

Songdo International Business District — South Korea's Cautionary Smart-City Blueprint

City Innovation Library · Good practice · South Korea

Quality score: 52/100

Evidence strength: Moderate

Summary

Built on reclaimed land for roughly \$40 billion since 2002 and wired with 500,000 sensors, Songdo was billed as the world's first from-scratch smart city — but two decades on, researchers call its model a cautionary tale of underused tech and slow adaptation.

Key dimensions

Dimension	Score
Evidence of impact / measured results	2/3
Transferability / demonstrated replication	1/3
Scalability	1/3
Sustainability / continuity	2/3
Innovation	2/3
Inclusiveness / equity	1/3
Multi-stakeholder collaboration	2/3

Evaluated by C-NAPSE

Data sources

[C-NAPSE web research](#) — accessed 2026-07-14

[Incheon Metropolitan City / Incheon Free Economic Zone Authority, with Gale International and POSCO E&C](#); — accessed 2026-07-14

[TNGlobal — Songdo two decades on: the cautionary tale in smart city design \(2025\)](#) — accessed 2026-07-14

[IADB — International Case Studies of Smart Cities: Songdo, Republic of Korea](#) — accessed 2026-07-14

[Taylor & Francis — Who built Songdo, the 'world's first smart city'?](#) — accessed 2026-07-14

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