

A Quick Thematic Guide for  
Mainstreaming Safe, Inclusive  
and Accessible Public Spaces into  
National Urban Policies

**NATIONAL URBAN POLICIES  
DRIVING PUBLIC SPACE LED DEVELOPMENT**

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>NUA</b>	New Urban Agenda
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>NUP</b>	National Urban Policy

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## Summary

*This document is addressed primarily to policy makers and stakeholders involved in formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating National Urban Policy (NUP) and public and private actors undertaking public space activities. It offers guidance on how national policies for urbanization should address public space and strengthen involvement of different stakeholders in that effort.*

UN-Habitat has been mandated by Member states to address the issue of public space and its contribution to sustainable urban development. This includes developing and widely disseminating policy approaches on the role of public spaces in meeting the challenges of the rapidly urbanizing world. The agency's research has already shown that the most prosperous cities are those that recognize public spaces with proper design layout, and allocate sufficient land to their development. However, public spaces in most urban areas largely remain ignored in national urban policy discourse. Where they exist, they are ambiguous, fragmented and embedded in other policies. Drawing experiences and practices from recent national urban policies and public space programme, this guide demonstrates how to mainstream public and open space into the National Urban Policy (NUP).

The guide is divided into two sections. Section one gives an overview of public space as generators of prosperous cities, the national urban policy process and the need for integrating the two.

It also highlights streets as vital ingredient for cities and how their designs and management facilitate sustainable urbanization. Insights on NUPs development process; pillars and principles in support of implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the New Urban Agenda (NUA) among other international frameworks highlighted.

Section two discusses how NUP can support local government policy on public space design, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation strategies through strong leadership and stakeholder participation. Clear recommendations on how to integrate public space in each of the NUP's development phases: feasibility, diagnosis, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are given. Further, analysis on how NUP can support national and local capacity development for public space has also been discussed.

## Introduction

Urbanization, a transformative trend in the 21st century presents unprecedented challenges and opportunities to local and national leaders all over the world. There is need however to take advantage of transformative opportunities offered by urbanization as an engine of sustained and inclusive economic growth, social and cultural development and environmental protection.

Developing policies and frameworks such as National Urban Policies (NUP) – coordination tools used by governments to direct and manage rapid urbanization processes – is useful to guide cities achieve sustainable urbanization. NUP offers immense opportunities and facilitates positive urbanization patterns through supporting productivity, competitiveness and prosperity in cities and local governments. They help establish connection between dynamics of urbanization and the overall process of national development. NUP also have the capacity to reveal and strengthen the value accorded to creation, protection and management of public spaces in promoting sustainable urban development, elements emphasized at city and local levels but often overlooked by national policy makers. Such recognition not only enhances development of enabling frameworks but also capture political will and public participation towards their development.

Urban public spaces are a vital ingredient of successful cities. They are backbone to support mobility, functionality, accessibility and economic transactions. They build a sense of community, civic identity and culture and are critical for environmental sustainability.

Their importance is elaborated by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target 11.7 “By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities”. The New Urban Agenda (NUA) commits to promote creation and maintenance of well-connected and well distributed networks of open, multifunctional, safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces as drivers of social and economic development, as well as for promoting attractive and livable cities and human settlements.

Given, the importance, national governments need to guide municipal and local governments on urban public space planning and design standards. Planning for public spaces should be adequately guided by national planning policies. By so doing, local public space strategies would greatly be informed by national policies and strategies enhancing creation of effective network of public spaces at local level. Furthermore, national governments would lead in setting uniform indicators that could guide local actions in achieving national priorities. The National Urban Policies, one of the pillars of the New Urban Agenda is an effective tool to provide clear policy recommendations on the creation, protection, management and enjoyment of public spaces. Drawing from inspiring experiences and practices this tool demonstrates the importance of and how national urban policies should guide development, management and enjoyment of public spaces.

## **SECTION ONE**

### 1.1. What are public spaces

Public spaces have been defined differently in relation to regional and local contexts. According to UN-Habitat, public spaces are all places publicly owned, of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without profit motive.<sup>1</sup> They are a key element of individual and social well-being, the places of a community's collective life, expressions of the diversity of their common, natural and cultural richness and a foundation of their identity.<sup>2</sup> There are three main public spaces categories: Streets (e.g. sidewalks and footpaths), Open Public Spaces (e.g. parks) and Public Facilities such as public markets.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.2. Importance of public spaces

National and local governments need to recognize the role of good quality public spaces as elements for prosperity in cities. They are key assets for a city's functioning and have a positive impact on its economy, environment, safety, health, integration and connectivity. They help define the social, cultural, and political functions of a sustainable city.

The form, connectivity, distribution and quality of public spaces are indicators of city's shared prosperity.<sup>4</sup> Public spaces in well planned and adequately functioning cities should make up 45 to 50 per cent of its land area with 30 - 35 per cent of the total allocated to streets and 15 – 20 per cent allocated to other public spaces. This has also been linked to economic growth of such cities as Manhattan<sup>5</sup>. Many cities particularly in the global south are far from achieving these recommendations. Conversely, inadequate, poorly designed, or privatized public spaces increase segregation and generate urban inequality. To achieve such public spaces state intervention through proactive urban polices and local governments legislative actions that support holistic and integrated approach to the planning, design, development, creation, protection and management of public spaces, is needed. Citywide public space strategies need to actively align with the national urban policies recommendations related to public space development and enjoyment.

