

7. Applying Supportive Spatial Planning Approaches

Overview

Spatial planning is an interdisciplinary field in the engineering and social sciences that deals with the spatial arrangement and development of living, working and environmental conditions at a wide range of scales, from the state and federal levels to the region (regional planning), the city (urban planning), the urban district, and the residential quarter (urban design). Lewis Keeble (1969) defines Town Planning as “the art and science of ordering the use of land and siting of buildings and communication routes so as to secure maximum practicable degree of economy, convenience and beauty”. In the context of a district renovation, spatial planning encompasses a breadth of areas, such as urban design and landscape, housing, transportation, leisure, infrastructure or the legal framework.

The *New European Bauhaus* aims to complement the economic, social and environmental measures of the Renovation Wave. This initiative opens the door to a more holistic approach to our districts seeking to enhance at the same time economic, social, environmental and cultural values. This requires rethinking the spatial planning of the 1960s to 2000 to propose a more reasoned, more resilient model, which reconnects uses (housing, shops, leisure, offices, industry), by working on proximity rather than zoning to reduce dependence on carbon-based mobility, and on circularity to take into account materials, resources and human flows.

The questions to be addressed in this section are:

- I. How can spatial planning approaches support a combination of purposes in the district?
- II. How to consider the views of different stakeholders?
- III. How to improve the social cohesion of the neighbourhood?

Recommendations and Good Practices

I. How can spatial planning approaches support a combination of purposes in the district?

Spatial planning is integrated into long-term projects, usually over several years or decades. It is therefore necessary to a range of issues in the renovation of a neighbourhood, including biodiversity, circular economy, or local heritage.

Per the New European Bauhaus, the infographic below provides an overview of the issues to be addressed in a comprehensive and desirable neighbourhood renovation and will serve as a basis for the examples of approaches proposed in this section.

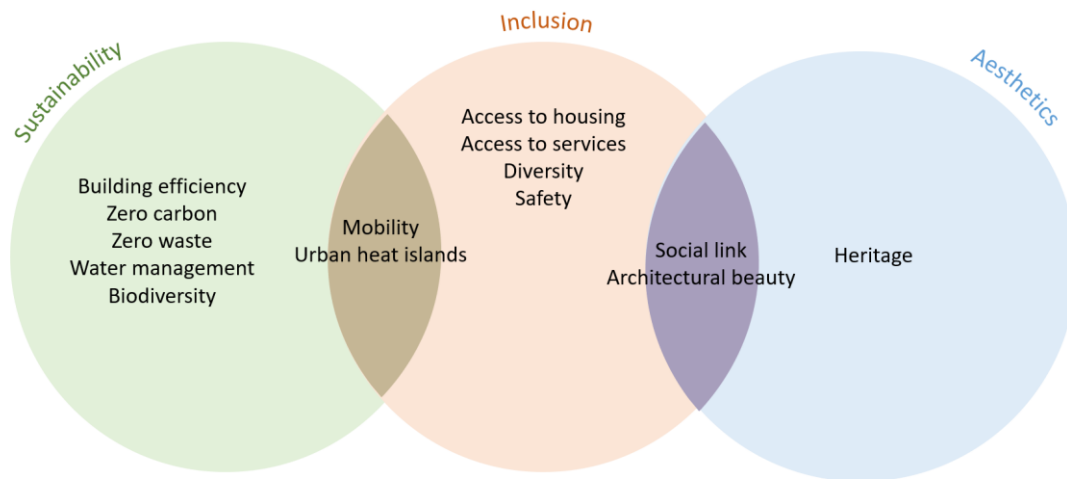


Figure 14. A holistic vision for district renovations.

Source: Greenflex, 2022.

Renovations at a district level have a few advantages compared to the building level, as synergies can be created between the different layers of the project: savings of resources and materials, sharing of energy resources, development of mobility solutions, response to the different infrastructure needs of the neighborhood, reduction of nuisance, aesthetic unity, etc. The approaches proposed below are recommendations for entire neighbourhoods. The next chapter describes how to apply these principles to a renovated building.

We can suggest the following approaches to holistic district renovations:

- ✓ Developing social linkages in the district: foster social links between inhabitants, support local initiatives and organise citizen events. Namely, local social or cultural associations can be a catalyst for social revitalisation.
- ✓ Enhancement of local biodiversity: During the renovation of a neighbourhood, a survey of existing species can be carried out to ensure that biodiversity is protected and maintained throughout the construction phase and during the operational phase. Solutions adapted to the development of habitats for new species can also be deployed (e.g., bird boxes in facades, new plant species)
- ✓ Adopting the 15-minute city concept. The 15-minute city concept revolves around the idea of proximity, where essential services and amenities are strategically located within close reach of residential areas. This innovative urban planning approach envisions vibrant neighbourhoods where residents can easily access everyday necessities, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, parks, and schools, within a 15-minute walking or cycling distance from their homes.

