

The New Urban Agenda



THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

As the world's population has grown, so has the number of people living in cities, towns and villages on all continents. With around 3 billion more people expected to live in urban areas by 2050, it is more critical than ever that we plan and manage the way our cities expand. We need a New Urban Agenda to ensure that urbanization is a tool for achieving economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development.

Drawn from UN-Habitat's decades of experience in urbanization, the New Urban Agenda (NUA) is a focused, action oriented approach to improving the quality of urbanization. It identifies five distinct **Action Areas** as follows:

1. National Urban Policy
2. Urban Legislation - rules and regulations
3. Urban Planning and Design
4. Urban Economy and Municipal Finance
5. Planned City Extensions / Planned urban renewals

These Action Areas are further divided into 30 Key **Action Points**, each of which is a clear, specific and implementable tool to help governments and municipal authorities reverse the current downward trend in the **Quality of Urbanization**



NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

Planning based on population projections makes the difference between cities with choked infrastructure and crowded slums, and cities that distribute urban benefits and quality of life for all.

Planning for regions instead of just cities helps prevent urban crowding, and preserves a city's physical and economic connection with its rural base.

A national urban policy distinguishes levels of responsibility for all tiers of government and other stakeholders, establishes mechanisms for coordination, and guarantees accountability for urban development outcomes.

Creating a metropolitan governance system prevents duplication of services and wastage of resources and helps with the planning of consistent transportation routes and other services.

Urban plans with the force of law provide city residents with predictability around property, security of tenure, access rights, and individual plans for the future. They also ensure that development is transparent and that a city's public spaces and services are protected.

National urban policies ensure minimum standards when planning urban basic services such as water, sanitation, and energy, or the basic design features of streets that promote safe walking and cycling and access to public transport.



URBAN LEGISLATION - RULES AND REGULATION

Established land management systems, including fit for purpose planning tools and land administration, are necessary for the sustainable delivery of all other elements of the urban fabric. Legal frameworks should be accessible to all, therefore acknowledging the reality of legal pluralism, informality and widespread insecurity of tenure and identifying practical and equitable solutions.

Public space, particularly streets and green space, provides the basic structure of human settlements that endures over decades and centuries. Public space enhances community cohesion, civic identity, the quality of life and enhances economic productivity. Therefore, the legal mechanisms to acquire, establish and maintain public space are fundamental to the character and liveability of an urban area.

Inclusive regulation of the central elements of urbanisation, including basic services and the identification of plots and blocks. Basic services such as water, sanitation, waste management and public transport should be available to all, regardless of status or tenure security. Plot and block management should create a diverse urban fabric that makes land and built space accessible to all and that supports a wide variety of economic and cultural uses.

Promoting a balance of rights and interests in urban development through proactive development control. Public investment in infrastructure and public consent to development create value in property that can be reinvested in the services those properties require and in urban development, as well as benefitting individual property owners. Cities that aim at increased equity among their citizens, financial stability and at increasing service delivery need to set in place legal frameworks to fairly balance the burdens and benefits of urbanization.

Building codes that support an economically vibrant, inclusive and safe city at both street and neighbourhood levels. These should be up to date and locally relevant while mitigating risk and promoting environmental efficiency.

Rules and regulations must be effective in delivering agreed policy objectives efficiently and predictably. They must be clear, precise and cost effective and support a framework of good governance that is relevant to the diversity of urban contexts and that encourages inclusive outcomes.



URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN



Urban patterns have a major influence on livability and sustainability. Buildable plots must be balanced by public space for residents to enjoy their neighbourhoods. The design of street patterns, blocks, plots and building arrangements directly affects the livability, walkability, safety, sociability, environmental impact and productivity of neighbourhoods. Accessible areas make it easy to deliver urban services, and make for easier flow of commerce.

Travel time between home and work has a huge impact on quality of life for residents. Mixed-use districts with residences close to employment promote easy travel, thereby saving time and reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. If well designed, this can also promote socially interactive and flexible public spaces.