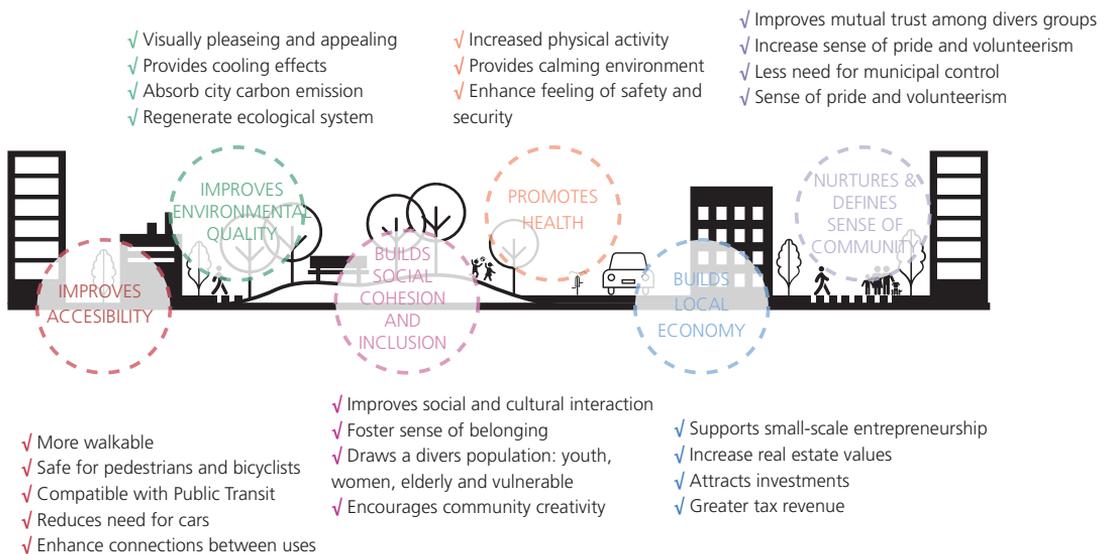


Figure 1. Benefits of public spaces to Cities

## 1.2. Streetscapes and pedestrianisation

Streets form important multi-functional public spaces. Cities that have adequately configured and designed, streets and streetscapes are more productive, have enhanced quality of life hence more prosperous. In such cities efforts have been made to optimize street networks into “livable and complete streets” by dedicating increasing amounts of public space to pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit including clearing obstacles and widening them for all people, including vulnerable and people with disabilities to walk more efficiently. In such cities, streets take almost 30 per cent of public spaces.<sup>6</sup> National Urban Policies supports establishment of quality public spaces and streetscapes for all, (see Box 3) including providing guidance and standards to ensure sustainable urbanization at local levels. By effectively anticipating urban growth, urban policies

enhance harmonious cities designs with vast public spaces and street design that create space for mobility, communication, commerce and social interaction. For streets to be liveable or complete the provision of amenities like seating play areas, good sidewalks and trees to make all people, particularly children, women, elderly and persons with disabilities feel safe and comfortable is inevitable. For this to be achieved National Urban Policies should give guidelines and standards to guide cities in development of such streets. ‘Thinking Streets as Free Space’ an innovative urban development project under the auspices of the Germany National Urban Development Policy is a clear example. Furthermore, the Australian National Urban Policy underscores the importance of Improving country urban designs to deliver high quality public spaces and streetscapes.

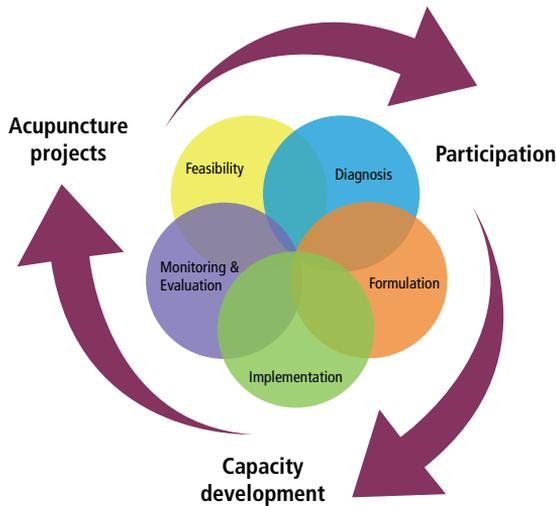


**Figure 2.** *Building Family-Friendly Walkways in São Paulo*

### 1.3. The national urban policy process

UN-Habitat define National Urban Policies as: “A coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term.” The UN-Habitat approach to

National Urban Policies development is based on three pillars (participation, capacity development and acupuncture projects), five principles (iterative and forward thinking, implementable, joined up, evidence based and action oriented) and consist of five phases i.e. feasibility, diagnosis, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 3.** *National Urban Policy Process*

National Urban Policy has the potential and ability to provide structure, organize and capitalize on opportunities offered by urbanization. They assert urban space and territoriality, provides an overarching coordinating framework to address urban challenges through maximizing on urbanization benefits while mitigating inequalities and adverse externalities. This is achieved through their capacity to promote more compact, socially inclusive, better connected and integrated cities and territories.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, National Urban Policy is a strong tool that can streamline benefits of quality public spaces. Besides balancing urbanization across national space, National Urban Policies seeks to support creation of well-defined and locally networked

urban patterns, rules and regulations as ultimate basis of sustainable urbanization. Its implementation guarantees sustainable public spaces as well as protected green areas. While local plans and programmes foster inclusion of public space in development programmes, National Urban Policies can link these spaces and focus these developments to take advantage of the benefits of high quality urban environment. Furthermore, creation of public spaces requires adequate legal framework and clear understanding between public and private interests. National Urban Policy provides clear policy recommendations on the creation, protection (see **Box 1**) management and enjoyment of public spaces and as a means to improve wellbeing and advance urban productivity.

## 1.4. Why mainstreaming public space in national urban policies

Public spaces are generators of prosperous cities. They integrate the physical and natural environment and further define the cultural, social, economic and political functions of cities.<sup>9</sup> However; their value remains a neglected agenda<sup>10</sup> by most urban policy makers.<sup>11</sup> Some policy makers treat public space as residual areas open to speculation for private profit, with research demonstrating reduction of area allocated to public spaces in city development.<sup>12</sup>

Maintenance and management of public space has been a main challenge in most cities in the global north and south, with their spatial growth creating inequality, fragmented cities and environmental degradation.

Dysfunctional urban planning regulations, bureaucracy, weak institutions and insufficient resource allocation have largely affected public space design, creation, protection, management and enjoyment.

Where legal and regulatory frameworks exist, poor enforcement,<sup>13</sup> and coordination from multiple agencies is evident.<sup>14</sup> Public space cleanliness, safety and security is also a major challenge for many city governments in the Global South,<sup>15 16</sup> (see **Fig 1**). Lack of clear public space policies has made it difficult for most urban governments to plan, prioritise and spend resources and undertake effective public space management.<sup>17</sup>

Integrating public spaces into countries policies will not only raise their profiles but will also help develop implementable solutions that can produce tangible results. By integrating them in urban policies it would play a critical role in ensuring that urban expansion and the opportunities it brings are efficient, sustainable and inclusive.

**Box 1.** *National Urban Policy Excerpt: Czech Republic – Principles of Urban Policy (2010)*

*“It is necessary to protect existing green spaces which play a recreational and ecological role from unreasonable economic demands of investors, development plans and developers, and to maintain these areas.”*

*(Section 5 principle 5)*

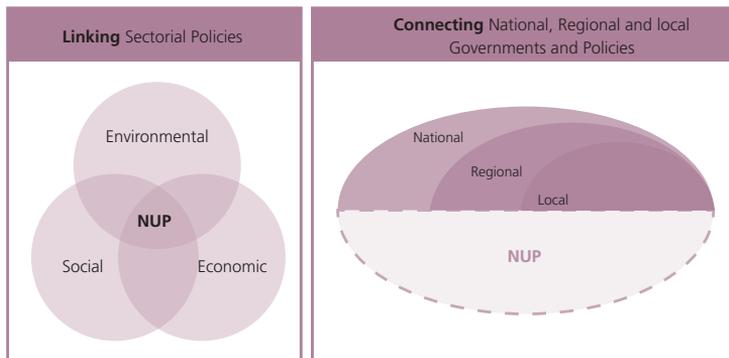


**Figure 4.** *Recreational park, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

## 1.5. National Urban Policies, Public Space and the New Urban Agenda

National Urban policies have been internationally recognized as key tools to support the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The New Urban Agenda (NUA) proposes them as a fundamental driver of change, and underscores need for governments to effectively implement such policies when deciding on urban

governance structures. More specifically, national urban policies are more relevant to SDG 11 ‘to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’. Due to its overarching nature, NUP is able to anchor and influence many other targets of the SDGs across the 17 goals.<sup>18</sup>



**Figure 5.** *Coordinated and Connected roles of NUP*

Furthermore, NUP is the strongest means of promoting coordinated and connected urban development, provides best opportunity to achieve sustainable urbanization and balanced territorial development by linking social, economic and environmental sector policies and by connecting national, regional and local governments’ policies.

