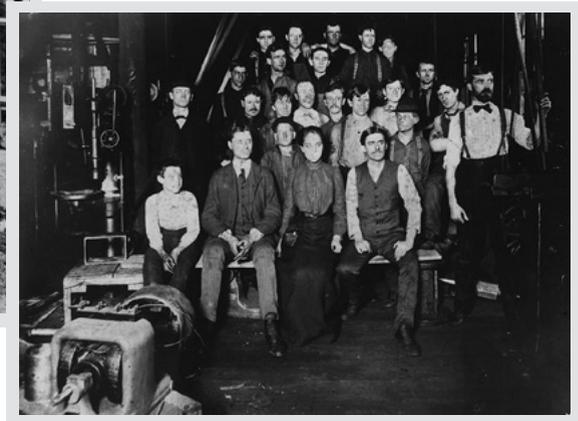
“The land value created by the community belongs to the community, just as surely as the wheat raised by the farmer belongs to the farmer,” wrote John C. Lincoln.

Lincoln rallied to George's cause, which is embraced today by leading economists. He even accepted a nomination from the Commonwealth Land Party to run for vice president of the United States in 1924, a mostly symbolic step intended to bring attention to Georgist principles and one he later deemed “a crazy thing to do.”

He would spend little of the wealth he accrued from his inventions on creature comforts. Instead, he became the single largest benefactor of the Henry George School of Social Science, which was founded in 1932 in New York City and still operates today. In 1946, he established the Lincoln Foundation, which was to be “dedicated to education in its broadest sense,” with a mission to “seek, through the dissemination of proven truth, to change the standards of economic education and of public opinion, and thus contribute to a more just and productive life for free men and women.”



The Lincoln Electric baseball team (left); John Lincoln is in the back row, center, and his brother James is in the middle row, second from left. Below, the entire Lincoln Electric workforce in 1907. Credits: LECO archives.





Camelback Inn, Paradise Valley, Arizona. Credit: PicClick.com.

Having moved to Phoenix in 1931, primarily to improve the health of his wife, Helen, Lincoln engaged in new activities in the Southwest including mining and the fledgling tourism business. He cofounded the Camelback Inn in nearby Paradise Valley and became a major benefactor in health care and other civic initiatives; to this day, a street and a medical center in the area bear his name.

In the 1950s, things slowed down for the slender man a Cleveland newspaper had once dubbed “tougher than a mule,” after he had sprung into action to sever a downed trolley wire. John Lincoln reached the end of his life in Arizona in 1959. He left the legacy of the Lincoln Foundation to his progeny, who would guide it to the next levels of philanthropy, education, and research.

DAVID COLVILL LINCOLN, born in 1925, was the youngest of John and Helen’s three children. Like his father, David revealed an acumen in business, engineering, and philanthropy as a young man. When he took the reins of the Lincoln Foundation after his father’s death, he expanded the universe of grant recipients to include a school of public finance at the Claremont Men’s College in California, the University of Virginia, New York University, the University of Chicago, and the Urban Land Institute.



1968

David Lincoln expands activities internationally, cofounding Taiwan’s Land Reform Training Institute, now the International Center for Land Policy Studies and Training.

1974

David C. Lincoln launches the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. The freestanding entity is funded by the Lincoln Foundation and welcomed to Cambridge, Massachusetts, by the president of Harvard University.

Its early work centers on the property tax, urban planning and development, land economics, and property rights. Arlo Woolery serves as the first executive director.

1975

Colloquium on Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) kicks off an era of leadership in the development of new methods for valuing property.

1979

Lewis Mumford receives the first Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Award; later recipients include Justice William Brennan and EPA Director William Reilly.

