



Urban Planning for City Leaders

URBAN PLANNING FOR CITY LEADERS

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Foreword



Dr. Joan Clos

Among the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century is the rapid growth of cities. Over the last century, our world is rapidly becoming predominantly urban. As such, cities embody some of society's most pressing challenges, as diverse as unemployment, climate change, and environmental degradation. But cities also hold the key to unlocking national urban development. They present real opportunities for unleashing enormous economic potential, increasing energy efficiency, reducing inequities, and creating sustainable livelihoods for all. History has shown that urbanization leads to development. It is also clear that urbanization is a source rather than simply a by-product of development. While Africa and Asia are among the least urbanized continents, they also have the fastest rates of urbanization in the world. Urbanization can therefore be used as a powerful lever for transforming lives and livelihoods.

Growing cities and towns face additional challenges, which include: high percentages of people living in slums; expansion and dominance of the informal sector; inadequate urban basic services, especially water, sanitation and energy; unplanned peri-urban expansion; social and political conflict over land resources; high levels of vulnerability to natural disasters; and poor mobility systems. If cities are to play their role as drivers of economic and social development, these challenges have to be addressed through effective planning and governance.

Tapping the opportunity presented by urbanization to advance sustainable human development is one of the defining challenges facing many of the countries in which UN-Habitat works. Unfortunately, many developing countries lack strategies for urban planning and design. Urban planning, where it happens, tends to be inadequate for addressing the many challenges which are endemic to rapid expansion. Evidence of this includes ineffective and unsustainable urban policies, excessive zoning and inadequate enforcement, developments far from the city core, poor connectivity resulting from insufficient allocation of land to streets and transportation systems, and the lack of appropriate urban design that allows for optimum density. The result of inefficient or non-existent planning limits economic potential and impinges on the health, opportunities, and well-being of city residents.

Appropriate urban planning for developing economies can be simple, enforceable, flexible, and responsive to shifting local needs. City governments must have sufficient capacity to facilitate agreement among residents on the path forward, build social trust, and arbitrate conflicts of interest where they occur, including in land disputes.

With sufficient capacity and more appropriate urban planning, countries can tap the opportunity for development which urbanization represents. Cities can generate economies of scale, enhance productivity, facilitate the exchange of ideas, and spur innovation.

This Guide has been designed to fill the gap between the technical and the policy dimensions of urban planning and to help local leaders to better communicate with their planning departments and ask the right questions. All too often planning has been disconnected from the day to day realities and needs of citizens. This guide offers practical advice and insight into how leaders around the world can succeed in leveraging capacities and know-how from communities, professionals and the private sector in tackling pressing urban development needs.

A new approach is needed to urban planning in which local leaders are principally engaged in shaping the future growth of our cities. I believe that this guide will not only raise awareness and build capacities in this regard, but will also offer directions for upcoming initiatives in this regard. As part of the World Urban Campaign, UN-Habitat has launched the "I'm a City Changer" campaign with the aim of promoting sustainable urban development and creating awareness among citizens for a better urban future. This publication will undoubtedly serve as a vital plank in this platform for change, enabling and empowering communities, partners and their leaders around the world.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Joan Clos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Dr. Joan Clos
Under-Secretary-General, United Nations
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

From the Desk of a Mayor



Aníbal Gaviria Correa

Good Planning will Transform your City

Urban planning is a key tool for local leaders in supporting the realization of a city's vision. A guide that offers lessons and ideas on urban planning is important for mayors and other local leaders. In our experience in Medellín, Colombia, we have learned the importance of urban planning for good development. We have instruments for urban planning that are approved by the Council with the involvement of residents and it is mandatory for local leaders to produce plans. Although they are often regarded as a bureaucratic requirement, urban plans - even those with a short validity of four years - can have an impact on a city for the next 20 years and more if they are properly conceived and systematically executed.

Indeed, a good plan is key to development. If it is created with the involvement of residents and clearly identifies the pillars of future development it can play a crucial role in the growth of the city. Its impact is dependent on several factors: it needs to reflect the social contract of the specific territory and it should not be subject to abrupt change and modification with each change in government. In Medellín, we have achieved an important transformation of the city because we successfully maintained a continuity of ideas and approach to urban development over the past 10 years. This has been possible because successive governments over the period have been synchronized – each building on the good planning ideas of its predecessor until the planning goals were achieved.

Urban plans and the extension of services and infrastructure that they support have been critical in Medellín to demonstrate the presence of the public authorities and of the state, particularly in areas of the city where informal and chaotic development was the norm. Bringing public actors to such areas has had a powerful transformative effect. In Medellín, we addressed problems created by the difficult landscape by planning mass transport systems. Dealing with geography and with transport needs in an innovative way, with the use of economic and ecologic advantages, has resulted in improved mobility. This, combined with investment in other infrastructure, public services and equipment, has changed

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