Public space planning, design and regulations have been identified as one<sup>19</sup> of the key levers for achieving NUA.<sup>20</sup>

The SDG target 11.7, “By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities” underlines the importance. Implementation of the target not only catalyzes action on public space but would also help achieve several other SDGs, as indicated in **Box 2**. Thus promoting safe, socially inclusive, integrated, connected, accessible, environmentally sustainable public spaces is fundamental in achieving the New Urban Agenda.

### **Box 2.** *Selected Public Space Contributions to other SDGs*

Well planned, designed and managed public spaces would also:

- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. (SDG 3)
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. (SDG 5)
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. (SDG 8)
- Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. (SDG13)

**Box 3.** *Public Space in Mexico Public Policies*

In recent years in Mexico, public policies have been promoted which reconsider and recognize public space as fundamental for urban life; and as a key element in the physical and social revitalization of the urban fabric. At different levels, national and local governments have created, managed and implemented public programmes which seek to create safer, more vital and dynamic public urban spaces that contribute to a more sustainable urban life. A core component of these policies is the revitalization of the public realm of cities.

*Source: Programa de Rescate de Espacios Públicos*

## 1.6. National Urban Policies and Public Spaces

Public space creation, improvement and management through national urban policies generate conditions which economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights of urban citizens are guaranteed, and included in the national and city development agenda.

This is notably in countries that have National Urban Policies with explicit public space strategies, in that their cities have progressed in development of network of public spaces that have changed the socio-economic status of the citizens. This is evident in Medellin and Bogota cities in Colombia. A key strategy in the Colombia National Urban Policy is *"to promote mechanisms for generation, improvement and sustainability of public spaces: to continue with technical assistance programs and support projects of public space in the cities, public space management plans in cities and accessibility in the framework of the disability policy"*.

Similarly, in Guatemala, public space has been given key relevance in NUP with strategy to create *"Public Space Defenders"*, in charge of verifying compliance with the alignments of the roads and the illegal occupation of such public spaces. Similar public space rescue initiatives are advocated for by NUP in Mexico. (See **Box 3**).

The Malaysian NUP has standards relating to provision of open public spaces while the Indonesia NUP has explicit concerns to retain 30 per cent of urban space as green areas protected from any form of development. *Currently UN-Habitat is supporting over 50 countries with development of their National Urban Policies including Cameroon, Cuba, Liberia, Afghanistan, Egypt, Zambia, Angola, and Argentina among others, where streamlining of public spaces is a key priority.*

**Box 4.** *Excerpt from LEIPZIG CHARTER on Sustainable European Cities 2007*

- The quality of public spaces, urban man-made landscapes and architecture and urban development play an important role in the living conditions of urban populations.....they are important for attracting knowledge industry business, a qualified and creative workforce and for tourism..... Creating and safeguarding functional and well-designed urban spaces.....is a task which must be tackled jointly by the state, regional and the local authorities, as well as by citizens and businesses

## **II. SECTION TWO**

## 2.0. National Urban Policies support to public space development and management at local level

### 2.1. Introduction

Since the beginning of 21st century, public spaces have been included in the national urban agenda. The National Urban Policy has been an effective tool to promote public space for cities prosperity and overall national development. In most countries, formulation of progressive National Urban Policies has created relevant frameworks and opportunities to foster inclusion of and assert the role of public spaces in urban development.

It supports planning, design, creation, protection and management of public spaces in many ways. Through the principles of good urbanism emphasis on planning and design of compact, dense, high connected, safe and resilient urban settlements are critical elements in public space management. Below is an analysis of the Australian Government NUP on how National Urban Policies should support public space creation, protection, management and enjoyment.

#### **Box 5.** *Australian Government National Urban Policy (2011)*

To support affordable living choices in cities, the government introduced the Sustainable Communities Program – including Livable Cities which invests in urban development and renewal projects that among others improve urban design outcomes through redevelopment of significant public spaces so as to deliver higher quality public spaces and streetscapes to benefit local businesses, communities and visitors. It further encouraged development of urban areas that promote healthy lifestyles through cycling and walking networks, recreational facilities and high-quality public spaces.

*Australian Government (2011): Our Cities, Our Future: A National Urban Policy for a productive, sustainable and livable future.*

### 2.2. Creating leadership and coordination in public space strategies

Planning, design, protection management, and use of public spaces requires adequate policy and legal frameworks, norms and practices, holistic and integrated approaches and a clear understanding on the roles and responsibilities of different government departments, public and private stakeholders. The National Urban Policy (NUP) offers an important coordination platform for rallying these actors towards a common public space vision and a clear communication to understanding roles of each of the actors.<sup>21</sup>

Such coordination and dialogue help achieve a unified vision and better response to public space challenges at city and national levels. By creating consensus across ministries and departments and defining roles and responsibilities for the different actors, NUP strengthens enabling environment for public space management.

NUP enhances this by mapping and analyzing institutions and stakeholders for design, formulation and implementation of public space strategies, including identification of lead institutions.

*“National urban policies amalgamate the dispersed energy and potential of urban centres within a national system or hierarchy of cities and towns. They help to coordinate the work of different sectors and tiers of government, establish the incentives for more sustainable practices, and provide a basis for the allocation of resources.” Dr. Joan Clos, former Executive Director, UN-Habitat*

### Policy recommendations:

- Adopt multi stakeholder partnership approach that recognizes roles and synergies of public, private and people partnerships in planning, design management and use of public spaces.
- Set up cross-sector / transdisciplinary and multilevel coordination framework among departments and different levels of government respectively to ensure coherence in public space management.

### Actions:

- Prioritize development of national institutional structures that promote cooperation and a unitary view in the creation, management and enjoyment of public space.
- Consult and consider contribution of national and local actors in public space planning design, protection, enjoyment and management.
- Develop inter-ministerial framework to secure stakeholders' participation and development of public space strategies.
- Develop public space creation and management frameworks based on unique strengths and expertise and maximize communication and interaction among them.



Figure 6. *Integration Square (Rímac), Lima, Peru*

### 3.0. National Urban Policy operational enabler’s support to public spaces

#### 3.1. Introduction

Urban planning and design, legislation and economy, the main NUP operational enablers play a fundamental role in promoting sustainable urbanization. Each of them impacts the way public space is designed, developed, enjoyed and managed. **Participatory urban planning** and design ensures development of adequate quantity and quality of public spaces addresses inequality and enhances their functionality.