1980

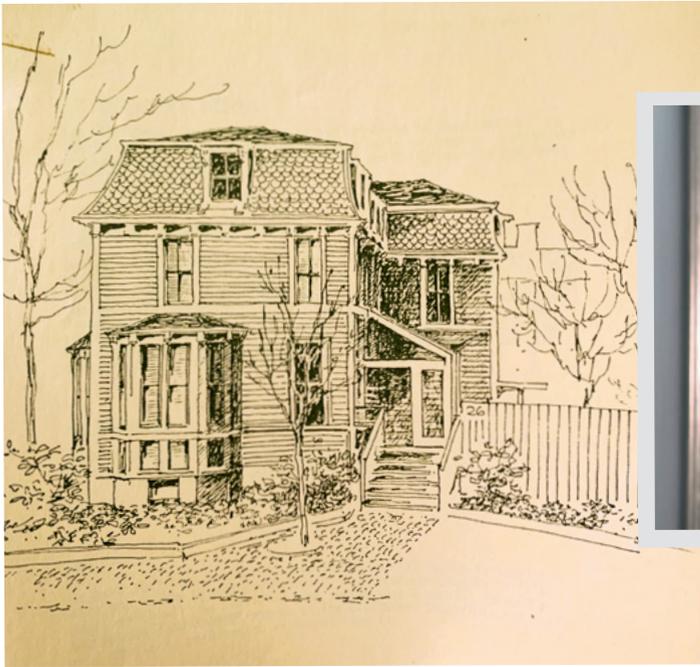
Lincoln Institute holds a meeting of state tax judges, which becomes an annual national conference to share experiences and explore issues related to tax law.

1981

Representatives from 40 land trusts gather in Cambridge under the leadership of attorney and Lincoln Institute Fellow Kingsbury Browne. They go on to form the Land Trust Alliance; more than 1,000 member organizations have since protected 56 million acres and counting.

1986

Ronald L. Smith, dean of the School of Business Administration at Georgetown University, is named executive director.



David Lincoln, shown with a portrait of his father, launched the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in 1974. At left, the organization's first offices in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Credits (l-r): Lincoln Institute archives, LECO archives.

The Lincoln Foundation had no staff then, and a 1963 annual report acknowledged that the first years “were measurably experimental.” But David Lincoln collaborated with various advisers including Raymond Moley, a member of FDR’s Brain Trust who had advised John Lincoln and made key introductions to scholars active in land economics. One such introduction was to the economist Archibald Woodruff, then the president of the University of Hartford. Woodruff became a board member of the foundation and offered a home to a new organization: the John C. Lincoln Institute, created in 1966.

Woodruff made further introductions, including to leaders at the Vatican and the United Nations, that led to discussions of land tenure and land reform internationally, and

The Lincoln Foundation had no staff then, and a 1963 annual report acknowledged that the first years were “measurably experimental.”

specifically in Asia. In 1968 the footprint of the Lincoln Foundation officially expanded with the establishment of the Land Reform Training Institute in Taiwan, now called the International Center for Land Policy Studies and Training and still a partner of the Lincoln Institute.

Still, David Lincoln had bigger dreams. The John C. Lincoln Institute in Hartford was a good start, but he and his board members envisioned a new entity that would be both far-reaching and freestanding. He wrote to at least a dozen university presidents proposing a collaboration on land use and land taxation issues. Derek Bok, then the president of Harvard University, was the only leader who wrote back, offering his assistance with the creation of a program in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy was established in 1974 as a center for education on land use and land-related tax issues, funded by the Lincoln Foundation. Arlo Woolery, an expert on public utility regulation and valuation, served as its first executive director. The Lincoln Institute set up shop at a house on Trowbridge Street in

Cambridge, inviting professors from Harvard and MIT to help evaluate the research initiatives that could support practitioners and policy makers through the 1970s and beyond.

It was a welcome invitation at a time of great concern for the fate of struggling and conflict-riven cities, recalls William A. Doebele, the first curator of Harvard's Loeb Fellowship, which had been founded just a few years earlier, in 1970, to enlist mid-career professionals to help solve urban problems.

The idea of the Lincoln Institute "was to study the property tax in all of its forms—a hugely important source of income for municipal governments," says Doebele. "There were all kinds of studies about the income tax and other forms of taxation. But nobody was looking at property taxation."

David Lincoln, Doebele recalls, "was not someone who much liked being in the spotlight." He was unostentatious and frugal, toting around the same leather briefcase and driving the same car long past the time when most others would replace such things. But his understated demeanor belied a determination to push forward into new frontiers.