- ✓ Promoting small businesses in the district: To reduce the effect of zoning on neighbourhoods, renovation can allow creating small local businesses in renovated and/or newly constructed buildings. Small businesses is also a proven way to improve social linkages.

The aim of the Quartiers Productifs programme in France is to make neighbourhoods more economically vibrant by intervening in three areas: support for entrepreneurship, development of local trade and crafts and support for the establishment of productive activities and services

- ✓ Promote the temporary use of urban spaces. While the project is not concluded you can use public space to create adaptable spaces for meanwhile uses to experiment activities that build the social and ecological fabric of the district (see box on Tactical Urbanism). By encouraging community engagement and a sense of ownership through initiatives like pop-up parks and markets, cities can experiment with innovative ideas, which, if successful, may influence long-term urban planning decisions. Over time, these incremental changes can lead to a distinctive sense of place that contributes to a city's identity, all while maintaining adaptability in the face of evolving societal needs and ecological priorities.



TACTICAL URBANISM involves repurposing car space for the benefit of the community, such as creating pedestrian-friendly zones or temporary bike lanes, thereby reducing the dominance of cars in urban areas. The fundamental idea is to initiate these changes in a temporary and low-cost manner, allowing communities to experience the benefits firsthand. These temporary alterations serve as both a testing ground and a way to garner public support. If these interventions prove successful and receive community approval, they can pave the way for more comprehensive and permanent urban development projects, ensuring that the temporary changes can be consolidated into a proper, long-term plan for the urban space. A number of activities are being considered, such as street festivals, interactive installations (ex. art installations), interactive sculptures, or participatory exhibits to encourage people to engage with their surroundings in new and creative ways. Street art,

including murals, graffiti, and temporary installations, not only add visual interest to urban environments but also serve as a form of expression, cultural reflection, and community identity.

- ✓ Densification: densification is a way to increase housing availability in the same neighbourhood. It also makes public transport development more competitive by increasing the population density.

However, densification is not necessarily suitable for all neighbourhoods, it must be carried out taking into account the other challenges of the district: biodiversity and green spaces, fight against heat islands, limitation of gentrification. The needs of the neighbourhood and its interaction with surrounding neighbourhoods must be well defined before densification is considered.

In the framework of the Politique de la Ville and the national urban renewal programme (*Programme National de Rénovation Urbaine*) in France, densification is also used to rebuild social links in neighbourhoods in difficulty and to break down ghetto effects by reconfiguring urban spaces, the layout of buildings, or by attracting a greater mix of populations.

- ✓ Improvement of the mobility fluxes. The renovation of a neighbourhood is an opportunity to rethink mobility fluxes and transport infrastructure. Reducing the space devoted to cars, implementing systems to reduce vehicle speeds, and installing infrastructure for soft mobility (bicycle shelters, bicycle paths, etc.) makes it possible to modify the mobility practices of residents for a more sustainable and citizen friendly city.
- ✓ Creation and enhancement of green and gardening spaces: green spaces play a central role in the life of a neighbourhood, they are both a meeting place and a breathing space for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, but they are also a refuge for urban biodiversity and islands of urban freshness. When renovating a neighbourhood, it is essential to preserve these green spaces, paying particular attention to the existing mature trees, which provide the greatest benefit in terms of lowering temperatures in the city. Neighbourhood renewal can also be an opportunity to increase the area planted or to add new green spaces. It is also essential to map the green and blue infrastructures in order to conserve them and reconstitute them as much as possible.

- ✓ Treatment of urban heat islands and creation of cooling islands: With the intensification of heat waves, the treatment and adaptation of urban spaces is becoming a major issue to be taken into account in the renovation of districts. Upstream studies on heat islands can be carried out in the neighbourhood. Solutions to reduce include increasing green coverage and tree canopies.
- ✓ Reclaiming public spaces for recreational, sporting and cultural activities. Public spaces are key: they allow people to meet, guarantee diversity and, above all, establish real links between the various changes in the district, between existing buildings and new urban developments.

As part of the renovation of Lyon Confluence, in France, each square and esplanade has its own special atmosphere. The softness of the water's edge for the Place Nautique, the bustle of the nearby train station for the Place des Archives, the hum of the city for the Place de l'Hippodrome. All of them contribute to the same objective: to make the district pleasant for pedestrians, who can move around more easily and comfortably. But also, to facilitate meetings and exchanges by creating convivial spaces. The harbour promenade, the future garden courtyards and the fields complete these quality public spaces.