**Legislation** enhances protection, vitality and utility and ensures good management of public spaces. On the other hand, **Urban economy and finance** enhances productivity; stimulate investments and livelihood opportunities for urban communities. Furthermore, it facilitates development of financial plans and mechanisms to support implementation of National Urban Policies and city-wide public space strategies. (see **Fig. 7**)



**Figure 7.** Relationship between Public Space and the NUP enablers

#### 3.2. Enhancing planning and design of public spaces

Insufficient allocation of land for common spaces and services, severely undermines urban livability. Allocations of well-planned land help organize public spaces while design encourages their use. Well planned public spaces are safe, empower women and girls and effectively support their participation in economic empowerment. To enhance productivity, National Urban Policies places high priority on urban plans and designs that deliver high quality street

patterns and public spaces. It advocates for national urban planning frameworks that embrace diverse opinions to a common vision, important process in place making. This is for example evident in the National urbanization policy for the Republic of Bangladesh. Through its land zoning tool, the policy designates land for variety of public space uses. It also highlights need for participatory planning to effectively preserve urban public and green spaces.

Similarly, Ecuador's 'National Plan for Good Living' sets appropriate planning standards for parks, open spaces and streets to foster urban prosperity. Such plans help defend public spaces against ever-expanding 'private' interest and its consequences. On the other hand, sustainable design of public spaces makes them parts of networks of towns and cities that effectively work for the country. The New Zealand urban design policy is a clear example.

### Recommendations:

- NUP to establish national urban planning and land zoning frameworks that clearly distinguish public spaces from buildable land.
- NUP to support public space planning by establishment data based national cadaster of public spaces.
- NUP to develop public space design policies and tools to guide local governments.



**Figure 8.** *Design of public space using minecraft: Bamenda Cameroon*

### Actions:

- In achieving the above recommendations, the following actions are needed at national and local levels:
- Define urban public space and uses in accordance to national urban growth and development projections.
- Develop urban planning and design guidelines that allocate land to a network of public spaces and that guard against encroachment by private interests.
- Develop public space designs guidelines that are age, disability, gender and special need users responsive for use by local governments.
- Adopt participatory public space planning and design practices.
- Support territorial / 'place related data' collection for national cadaster of public spaces development.
- Support development of territorial planning instruments to improve public spaces
- NUP to support development of urban plans that foster mixed land use with adequate public spaces and streets.

### 3.3. Harnessing urban economic productivity from public spaces

Besides being a structuring element, public space is an important means to generate employment, revenue and local economic development. Well planned, designed and managed public spaces have positive impact on the surrounding businesses and property values by stimulating investment and consumption. Research show that increased streets allocation in cities has evident economic benefits. In London for example a 1 per cent increase in green space is associated with a 0.3 to 0.5 per cent increase in average housing price,<sup>22</sup> while the development of the Highline Park in New York has increased rental income in adjacent properties with over 25 per cent.<sup>23</sup> In the City of Bogota, 1 per cent of public space development generates 8 million dollars in revenue.<sup>24</sup> By streamlining, public space, National Urban Policies have a great potential to support cities generate more revenue. To foster enterprise activity and employment creation, Ireland's National Spatial Strategy (2002 – 2020) targets not only high-quality built environment, but also public parks and green spaces. NUP through diagnostic studies helps understand contribution of different sectors to urban economy, thus key to enhance identification of public space related business and livelihood opportunities towards to enhance productivity and competitiveness of cities.

It would further ensure conditions for city's productivity is enhanced, including recognizing, respecting and negotiating rights of entrepreneurs and informal street vendors operating in public spaces (**see Box 5 and 6**).

### Recommendations

- Set up a national land value capture framework to ensure benefits accrued from improvement of public space are shared throughout the urban areas
- Enhance policies and strategies that foster and promote public space related urban economic development and livelihoods improvements
- Support financing of public space creation and management

### Actions:

- Encourage cities to introduce 'betterment levies' to urban properties and businesses benefiting from public space upgrading.
- Undertake land value assessments as a means of resource mobilization to sustain public space among other urban development initiatives
- Support urban areas in development a harmonized value sharing systems /tools that cuts across social, economic, cultural, institutional and spatial challenges
- Support local authorities financial management skills and capacities in many local to enhance public space finance allocation to public spaces.

**Box 6. National Urban Policy Excerpt: Czech Republic (2010) Principles of Urban Policy**

The economic success of and competitiveness of towns is closely related to the attractiveness of the urban environment and the range of services offered. Development planning and strategies that include regeneration of urban cores.....brownfields and public spaces would be very important to achieve this.

*Czech Republic (2010) Principles of Urban Policy Ministry For Regional Development of the Czech Republic*

**Box 7.** *Excerpt from India's National Policy on Urban Street Vendors 2009*

In recognition of importance of public space in promotion of local informal economy, India has enacted a National Policy on Urban Street Vendors which emphasizes the importance of allocating vendors enough space and protecting their rights to do business and gives street vendors dignity and recognition in the national policy arena. Through the policy, public space is made available for vendors on a time sharing model on the basis of a roster. The 2009 Policy is aimed to balance the need to promote vendors' livelihoods with the need to prevent overcrowding and unsanitary conditions in public spaces and streets.

*Source: Government of India (2009) National Policy on Urban Street Vendors*



**Figure 9.** *Craft hawkers market that operate in open public spaces in Nairobi*

### 3.4. Strengthening legal framework to secure, regulate and protect Public Space

National Urban Policy depends on laws as its primary means of implementation. Enforcement of such legal frameworks provide long term vitality and utility of public spaces and protects them from capture by market led urban development and monetarization. NUP diagnostic would support analysis of legal provisions that support development, management and enjoyment of public space (see **Box 7**) and amendment of those that are counterproductive public spaces.

Furthermore, NUP based public space legal and regulatory frameworks delineates public and private spheres and guide interaction between and within them in the management of these spaces.

#### Recommendations:

- Promote legislative and regulatory framework that clearly define universal minimum requirements for public spaces including sizes and that advocate for network of places in city and local plans.
- Develop guidelines that advise on use of public space and guard against private interests and any form of segregation in public spaces.
- Encourage cities to develop minimum standards and management guidelines for public spaces.

**Actions:**

- Enhance cities capacities to allocate land for public space and related infrastructure linkages such as streets and pedestrian walkways.
- Put in place laws to protect public spaces from encroachment by private interests.
- Enhance capacity of local authorities to enforce implementation of public space plans and designs.
- NUP outlines code of standards and guidelines to support local government implement and manage public spaces.

**Box 8.** *Excerpt from Vietnam (2008) National Urban Upgrading Strategy*

.... “through effective enforcement, legal measures to ensure that residential development must include provision on space for parks and open space to maintain a natural and scenic area for recreation and other social functions of built up areas”.

*Vietnam (2008) National Urban Upgrading Strategy and Investment Plan for Urban Upgrading to year 2020*

## 4.0. Mainstreaming Public Space across National Urban Policy development phases

### 4.1. National Urban Policy Feasibility phase

NUP feasibility creates consensus on the need for policy. It maps existing legal and institutional frameworks, multilevel stakeholders and their interrelationships in policy formulation and implementation, hence helps to build political will.