Fresh air and greenery improve life for everybody. Parks, urban forests, wetlands, peri-urban agricultural areas, street trees, green roofs and vertical green surfaces improve the urban ecosystem and microclimate - and have even been shown to reduce urban violent crime.

Urban residents must be at the centre of planning. Housing development has too often led to the segregation of some socio-economic groups and land users. 'Housing at the Centre' implies a holistic planning approach that puts people and their daily needs at the centre of urban development policy and makes affordable housing a pillar of city life.

Strong crisis planning reduces recovery time, and ensures normal life for residents is restored expeditiously. Good crisis planning engages all actors, from emergency responders and municipal authorities to central government. A good plan can increase resilience, and reduce loss of life and property during an emergency.

Good planning includes provision for commerce and economic growth. Diverse urban economic spaces that also cater for small scale entrepreneurs and that are close to homes enhance overall productivity and livelihoods, including a better quality of life for workers.

URBAN ECONOMY AND MUNICIPAL FINANCE

Identifying key sources of sustainable finance.

Strengthening a city's economic and financial capacity increases economic opportunities for residents and enables the city to finance provision of basic services local infrastructure such as affordable housing.

Good investment plans support long-term growth of cities. Planned urbanisation allows cities to identify future opportunities for revenue-generation, and to allocate funding for priority investments. Investment plans also facilitate realistic and achievable Capital Budgets.

Local finance will determine the future of urban infrastructure development in developing countries. Urban authorities can increase local revenue by leveraging planning rules and using locally available financial instruments such as land value sharing, which in turn attract external investment such as bonds and commercial loans.

Planning instruments help local governments to

maximize value. Innovative instruments such as land readjustment help land owners and city residents to service and redevelop land. Populating and developing underutilized land, and post-disaster/post-conflict reconstruction, can stimulate long-term development while delivering short-term results.

Investing in basic urban services improves living conditions for city residents.

Rapid assessments of the level of access to basic urban services helps municipal authorities to estimate the investments required to meet the demands of growing urban populations. Internal and external financing sources should be used for upgrades and construction of new infrastructure. Sustainability considerations can be built into the programming and design of solutions.

Housing finance options should be available for low income residents.

This is possible through creative and visionary policies such as cross-subsidies, mortgage finance, financing for social and rental housing, non-collateral credit mechanisms for owner-builders, credit for developers and contractors, and support for construction buildings with resilient materials.



PLANNED CITY EXTENSIONS/ PLANNED URBAN RENEWALS

Once a street is in place it can last a thousand years. When people settle in areas where adequate public space and rights-of-way have not been laid out, the result is slums, segregation and congestion. Retrofitting an urban area is difficult and expensive. It is much easier and cheaper to plan in advance.

Planning based on informed demographic, economic, and other holistic projections makes a quality of life difference between future urban centres with inadequate, overloaded infrastructure, overcrowding, traffic jams, cities beleaguered by vacancy, vandalism and costliness – and those that provide sufficient infrastructure, vitality and affordability balance.

Where possible, urban ‘in-filling’ and slum upgrading is best, creating appropriate population densification, mixed-use neighbourhoods, and urban vibrancy. Vacant urban lots, slums, and brownfield redevelopment allow urban centres to accommodate growth without expanding their urban edge into ecologically valuable land, or encouraging urban sprawl. This approach results in lowering urban energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

Integration is key to the equitable and effective provision of services. Improvements to urban basic services should be designed as an integrated, inter-sectoral package, allowing for incremental implementation as resources grow and providing common space as necessary rights-of-way. Sustainability considerations can be built into planned improvements to basic services.

Land supply for urban expansion must keep pace with growth. To achieve this, land must be identified for planned city extensions. Extensions also allow for a measure of control over the land market and increase affordability city-wide.

Uncontrolled land speculation is a burden on equitable city growth and good planning. Speculation means that land can be held for years for long-term capital gain, leaving empty plots when there is a need for housing for example; pre-investment land value increases can undermine the financial viability of a project. Legal mechanisms must address both.

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United Nations Human Settlements Programme

P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya

T: +254-20-7623120

E: advocacy@unhabitat.org

