BRICKFIELDS™

Nimble Neighbourhoods

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Contents

Welcome to Nimble Neighbourhoods, a critique on the progressive developments resolving the interplay of diverse demographics, daily routines, places of commerce, modes of mobility and the human connections that bind them.

As urban pressures increase, neighbourhoods, old and new, are adapting to provide a more enriching and equitable quality of life for their residents – and increasingly one which respects not only the immediate residents, but the planet as a whole.

In this report we explore how property owners are creating more inclusive places, driven by a need to reduce growing levels of urban loneliness. We'll investigate how developers are supporting ageing populations by providing equal opportunities to persons with different physical and neurological abilities.

In addition to more inclusive communities, flexible economic models are also allowing the integration of unique cultural spaces, childcare services and high-street businesses – making a neighbourhood or development more equitable and market competitive. Furthermore, sustainability initiatives are coming in the form of city-branding campaigns, car-free neighbourhoods, and eco-housing product to capture eco-conscious homebuyers and attract talent.

Finally, and perhaps most critically, emerging technology is changing the way property owners deploy and collect data. The developers set to profit and help communities prosper are those that take a nimble stance, equipping themselves with the evidence to make sound investments – consistently responding to a human need.

01
Holistic havens

A renewed focus on building social capital has seen developments become more inclusive, rich in curated amenity, typically co-created by their community.

01 Introduction

New residential developments are taking a holistic approach to the lifestyle and amenity they deliver – designed with community at the heart, they foster meaningful relationships and greater levels of social inclusion. These "holistic havens" are tailored to specific audiences and are enriched with diverse housing product, as well as retail, cultural, and shared facilities – which play an integral role in building local relationships. This practice is manifesting in various ways, including multi-generational housing product and public amenity, unique approaches to mixed-use in suburban areas and assets (particularly hotels), repositioning their offer to connect more strongly with their locales.

The shift towards such development is driven by ageing populations in the developed world, coupled with increased levels of loneliness among adults at each end of the age spectrum – with one in four Australian adults admitting to being lonely, according to research by Swinburne University (2018). Heightened levels of public awareness regarding health and wellbeing

are also driving this trend, with findings from the What Works Centre for Wellbeing in the UK that lower levels of social capital* indicated a general lack of wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the importance of localised amenity within walking distance to meet basic needs. Going forward, residential communities with holistic levels of amenity, robust community and wellbeing will be seen as increasingly desirable by homebuyers who can attribute a psychological value on socially connected communities.

Inclusive neighbourhoods

Research by Australian academics has found that social isolation and disempowerment increases premature death by 50 per cent in addition to being linked to a number of physical and mental health diagnoses. This highlights the need for neighbourhoods and society at large to become more inclusive by supporting the diverse needs of often-marginalised groups – be it in the context of cultural identity, economic standing, physical ability or age.

Indigenous development

Looking to social and cultural inclusion, a development breaking the mould is Senakw in Vancouver. The proposal responds to city's housing affordability crisis and the inequality experienced by the Squamish Nation (an indigenous community native to British Columbia, Canada). Of the scheme's 6000 dwelling units, 70-90 per cent are set aside for renters, rather than owner-occupiers. Further to this, there will be a set allocation of affordable housing for the indigenous Squamish. The scheme by Revery Architecture and the Squamish

Nation also favours slender towers to maximise public amenity on the ground plane. This leaves ample room for the community assets, schools and transport required to support the approximately 10,000 residents. In speaking to The Guardian, Khelsilem, a Squamish Nation councillor states that "people who support new housing are often marginalised out of decision-making, and this is a marginalised community saying, 'This is how we're creating value for our nation, and the public at large.'" Overall, the scale and intent of the proposal represents an empowering move for the Squamish Nation, and one which shows that urban and indigenous development can successfully co-exist.

"People who support new housing are often marginalised out of decision-making, and this is a marginalised community saying, 'This is how we're creating value for our nation, and the public at large'."

Khelsilem, Squamish Nation councillor, cited in The Guardian, 2020

*Social capital is described by the OECD as the "links, shared values and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and so work together".

Senakw Development, Vancouver

Senakw Development, Vancouver

Diverse abilities

People with disabilities also commonly experience isolation and exclusion. A response counteracting this is Singapore's Enabling Village, an integrated community space that encourages people living with different abilities to live, work and learn independently.