NUP feasibility phase would help map standards and stakeholders in public space creation, management and enjoyment, related challenges and solutions in a transparent and participatory process. Furthermore, the phase gives an opportunity to central governments to build an effective relationship with regional governments and citizens, and to provide an opportunity for wholesale adoption and implementation, including of public space programmes.

**Recommendations:**

Key recommendations to facilitate mainstreaming public spaces in the NUP feasibility would include:

- Adopt a trans-disciplinary and multi stakeholder partnership approach that identifies and recognizes roles and synergies of actors in planning and design of inclusive, safe and accessible public spaces
- Establish frameworks to appraise public space at national and city contexts and including existing agenda for its support and development

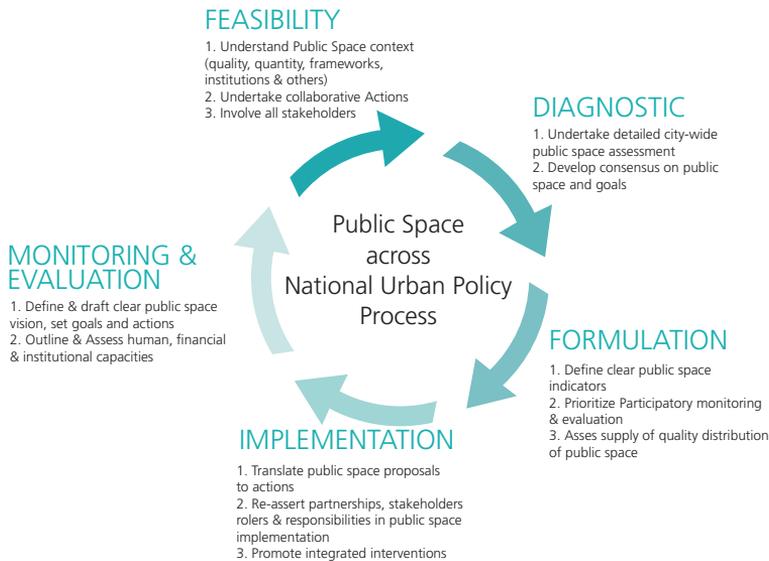
**Actions:**

- Develop a practical toolbox to evaluate national public space status including quantity, quality, legal and institutional frameworks.
- Identify national and city-wide stakeholders and their roles in creation and management of public space.

## 4.2. National Urban Policy diagnostic phase

NUP Diagnostic is an important where background data and information for policy decisions is gathered, organized and analyzed. During the phase, consolidation of solid knowledge and data on condition and supply of public spaces to inform

policy decisions is inevitable, if the policies are to be informed by empirical evidence. Such evidence would help develop consensus on public space goals, policies and strategies at national and city levels.



**Figure 10.** *Mainstreaming Public Space across NUP Development phases*

### Recommendations:

- Develop frameworks to define standards and undertake detailed analysis of public spaces, stakeholders, institutional and legal frameworks at both national and city levels.
- Encourage and support cities to conduct city wide assessment on public open spaces to ascertain their supply, quality, status of use and distribution

### Actions:

- Formulate a clear, comprehensive and universal definition of public spaces at national level.

- Develop national and universal public spaces assessment tools to ensure uniform and comparable public space data and national sample of cities.
- Support research institutions to build local authorities' capacities in collection and updating of public space data.
- Harness innovative technologies to capture and analyze integrated public space data and information.
- Encourage and support city authorities to establish specialized public space research departments

### 4.3. National Urban Policy Formulation Phase

National Urban Policy that considers public space in its formulation phase requires clear public space goal, objectives and actions that are feasible, implementable and that can be monitored and evaluated. Equally it should evaluate capacity of relevant actors and stakeholders, bring them together to prioritize public space policy options and guide their implementation. This would help address competing and conflicting policy needs and priorities.

Furthermore, key human, financial and institutional resources and capacities for public space improvement also need to be identified during the formulation phase.

#### Recommendations:

- Articulate national public space vision to secure political commitment in design, planning, implementation, management and enjoyment.
- Establish frameworks to guarantee inter-ministerial co-ordination of roles and responsibilities in formulation of public space strategies.
- Provide guidance on establishment of public space inter-departmental agency within the local authorities
- Develop national technical assistance programmes to support cities formulate public space improvement projects.

#### Actions:

- Support cities formulate public space strategies and visions towards achievement of national public space vision.
- Ensure public space policies are highly prioritized at national and city levels.

- Identify gaps and capacity building initiatives to enhance effective implementation of public space initiatives.
- Encourage inter departmental and inter-ministerial collaboration and dialogue in the design, creation and management of public spaces.
- Support cities to identify and mobilise financial resources for development of public spaces and related infrastructure.
- Reinforce of public - private - people partnerships and strengthen transparency and efficiency in creation, financing and managing public spaces.

### 4.4. National Urban Policy Implementation Phase

National Urban Policy implementation involves translating policy proposals and strategies into actions. Implementation of public space policy goals, reasserts partnerships, coordinated roles and responsibilities among stakeholders. It ensures of administrative and legal structures coordination and turns public space vision into physical reality within a reasonable timeframe. Furthermore, implementation of public space projects can and should address multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including goals 3, 5, 8, 11 and 13.

#### Recommendations

- Develop public space implementation action plans with timeframes, clear roles and responsibilities for local authorities among other partners.
- Delineate public space implementation financing mechanisms.
- Enhance delivery of network of public spaces by promoting integrated interventions that build on existing projects and with impact on other SDG goals and targets.

**Actions:**

- Develop national public space action plans and encourage cities to domesticate their implementation.
- Support the development of training curricula to enhance capacity to implement planned public space policy actions.
- Establish financing mechanisms for capacity building and implementation support in cities and local governments
- Support use of local knowledge, and materials in public space projects. Encourage people centered public space projects that promotes city art, culture and identity.
- Encourage local authorities to design and implement transformative public space projects that address more than one sustainable development goal.
- Encourage national government to provide funding to local governments to develop and implement city-wide public space strategies.

**4.5. National Urban Policy Monitoring and Evaluation instruments**

Monitoring and evaluation of National Urban Policy is based first on definition of clear indicators to measure effectiveness of the formulation and implementation process and most importantly impacts achieved. Incorporating public space baseline data at National Urban Policy inception

create baseline for progressive assessment and related achievements during implementation. Furthermore, evaluation surveys help assess public space, including their functionality and usability and offer learning opportunities.



**Figure 11.** *Pedestrianization and protected bike lane, Luthuli Avenue, Nairobi*

This can only be achieved if National Urban Policy monitoring and evaluation frameworks include indicators to assess impacts on formulation, implementation, protection and enjoyment of public spaces. Evaluation findings should be disseminated widely to keep stakeholders engaged

and supportive of the initiatives. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be based on SDG 11 target 11.7 on how public spaces catalyze actions towards achievement of sustainable cities and human settlements.