Just a year after its founding, the Lincoln Institute held a colloquium on Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA), an emerging methodology to bring property valuation—still done with pencil and paper in many places then—into the digital era. The Lincoln Institute would go on to play a key role in making the tool widely accessible (see *City Tech*, page 26).

The fledgling institute was a welcoming place for up-and-coming scholars like Daphne Kenyon, a senior research associate at the Urban Institute, and Joan Youngman, who joined after doing groundbreaking work in taxation and law at Harvard. "It was not only open to new ideas, it also actively promoted and investigated new areas of research," says Kenyon, now resident fellow in tax policy at the Lincoln Institute. "I have certainly found it to be an intellectually stimulating place to work."



1988

Study of sprawl ramps up with a major forum on growth management in Phoenix. Subsequent research topics include smart growth, New Urbanism, regional planning, and "zombie" subdivisions. Lincoln Institute releases first major evaluation of smart growth policies in the United States.

1989

Land Lines first published as an eight-page internal newsletter.

1990

"Land Use and the Constitution" course launches. Early distance learning courses, including "Comprehensive Planning for Practitioners" and "New England's Forests," engage students nationwide.

1991

Lincoln Institute moves to current headquarters at 113 Brattle Street in Cambridge. The Queen Anne building was one of several once owned by the family of poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and had been used as a school.

1992

First annual Journalists Forum held with reporters from 13 newspapers, including the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

1993

Program on Latin America and the Caribbean is established, tackling topics from informal settlements to cadastres. Training in land reform and the property tax begins in Eastern Europe.

1996

Kathryn Jo Lincoln, John Lincoln's granddaughter, becomes chair of the board and later chief investment officer. Harvard urban planning professor H. James Brown is named president.

Early areas of research at the Lincoln Institute included the fiscal and environmental impacts of sprawl. Credit: Duncan Rawlinson/Flickr CC BY-NC 2.0.



In addition to land and property taxation, land use was a major focus, as the Lincoln Institute explored the environmental and fiscal ramifications of suburban sprawl. This work “did help move the needle,” says Richard Perkins, a founder of the real estate company LandVest and a former board member of the Lincoln Institute. Environmentally sensitive development was catching on with developers, but municipalities needed to know how to change the rules to encourage it. “That [influence] was huge,” Perkins says. “It affects the entire world and how we live.”

The study of sprawl continued under the next executive director, Ronald L. Smith, who arrived in 1986 after a stint as dean of the

School of Business Administration at Georgetown University. In 1988, the Lincoln Institute hosted a major forum on growth management in Phoenix. This ultimately led to research on smart growth, New Urbanism, regional planning, “zombie” subdivisions, and the release of the first major evaluation of smart growth policies in the United States.

The cutting-edge movement for sustainable development drew strength from the Lincoln Institute’s research and assessment, says Armando Carbonell, who led a regional land use planning system for Cape Cod, Massachusetts, before joining the Lincoln Institute to manage its urban programs. “We took a rigorous, evidence-based approach to look at what policies worked or didn’t work,” he says.

In the 1980s, financing land conservation became another critical part of the Lincoln Institute’s growing portfolio. Boston attorney and Lincoln Institute Fellow Kingsbury Browne convened some 40 representatives of land trusts to engage in open-ended discussions, with the goal of establishing best practices for conservation easements and land purchases. That gathering gained both momentum and national



A 1983 meeting of land trust leaders. Lincoln Institute Fellow Kingsbury Browne is in the third row, left, and future Land Trust Alliance President Jean Hocker is standing, second from right. Credit: Files of Jean Hocker.

influence, much as the start-up work in CAMA had. The group became the Land Trust Alliance, whose more than 1,000 member organizations have protected 56 million acres and counting.

Convening practitioners, holding workshops, and fostering networks would become a hallmark of the Lincoln Institute. Journalists writing about cities and urban growth in the United States and Latin America, state tax judges, city planners, property rights scholars, international ministers, and mayors of post-industrial legacy cities have all come together regularly over the years, exchanging ideas and forming networks that advance policies and practices on the ground.