- ✓ Preservation and enhancement of local heritage: renovation of a neighbourhood also means taking into consideration, and building on, the collective identity, memory, common values and respect for architectural quality. The history of a neighbourhood shapes its personality. A commercial or industrial past often leaves lasting traces, particularly through historic or renewed infrastructures. In an entirely new district, where the site memory has been erased, there are no elements to anchor the collective identity. It is therefore more difficult for the inhabitants to develop and share a collective culture specific to the area in which they live.

To develop a sense of belonging through the enhancement of Lyon Confluence's industrial past and the development of local cultural offerings that promote the district, the project proposed:

- Architectural games diverting buildings from their initial function while maintaining strong architectural elements recalling their former vocation;
- To secure the docks to transform them into cultural venues;
- To encourage exchanges by creating meeting and convivial spaces.

- ✓ Promote a zero-carbon renovation of the district utilising natural/biobased and locally available materials can be carried out during the design phase. The choice of suitable materials reduces the carbon impact of the renovation.

GENDER AS A TOOL FOR INCLUSIVE DESIGN

The Col·lectiuPunt is a Spanish cooperative of architects, sociologists and urban planners that have helped to develop such concept:

- Feminist urban planning advocates for placing people's lives at the forefront of urban decision-making. It employs a "gender" framework as an analytical tool to highlight disparities in spatial use stemming from the assigned tasks, stereotypes, and roles associated with both women and men. Gender perspectives seek to drive societal transformation by reimagining urban spaces, recognizing their significant influence on shaping realities.
- A gender urban perspective not only acknowledges gender diversity but also the intersections with various identity factors, including age, origin, sexual identity, the nature of cohabitation units, social class, functional diversity, and more. It considers how these factors intersect and manifest as both privileges and oppressions within the city and its utilized spaces.
- Historically, the cities, neighbourhoods, and towns have been designed according to an economic logic that prioritizes private car mobility, resulting in vast, homogenous areas throughout the territory. This approach has predominantly served to bolster a capitalist system that has formalized the urban and territorial landscape in this manner.
- Urban planning with a gender perspective starts from the premise that urban planning is not neutral and that the cities and the neighbourhoods have been shaped by the values of a society that is patriarchal.

II. How to consider the views of different stakeholders?

A district renovation project typically involves a variety of stakeholders, such as architects and urbanists, local or state authorities, inhabitants, associations, local businesses, project financiers or real estate developers. An open, transparent, and participatory process is the best way to ensure buy-in from residents and that they feel they had an influence in the way their neighbourhood was designed.

One of the main factors of success will thus consist in being able to make all these stakeholders work in tandem on the urban planning process. The most direct form of a multi-stakeholder approach to urban planning and design is to create multidisciplinary working groups. This approach enables a wide range of organisations with a stake in the district renovation (including municipalities, energy

companies, social and health services, the construction company and subcontractors, architects, urban planners, etc.) to contribute with their knowledge to find solutions that will impact the community as well as the decision-making process. Ideally, as shown in the Aalborg example, the housing owner / manager should lead the working group and project development.

Aalborg East

Aalborg, Denmark

Northern Europe



Aalborg East is a project derived from a long-term strategy underpinned on resident co-creation to ensure quality of life for the residents. Between 2011 and 2021, the social housing company Himmerland Boligforening (HB) led the district regeneration with the support of a broad set of actors aiming to undertake an integrated approach. HB provided administrative support, led the institutionalisation of cross-sector work (and investment) needed for an integrated solution, and led tenant involvement. East Aalborg, like many other public housing examples in Denmark, benefited from the effective financial structure in place at the national level to support large-scale renovation projects.

Additionally, participatory planning involves engaging community members in the decision-making process for projects that affect their neighbourhood or community. This approach ensures that the diverse needs, preferences, and concerns of the residents are taken into account. Here are some common elements of a participatory planning process:

- Community Meetings and Workshops: regular community meetings and workshops to gather input from residents. These sessions provide a platform for open discussions, idea sharing, and collaborative problem-solving.
- Surveys and Questionnaires: Distribute surveys or questionnaires to collect feedback from a wide range of community members. Online surveys, paper surveys, or a combination of both can be used to gather opinions on specific issues or projects.