Furthermore, for effective monitoring of such indicator a combination of geospatial data and user-perception surveys may be needed.

### Recommendations:

- Compile data on and gazette national state of urban public spaces as baseline to monitor successive policies and strategies implementation.
- Develop annual national public space improvement targets and encourage cities to contribute towards their achievement.
- Formulate national public space monitoring and evaluation frameworks upon which cities specific monitoring and evaluation plans can be developed.
- Allocate resources for public space data collection, analysis and reporting.
- Formulate minimum public space standard indicators that are relevant to local policy makers and encourage their use by cities.
- Encourage cities to continuously collect and share sex and age disaggregated public space data to enhance monitoring impacts to different population groups.
- Develop clear public space targets and indicators to determine progress towards achieving the national policy objectives.
- Support and undertake institutional capacity development on statistical and spatial data collection and analysis for public space development.

### Actions:

- Collect data and report on SDG 11.7.1 implementation at the national level
- Adopt mixed monitoring methods (quantitative and qualitative) to get comparable data on public space preferences, use, impacts and concerns.

## 5.0. Capacity building for public space

Achieving sustainable national urban policy is not only in the product alone but also the process. Deficient knowledge and capacity among policy makers on importance of public spaces as the most inclusive urban element among other benefits have led to their neglect and consequently poor quality public spaces. To address this, capacity development is a key pillar, for planning and developing inclusive, accessible, safe and people centered public spaces requires fair amount of technical knowledge and skills.

Institutionalizing public space capacity development within National Urban Policy formulation process would inform capacity needs and increase institutional responsibility towards implementation of national and city public space strategies.

Furthermore, it would enhance enforcement of necessary legal instruments to implement the policy. Capacity development should result in permanent positive changes in human, financial, and institutional capacity for public space management including considerations of practical strategies prior to their development.

### Recommendations:

- Prioritize national strategies and structures that support continued human and institutional capacities development on public space issues.
- Prioritize development of tools, frameworks, guidelines and manuals to enhance knowledge, skills and capacities needed by stakeholders in creating and managing public spaces.

**Actions:**

- Support national and city levels capacity needs assessments and development in implementation of public space strategies.
- Support enhancement of local government's professional competences in participatory design and public space management.
- Prioritize and allocate resources for public space related capacity development in government training centres.
- Support development of public space training materials at national and city levels.

**6.0. Public space acupuncture projects**

Urban acupuncture projects are small-scale but socially and environmentally catalytic interventions into the city's fabric that are aimed at transforming the larger urban context. It entails focusing on small, subtle, bottom-up interventions that harness and direct urban community energy in positive ways that would improve the wider cityscape. Grounding National Urban Policy through such projects ensure their translation into action policies that are relevant and implementable. They offer lessons and experiences, hence opportunities to revise policy based on implementation challenges.

This is more practical in implementation of public space projects which are complex and organic, hence their need to be tested and refined over years. Quick win acupuncture projects are an effective urban strategy for regenerating public spaces. Their formulation and implementation are capable to inform best practices for future public space planning at city and national levels.

**Recommendation:**

- Encourage cities to identify 'quick wins' and catalytic public space interventions which can demonstrate value of policy and that can link tangible benefits from public space to city and national development.
- Promote creation of a national database of public space innovations and inspiring practices to inform public space policies development.

**Actions:**

- Create and maintain a national database of public space inspiring practice initiatives which can guide cities interventions
- Identify and finance strategies that can help cities implement low-cost and quicker public space demonstration projects.



**Figure 12.** *Al Shaimaa Community Garden in Beit Lahia in Gaza*

## 7. Promising Public Space Practices with Nationwide Implications

### 7.1. Programme for Recovery of Public Spaces – Mexico

In 2007, Mexico's Federal Government implemented the Program for the Recovery of public spaces as part of the social component of the National Security Strategy, with an aim of recovering damaged, abandoned and insecure public spaces and promoting community appropriation in Mexico. The project was funded by municipalities and the Federal government each giving 50 per cent of the resources required.

The Program emphasized on the improvement of infrastructure, security and social participation. Between 2007 and 2012, 4500 public spaces in 350 municipalities were recovered benefiting over 22 million inhabitants. The project also conducted over 4800 courses to prevent drugs addiction and encourage community safety. Neighborhood committees to watch over the proper use and maintenance of public spaces were formed. Over 70 per cent of the resident in the municipalities acknowledged that the recovery of public spaces highly improved safety within their neighborhoods. Among key lessons learned were:

- The need to establish clear rules.
- Engage the community in the planning and design process; no need to assume their needs.
- Design inclusive public spaces. Design crime prevention oriented public spaces.
- Promote joint responsibility between government and community.
- Promote inter-sectoral cooperation / collaboration.

*Source: Luis Zamorano Ministry of Social Development, Mexico: Presentation made at the SUD-Net Session on Quality Public Space for Sustainable Urban Development at the 6th World Urban Forum, Naples, Italy. 5 September 2012.*



**Figure 13.** *Community Garden, Mexico*

## 7.2. Improvement of Streets and Public Spaces: Bogota & Medellin-Colombia

Colombia's capital Bogota and second city, Medellín have successfully used public spaces as tools of urban development and social change. Medellín has turned itself into a model Latin American city and has designed a comprehensive strategy that seeks solutions to mobility, governance and education together with the recovery of public space and green areas. Bogota on the other hand has embarked on a citywide campaign to use public space and transportation systems to bridge the social divide and create opportunity for all of Bogotá's citizens.

Medellín strategy aims to recover the poorest sectors of the city that until recently, were dominated by communist groups, paramilitaries or drug smugglers. The plans are executed through the Integral Urban Project (PUI) the Land Use Plan (POT) and the Master Plan for Green zones. Each public space is specifically adapted to the context and needs of the neighborhood it is situated in, hence becoming a means of building civic pride. The real design projects, however, have been of social organization, with a section of society grouping together and deciding to rewrite their city's story.

The city's transportation system brings together the formal and informal cities and enhances the street life. The Metro Cable, a cable car that travels above the city, connects informal settlements in the upper regions of Medellín to the metro system in the lower regions, enabling much faster access to transportation and has reduced travel time. While building the cable, pedestrian walkways Parks, sporting fields, and libraries have been constructed nearby. The increase in per capita public space, especially in the poor neighborhoods has been attributed to fall in crime.

A key holistic approach that Bogotá has taken to its transformation is the Ciclovía. Each Sunday and on holidays, for several hours, most streets of the city are closed to cars so that people can enjoy biking, walking, and various recreational activities in the streets. These events have helped to raise awareness of the negative impact that car traffic has on people's lives, and have been a key part of the city's ongoing effort to regain street space for pedestrians and bicycles.