Nan Whaley, the mayor of Dayton, Ohio, has participated in workshops with fellow chief executives of struggling postindustrial cities. “It’s a nice relationship between listening and telling,” Whaley says, noting that the events she has participated in are designed “not to tell practitioners what to do, but to take into account what challenges each community is facing.”

Many other political leaders came to appreciate the bridge between research and training, and between policy and practice. “This was one of the first institutions of its kind that stepped back and looked at what we were doing in terms of the environment, land conservation, planning,” says former Massachusetts governor and presidential candidate Michael Dukakis. “Thoughtful analysis of what we were doing to our natural and urban environment—for guys like me, it was one place you could get sensible information about what was actually going on, during a time of massive disinvestment in cities. Now, we have lots of folks who are into this. But not then. It has been a real contribution.”

“This was one of the first institutions of its kind It was one place you could get sensible information about what was actually going on, during a time of massive disinvestment in cities.”



2000

First annual gathering of U.S. urban planners, which becomes the Big City Planning Directors Institute, held with the American Planning Association and Harvard Graduate School of Design. David C. Lincoln Fellowships in the study of land value taxation established.

2003

New program established in China, dedicated to studying environmental issues, rapid urbanization, and municipal finance. Joint venture with Sonoran Institute launches, focusing on planning and environmental issues in the American West. Superstition Vistas demonstration project uses scenario planning in the design of a major development outside of Phoenix.

2005

Gregory K. Ingram, director general of evaluations at the World Bank, is named president; launches annual Land Policy Conference (2006–2014) and associated publications on topics including property rights, climate change, and value capture.

2006

Lincoln Foundation and Lincoln Institute merge to become a private operating foundation.

First engagement at the United Nations World Urban Forum, followed by participation in UN conferences in Rio de Janeiro, Quito, and Abu Dhabi. *Making Sense of Place*, a trilogy looking at urban issues in Cleveland, Phoenix, and Portland, Oregon, premieres on public television. *Shifting Ground*, a parallel outreach effort about place and land, later debuts on National Public Radio. Kingsbury Browne Fellowship established for conservation leadership in partnership with the Land Trust Alliance.

2007

Award-winning website Visualizing Density, a companion to the book of the same title, launches as part of an effort to produce freely available databases to drive evidence-based decision making. Later databases include the award-winning Significant Features of the Property Tax.



Lincoln Institute Chair and Chief Investment Officer Kathryn Lincoln with Peking University President Ping Hao. Credit: Tao Jin.

The Program on Latin America and the Caribbean, launched in 1993, has conducted policy and education work in cities throughout the region, including Bogotá, Colombia. Credit: Arturo Rosenow/iStock via Getty Images Plus.

KATHRYN JO LINCOLN was born in 1954 on Long Island, New York, where David was working as an engineer for Sperry Rand. Katie Lincoln, as she is nearly universally known, was the second of four children born to David and his wife, Joan. A professionally trained actor and arts administrator who also earned an MBA, she became chair of the board of the Lincoln Institute in 1996. That same year a new president was named: H. James Brown, chair of the City and Regional Planning department at Harvard and director of the MIT–Harvard Joint Center for Urban Studies.

John Lincoln’s granddaughter, who also sits on the board of the company he founded, Lincoln Electric, set about to sharpen the mission of the Lincoln Institute. She built on priorities identified earlier in the 1990s, which included the taxation and regulation of land; the functioning of land markets; transportation and land use; and community and individual rights and responsibilities in land. Those themes would soon be aligned with an expanded geography; as the new millennium approached, the Lincoln Institute’s research and expertise were increasingly in demand overseas.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, newly independent Eastern European nations undertook land reform and property taxation as they made the transition to a free-market economy. A team from the Lincoln Institute tax department began traveling to Lithuania and other locations each year to teach the basics of the property tax.

Half a world away, fast-growing Latin America was struggling with urbanization and slums. After holding international conferences that included discussions of urban challenges in Mexico, which had been an area of special interest for David Lincoln, and testing the waters with a program on land use and development in Cuba, the Lincoln Institute launched the Program on Latin America and the Caribbean in 1993. Its focus included informal settlement, better-functioning land markets, and technology-enhanced cadastres.