- Focus Groups: Conduct small groups discussions with representative samples of the community. These smaller scale settings allow for more extensive insights on specific pre-prepared questions or in-depth conversations on specific topics.
- Community Design Charrettes: collaborative planning sessions where planners, architects and designers work together with community representatives to generate ideas and concepts for a specific project or area.
- Interactive Mapping: Use visual and conceptual representations that illustrate the concluded renovation to allow residents to mark areas of concern or interest. These tool usually help planners explain their ideas better and understand the spatial aspects of community needs.
- Online Platforms and Social Media: Utilize online platforms, forums, and social media to engage a broader audience. Create dedicated groups or pages where residents can share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns about various planning issues.
- Community Advisory Boards: Establish committees composed of community members or their representatives to provide input or feedback at each design or delivery milestone.
- Participatory Budgeting: Allow community members to have a direct say in the decision to allocate a portion of the budget to specific projects or services.
- Walking or Site Tours: Walk with community members to explore and discuss specific areas of the renovation project. This hands-on approach helps participants understand the physical context and identify potential sources of disagreement.
- Artistic and Creative Engagement: Use community art projects or storytelling, to engage residents in expressing their visions for the community.
- Collective Vision Workshops: Facilitate workshops where community members collectively articulate their long-term goals and aspirations for the neighbourhood. This can inform the development of a shared vision of the district renovation.
- Awareness raising sessions: Provide residents with information about planning processes, land use, and urban design principles. Aware residents are better equipped to contribute meaningfully to the planning discussions.
- Partnerships with Local Organisations: Collaborate with local community organizations, nonprofits, and schools to reach a diverse and representative group of residents. These organizations can help facilitate engagement efforts.
- Regular Updates and Feedback Loops: Establish transparent communication channels by providing regular updates on planning progress and seeking continuous feedback. This helps build trust and keeps the community informed.

The approach should be tailored to the specific context, needs, and characteristics of the community to ensure effective and meaningful participation in the planning process. Combining multiple approaches often results in a more comprehensive understanding of community perspectives. A good practice involves considering additional funding in the project for these participatory approaches.

A key element to consider is the level of “social capital” existent in the community. Social capital refers to the shared norms and trust that exist within a community or social group. It conveys the effectiveness of individuals’ participation in social networks. Lower social capital means that there is not enough mutual trust to engage in collective undertakings. In its absence, work on social cohesion should be prioritised first and foremost.

III. How to improve the social cohesion of the neighbourhood?

As far as residents are concerned a number of approaches can be used. The main objective is to involve the residents in the design and implementation phase, together with the necessary objective of fostering social cohesion: sense of community, encouraging positive interactions among residents, and creating a supportive environment for different social groups.

A number of approaches have been tried successfully:

- Street interviews: make it possible to collect the impressions of the inhabitants who live in the district, whatever their age or level of education. This type of data collection provides qualitative information and feedback on the neighbourhood, such as attachment to a public amenities, building. This allows the inclusion of populations that would not necessarily participate in workshops organised by the city or in online surveys.
- Neighbourhood walks: organised with residents, architects, elected representatives or others, they are an opportunity to identify the main issues of the project and to open discussions between the actors on the spot.
- Workshops: an event well-tuned to urban planning on specific topics or to involucrate the neighbourhood in a deep level .
- Social cohesion events: To further include residents in the co-creation process, small events can be organised for residents during the construction phase, such as planting a tree, a collective lunch or taking care of a common space to create a garden, for example.
- Local clubs: Encourage the formation of local social clubs or interest groups based on residents' hobbies or interests. This could include book clubs, fitness groups, or art classes, providing avenues for people with similar interests to connect.

- Conflict Resolution: Establish community meetings to discuss disputes within the community in a constructive manner. Open communication channels can prevent the escalation of issues.

The use of ICT-based participation tools in urban design has come into prominence in the last decade. A plethora of technology-enabled participatory tools, techniques, and applications have been developed to facilitate the participation of citizens as well as other stakeholders. ICT-based platforms make it possible to involve a large mass of people in urban design process, to use their knowledge and experiences and to test public reactions in early phases through these platforms. Moreover, these platforms provide more transparent communication channels than formal actors such as government agencies and municipal officials. Utilize social media and online platforms to create virtual communities. Platforms like Nextdoor or neighbourhood-specific Facebook groups can facilitate communication, share information, and coordinate local activities.

Vivalla

Örebro, Sweden

Northern Europe



ÖrebroBostäder was the first public housing provider in Sweden to include as a condition in the procurement the obligation to hire jobless inhabitants as construction workers for a limited period. The renovation plan placed at the forefront fostering social cohesion in the neighbourhood.

Further Reading and Online Resources

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