Medellín's latest innovation is the: El Cinturon Verde Metropolitano (the "Metropolitan Greenbelt Mega-project"), an enormous urban park lining the upper reaches of the hillsides surrounding the city, which some years ago were war zones. The project aims to achieve many goals and will hugely expand the city's overall amount of parkland, recreation opportunities, and even places to grow food. By embracing the concept of Open Streets, shared places that embody respect for all and help bridge the social and spatial divides of the city create are created.



Figure 14. *Open streets concept Bogota, Colombia*

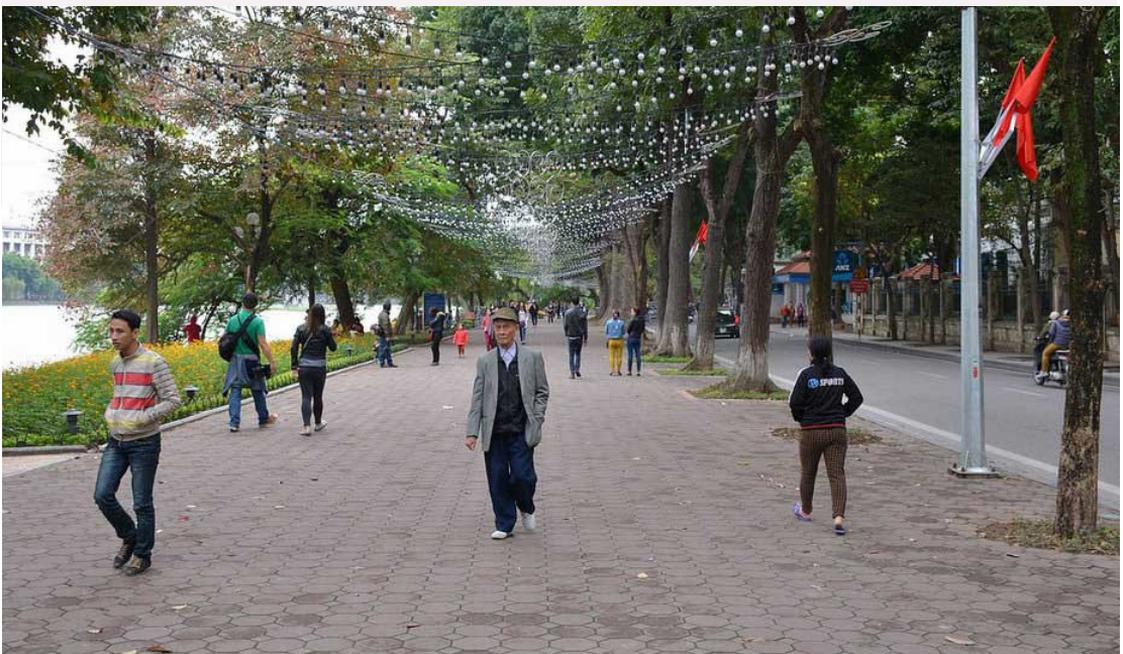
### 7.3. Public Spaces Policies in Hanoi, Vietnam

Though there is lack of strong measures to effectively implement them, public space policies in Vietnam have seen significant positive changes. Vietnamese capital, Hanoi is still far from reaching the target of 7 meter squared per capita of “public-use green spaces outside of residential units” set by the Ministry of Construction in the 2008 Vietnam Building Code 2008. However, from year 2000 to 2010, Hanoi’s urban districts saw an increase of over 124 hectares in the area of parks (1.5 times increase) and an addition of 13.5 hectares on public gardens (a three-fold increase).

This was largely enhanced by the development of policies guiding the production of urban public spaces in the country which have evolved considerably since the early 2000s. To illustrate this evolution, policy documents adopted between 2000-2014 referred to ‘parks’ eight times more than the policy documents issued in the 14 previous years (1986 -1999). Content and focus of policies saw many positive changes since the early 2000s.

Further review of relevant planning policies recently adopted by the central government highlights three positive changes including: an explicit acknowledgment of the positive contributions that public space make to cities livability; heightened attention to the spatial dimensions of public spaces; and a recognition of the need to protect public spaces from degradation and encroachment by private and commercial activities. Despite these positive changes, several challenges including multiple definitions of urban public spaces, divided responsibility for the management of these spaces amongst different government agencies, and some planning norms regarding the production of public spaces exist.

<http://www.hanoiyouthpublicspace.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/FINAL-research-report-small.pdf>



**Figure 15.** *Public open space at Hoan Kiem Lake Hanoi, Vietnam*

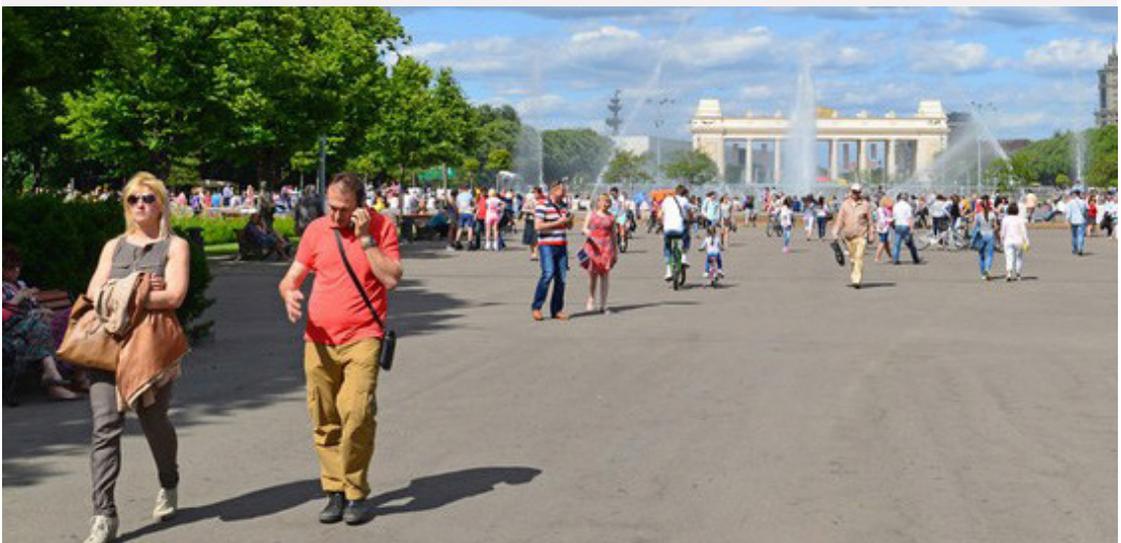
## 7.4. Liveable Urban Environment in Russia

In 2017, the Ministry of Construction of Russian Federation launched a countrywide project to improve the urban environment through the improvement of urban public spaces. The project aims to improve public spaces across municipalities in the Republic and in doing so create an attractive and lively urban environment and improve quality of life and attractiveness of cities and towns.

International experts, as well as local governments from the Russian Federation and various Ministries representatives attended and contributed to the discussions following presentations on progress of the Priority Federal Project “Formation of Liveable Urban Environment”, proposed legislation changes and indicators development for the measurement of quality of urban environment. The Project involving 1653 municipalities across Russia focusses on the improvement of residential areas – where 15,900 courtyards have been already improved – and the creation and improvement of public spaces, with 1950 spaces already improved.