The region, in particular Colombia and Brazil, was also experimenting with land value capture—returning increases in land value that resulted from government actions and public investments to the community, just as Henry George had described. Those experiments further fueled the Lincoln Institute’s interest in that topic, ultimately leading to the report *Implementing*

Value Capture in Latin America: Policies and Tools for Urban Development.

By the turn of the 21st century, another part of the world was also rapidly urbanizing. The Lincoln Institute had been engaged with land policy work in Asia at least since the start of the training center in Taiwan in 1968, and now it began developing research programs in China, looking at topics including land use, housing markets, and land taxation. The board of the Lincoln Institute reached an agreement with top officials in China, through the influential Ministry of Land and Resources, to create a formal relationship. The Program on the People's Republic of China, established in 2003, was dedicated to studying environmental issues, rapid urbanization, and municipal finance. Four years later, the Peking University–Lincoln Institute Center for Urban Development and Land Policy launched in Beijing. Early projects ranged from training Chinese senior government officials and young scholars to producing and sponsoring hundreds of data-driven policy reports, says Joyce Man, the center's first director. Man notes that China has much to teach the United States and the rest of the world about sustainability, land-based financing of public infrastructure, and urban redevelopment. "The exchanges can go two ways," she says.

Katie Lincoln and Gregory K. Ingram, Brown's successor as president and a former World Bank executive, began traveling extensively to nurture relationships in China and other corners of the world. In the early aughts of the new century, the Lincoln Institute became a major partner in the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, known as UN-Habitat, and contributed to international summits from Nairobi to Kuala Lumpur. The Lincoln Institute was now fully operating on the international stage, taking its place alongside much larger philanthropic foundations and nongovernmental organizations, and would soon expand even further.



2007

Peking University–Lincoln Institute Center for Urban Development and Land Policy launches. Joint venture with the Regional Plan Association helps produce America 2050 initiative, centered on planning infrastructure at the scale of megaregions.

2008

Community Land Trust initiative fosters partnerships with municipalities to create sustainable affordable housing, ultimately spinning off to become National CLT Network.

2009

Publication of *Urban Planning Tools for Climate Mitigation* continues exploration of connections between climate change and land, with a focus on resilience, managed retreat, and green infrastructure.

2010

First 50-state property tax report issued in partnership with Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence.

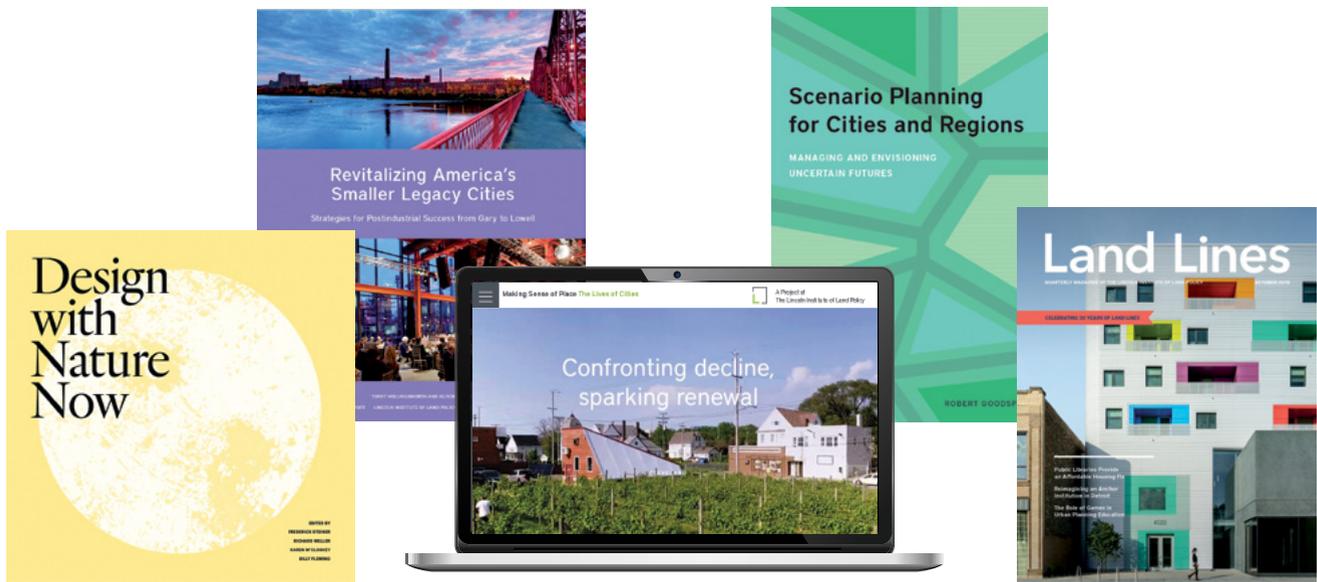
Other key tax-related publications focus on the land value tax, payments in lieu of taxes, use-value assessment of rural land, and tax breaks for business location. Dissertation support named C. Lowell Harriss Fellows in honor of longtime board member and Geogist scholar.