The project increasingly advocates for development of city-wide strategies on public space, urban development and a capacity building programme for municipalities, among other stakeholders. He also highlighted the project successes and the opportunities that exist to move to more systemic impact as shown through the legal changes being proposed.

The huge innovative undertaking by the Federal Government aim to address urban quality and translate global commitments into local action through analysis of successes and lessons that area used to design milestones in the project. The initiative is a new generation of efforts by national government to support change at the local level, engage with residents and build local initiatives and capacity in the field of public space, and its linkages with urban quality and development.



**Figure 16.** *Public garden near the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour; Moscow, Russia*

Source: <https://unhabitat.org/russian-expert-council-puts-liveable-urban-environment-in-the-spotlight/>

## 8.0. Some Dos and Don'ts in mainstreaming public space in National Urban Policy

### Do's

- Understand national public space needs before engaging on any planning or rehabilitation process.
- Develop clear national goal and unified public space vision that advocate for development of a city-wide strategies that support network of public spaces.
- Ensure formulation of policies and strategies that support planning, design and management of public spaces at different scales.
- Focus on policies that enhance and guarantee public spaces availability and accessibility.
- Facilitate policies that prioritize streets and public spaces as places to protect and promote human rights of all citizens.
- Ensure adequate public spaces land is reserved in cities
- Ensure the benefits accrued from implementation of public spaces are adequately redistributed to citizens benefits through land value capture.
- Strengthen leadership, horizontal and vertical cooperation and coordination between ministries, departments and agencies involved in public space planning and management.
- Develop national guidelines for setting up inter-departmental committees at national and local levels.
- Develop a clear financial plan on the implementation of city-wide plans and strategies as spelt in NUP and clear communication strategy to enhance dialogue on expected roles of different public space actors.
- Invest in innovative partnerships and institutional capacities and embrace diverse opinions in planning, development and management of public spaces.
- Enhance strategies that defend public spaces against over- expanding private and speculative real estate interests
- Ensure gender issues and interests of the marginalized groups are incorporated in public space planning and management.
- Develop public space strategies that effectively mobilize resources to finance public spaces formulation, planning design and management within cities.
- Develop conflict resolution mechanisms realization, use and management of public spaces.
- Support setting up of frameworks and guidelines for private developers in creating and managing public space.
- Develop and invest in clear public space sustainability strategies and plans.
- Develop strategies that balance enjoyments of public spaces with associated livelihood opportunities.

### Don'ts

- Do not encourage strategies that privatize, commercialize and commoditize public spaces to avoid their segregation and fragmentation
- Do not regulate access to public space by setting fees to enter.
- Do not oversaturate, hence creating need to overregulate productive activities in public spaces through use of regulations

- Do not encourage public spaces design choices that ignore the multifunctional criteria and structural connections of public spaces
- Do not encourage development of legislations that are counterproductive to lively public space
- Do not underrate existing projects, local knowledge and culture in public space designs and planning or assume city's public space needs.
- Avoid spatial segregations in public space planning enhancement opportunities
- Do not sectoralize public space administrative and management structures
- Do not limit participatory processes to consultation on design criteria procedures

## Conclusion

Public spaces are a vital ingredient and a key asset of successful cities. They should be among the top urban planning development priority agenda within our cities, thus be designed, planned and managed in every detail for the prospective public users. National urban policy, a government tool for promoting sustainable urbanization can help promote public space as an important component for prosperity in cities, by helping galvanize support for the development of national and city-wide public space management strategies including their inclusion in the urban planning processes.

These guidelines are applicable throughout the National Urban Policy process could guide development of important city-wide public space strategies. From the guidelines, it's imperative that articulating a country's public space vision and securing political commitment in its implementation would be an important starting point, while assessment strategies ascertaining the supply, quality, connectivity, status of use would be a good predictor of public spaces quality.

Detailed analysis of stakeholders, institutional and legal frameworks in support of their development in the context of existing national and international agenda need to be undertaken and frameworks that guarantee availability of the relevant institutional, technical and financial capacities to help implement the public space strategies need to be put in place. Plans and designs that guarantee more diverse, well-distributed and connected public spaces and street patterns that meet community needs, purposes and functions and that are cost effective in management and maintenance need to be prioritized and be given full attention.

Such designs should largely enhance delivery of integrated network of public spaces by building on existing interventions such that they address multiple goals and create impacts beyond SDG target 11.7.

To enhance management and care of public spaces, adoption of trans-disciplinary and multi stakeholder partnership approaches that recognize people, public and private partnerships in planning and design of systems of public spaces, that foster dialogue, mobilise collective consciousness and resolve conflicts in implementation of city wide public space strategies is inevitable. Such frameworks would enhance cross-sector and multilevel coordination among government departments and also ensure coherence and a unitary view in the creation, management and enjoyment of public spaces.

Strategies that enhance land value capture and that promote economic social interactions through encouraging pedestrianisation and street sharing need to be encouraged. Land value capture ensures benefits accrued from physical improvement of public space are widely shared, hence beneficial to cities. Additionally, structures and frameworks that prioritize capacity development for continued improvement of human and institutional capacities development on public spaces including participatory monitoring and evaluation for institutional learning and to enhancing visibility of public space work are inevitable, while mechanisms to ensure public space data, information and indicators are captured and monitored throughout implementation of public space strategies need to be well developed.

## Endnotes

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2. See the Charter of Public Space. This is the outcome of an open, collaborative and participatory process announced at the 2012 World Global Forum and carried out in collaboration with UN-Habitat, INU and other partners with the purpose of laying out a set of clear principles to define public space and suggest appropriate actions for the creation, maintenance and enjoyment of good urban public spaces. [http://www.biennespaziopubblico.it/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CHARTER-OF-PUBLIC-SPACE\\_June-2013\\_pdf-.pdf](http://www.biennespaziopubblico.it/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CHARTER-OF-PUBLIC-SPACE_June-2013_pdf-.pdf)
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11. Kim S., 2015.
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18. United Nations, 2017.
19. The others include planned (i) city extensions; (ii) planned city infills; (iii) land readjustment interventions; (iv) Basic service delivery; (v) adequate housing for all; (vi) a global monitoring framework for the New Urban Agenda.
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Public spaces are a vital ingredient for successful cities. They help build a sense of community, civic identity and culture. They facilitate social capital, economic development and community revitalization. They not only improve the quality of life but are a first step towards civic empowerment and greater access to civic empowerment, institutional and political spaces.

For effective creation, protection and management of public spaces as a means to generate wealth, improve wellbeing and advance urban productivity, they need to be fully integrated into the National Urban Policies, which touches on all aspects of the New Urban Agenda (NUA).

The guide “Addressing Public Space in Implementation of National Urban Policies,” contains action-oriented Recommendations that can assist all National Urban Policy and Public Space stakeholders to better understand the relationship between the two and consequently how Public Spaces can be mainstreamed in development of National Urban Policies.

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