2011

Property in Land and Other Resources, coedited by Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom, details how property rights systems affect scarce natural resources.

2012

The Atlas of Urban Expansion, a comprehensive online visual guide to global urbanization, follows the publication of *Planet of Cities*.



The Lincoln Institute makes land use research accessible to broad audiences through books, reports, videos, and podcasts. Credits: Lincoln Institute.

IN 2006, the Lincoln Foundation and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy merged to form a private operating foundation. Katie Lincoln became its chief investment officer, overseeing the Lincoln Institute endowment. She diversified the portfolio and added mission-related investments, including the wetlands restoration company Ecosystem Investment Partners and an infrastructure fund for Africa. “I view this as a perpetual book that will live past my children, and my children’s children,” Lincoln says. “My responsibility is to make sure it is structured in such a way that we have an eye on long-term growth, but have enough income to support the work we’re doing.”

The new era also saw a renewed focus on outreach, with the establishment of a formal communications and publications program that produces books, reports, working papers, policy briefs, and *Land Lines* magazine. “It was important that we do the work, we do the research, but we present it in a way that made

it accessible,” says Lincoln, who worried about overly technical books sitting unread on the shelf. “I’m not the economist in the room, but someone like me has to understand what we do in order for us to be successful.”

Today, Lincoln Institute publications are available in print and online; a distribution partnership with Columbia University Press ensures that they reach a broad audience. Multimedia projects have also been a priority: with Northern Light Productions, the Lincoln Institute launched a documentary film series, *Making Sense of Place*, examining urban issues in Phoenix, Cleveland, and Portland, Oregon. The one-hour films have been broadcast on public television and were recently updated and given new life as a website. The five-part *Shifting Ground* series, looking at land use conflicts and compromises across the nation, aired on public radio, and two podcast series—*Land Matters*, recorded in English, and *Estación Ciudad*, in Spanish—address key themes.

In another effort to make research more freely available, the Lincoln Institute assembled data on topics from municipal budgets to urban growth, creating tools that can be used by scholars, policy makers, journalists, citizen activists, and others. One database, Significant Features of the Property Tax, essentially replaced an annual report by the federal government that had been discontinued. Other databases, including Fiscally Standardized Cities and the Atlas of Urban Expansion, facilitated research on density, global urbanization, and municipal finance. With these and other projects, the goal has been to take advantage of advances in technology to bring more attention to the wealth of information that the Lincoln Institute has built up over the years and to help guide evidence-based decision making.



George "Mac" McCarthy, current president of the Lincoln Institute, during a press interview at the UN-Habitat conference in Quito, Ecuador, in 2016. Credit: Courtesy of Next City.



2012

Release of a major Lincoln Institute report on scenario planning plants seeds for the later establishment of the Consortium for Scenario Planning.

2013

Partnership with Consensus Building Institute promotes better communication about local land use with the release of *Land in Conflict: Managing and Resolving Land Use Disputes*.

2014

Economist George W. McCarthy, director of the Metropolitan Opportunity program at the Ford Foundation, is named president.



2015

International Land Conservation Network established to connect and engage conservation practitioners. *Inclusionary Housing: Creating and Maintaining Equitable Communities* published, part of a continuing effort to address spatial equity, affordable housing, and gentrification. Campaign promoting municipal fiscal health launched. Fiscally Standardized Cities database launches, allowing users to compare local information for 150 U.S. cities across more than 120 fiscal categories. *Financing Metropolitan Governments in Developing Countries* provides analysis for fast-growing urban areas.

2016

A Good Tax: Legal and Policy Issues for the Property Tax in the United States defends the tax as a mainstay of democratic, stable, and efficient local government.

2017

Center for Community Investment created to help communities mobilize capital to achieve economic, social, and environmental goals. Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy founded to promote the integration of land and water policy. Lincoln Institute embarks on partnerships with OECD and Champion Mayors.

The annual Big City Planning Directors Institute gives participants an opportunity to share best practices and compare notes on urban issues. Convening practitioners is a core element of the Lincoln Institute's work. Credit: Amy Cotter.



Reinvention was again at hand as George W. “Mac” McCarthy, director of the Metropolitan Opportunity program at the Ford Foundation, was named the Lincoln Institute’s fifth chief executive in 2014. McCarthy launched a strategic planning process that identified six “pathways to impact,” organizational goals that address global social, environmental, and economic challenges through the lens of land policy (see Our Goals, page 20).

Under McCarthy, the Lincoln Institute became active in Africa, working with partners there to strengthen the planning capacity of local governments, develop and deliver curricula on the property tax, and foster the exchange of knowledge and ideas with other regions.

Three new centers also came into being. The Center for Community Investment helps communities mobilize capital to achieve their economic, social, and environmental priorities. The Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy promotes and strengthens the critical links between land and water management, with an initial focus on the Colorado River Basin. The Center for Geospatial Solutions provides data, expertise, and services to expand access to technologies that can inform land use decisions around the world.

FROM THE BEGINNING, the idea of the Lincoln Foundation, and in turn the Lincoln Institute, was to use research and education to help address the toughest challenges of the day. The gap between rich and poor that was an affront to John Lincoln persists, and translates into current issues including affordable housing, fiscal stability, and social justice.

“The relevance is probably always going to be there, as long as there are people in cities and communities working to improve the quality of life, reduce poverty, and build wealth,” says Andrea Taylor, a long-serving Lincoln Institute board member who is now the chief diversity officer at Boston University. Taylor adds that the Lincoln Institute is “constantly thinking about how it can continue to reinvent itself in response to what is happening in our societies, both domestically and across the world.”

As the world confronts the challenge of climate change, with severe drought and rising seas potentially reshaping land and land use in myriad ways, and as it contends with the social and economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, the notion of putting land on center stage seems especially prescient. These crises are prompting new thinking about density and land use, housing, transportation—

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and, ultimately, how to better express the fundamental principle that inspired the founding of the Lincoln Institute: fairness.

Taylor describes the current moment as an opportunity to rethink equity and access to resources, including land, and to create resilience by finding new ways to build community. “Nothing is static in land and land use—there are always new opportunities for solving problems,” Taylor says. “The specific issues may change, but the underlying premise is based on people and place and space. I would think 75 years from now there will still be a big role for the Lincoln Institute to play, because these issues aren’t going away.” □

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2018
Place Database unveiled, drawing on a variety of sources to provide nationwide data visualization tools.

Global value capture campaign launches, stemming from *Implementing Value Capture in Latin America* and other work.

David C. Lincoln dies at 92 in Paradise Valley, Arizona.

2019
New partnership with Columbia University Press ensures global distribution of more than 200 book and report titles. *Design with Nature Now* revisits and celebrates Ian McHarg’s *Design with Nature* and expands the message of *Nature and Cities: The Ecological Imperative in Urban Design and Planning* (2016). *Land Matters* podcast launches, as does Spanish-language podcast, *Estación Ciudad*. Major reorganization matches strategic goals with global geographies to broaden the impact of the Lincoln Institute’s work.



2020
Making Sense of Place video series revamped as interactive website. Launch of Legacy Cities Initiative, dedicated to helping postindustrial areas regenerate equitably. Launch of Center for Geospatial Solutions to expand access to data and technologies that can inform global land and water management decisions.



2021
Lincoln Institute celebrates 75th anniversary with special events, publications, and celebrations.

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