This reimagined health precinct, led by the Ministry of Children and Family Development and managed by SG Enable, combines retail, food and beverage, and training for people with disabilities and carers, as well as an R&D lab for assistive technology. These uses are embedded within a fine-grain precinct, resplendent in lush landscaping, and dotted with quiet cabanas for those with sensory needs. The cafe, restaurants and retail are staffed by disabled people to provide training and employment opportunities whilst helping build awareness with the general public about their capability.

The curation of public-facing health and non health-related offerings, combined with programmable spaces, creates a precinct that has broad appeal to diverse audiences. The result is an inclusive place where all members of society are welcome on an equal footing.

The Enabling Village, Singapore

Ageing in place

Another group requiring social inclusion are elderly citizens. By 2030, the number of people globally aged 60 and older is expected to grow by 56 per cent to 1.4 billion, prompting a rethink of how an ageing population is housed. A progressive response is Kampung Admiralty in Singapore by the national Housing and Development Board. The "vertical village" supports "ageing in place" by collocating residences with essential amenities, such as healthcare providers, community centres, food and beverage outlets and green spaces.

The village facilitates community interaction through a hawker centre for communal meals, community gardens, volunteering opportunities, and programmed leisure. A porous and active ground plane connects the village to the neighbourhood, allowing for incidental socialising with the wider community. This balance of diverse and integrated experiences respects older citizens as active members of the community and provides them with an enriched daily life.

Multi-generational living is another way of caring for an ageing population, and is increasingly being recognised in developed countries, taking cues from migrant families where it is common practice. In Australia, it is estimated that 20 per cent of households are now multi-generational; meanwhile, in Canada, the 2016 census showed that multi-generational households are the fastest growing housing category in Canada (having increased by over 37 per cent since 2001). Despite this, suitable homes are still hard to source. In response, home builders are tapping into this trend and developing specific product to address this undersupply. SHAWOOD Homes, a subsidiary of Japanese developer Sekisui House, is leading the way with models for multi-generational living. Catering to older generations, their product locates a principal suite on a home's ground level with adjacent bathroom and living space – as well as easy access to communal areas to join in family life.

Kampung Admiralty, Singapore

Another similar example is FlexHouz by Canadian-based builder Marshall Homes. The design combines two fully-functional and independent homes under one roof, each with separate entrances. The homes, which cost about CA$1.6 million, are being praised for their practicality and flexibility.

Bespoke solutions are also proving that multi-generational housing can also be developed in high-density areas.

A particular example is Dongsimwon house in Seoul, designed by Sosu Architects. The six-storey structure combines ground-floor retail and three apartments for three generations. Kitchen and dining areas in the parents' apartment are designed to be shared by the whole family, creating efficiency in the plan. Flexible partitions throughout the house also enable the creation of independent rooms if required. Solutions such as this keep older generations close to their families and local amenity.

"It's time to concentrate on the potentiality of small scale multiplex house as an alternative downtown residence."

Sosu Architects speaking to *Dezeen*, 2018

Left: FlexHouz, Canada
Above: Kampung Admiralty, Singapore

Dongsimwon house, Seoul

City microcosms

As cities become increasingly dense and unaffordable, suburban areas are stepping up with mixed-use housing product that is amenity rich and emulates the vibrancy of city life. This movement is intended to appeal to Millennial buyers that are less car reliant, seek affordability and value the diverse experiences of urban living. It also responds to lessons learned from decades of suburban sprawl in the world's western economies, which has seen increased car dependence, long commute times, low access to essential needs, and poor lifestyle outcomes.

An example which reinvigorates outer-urban living is Mehr als Wohnen in Zurich. The ambitious 45,000-square-metre co-operative urban quarter was delivered in a partnership between the City of Zurich and 50 co-operatives. In an interview with Brickfields Consulting, Ueli Keller, one of the founders, imparted that the intention was to create a microcosm of Zurich with a "different built environment and different people living together, and where one can find more opportunities".

The development's success is in its breadth of housing typologies which suit various modes of living, such as student accommodation, co-housing, multi-generational living, and subsidised homes – drawing together diverse demographics. A localised lifestyle is achieved by the presence of many different retail, commercial and community spaces, including workspaces supporting individuals with disabilities and those who have sought asylum. Residents have all they need within 10 minutes' walk, thus reducing car dependence.

Overall, the result has been the flourishing of a socially diverse community. The development exemplifies the level of quality that can be attained when co-operatives, architects, government, and communities collaborate through an effective competition-led process and a commitment to achieving a holistic outcome.

Mehr als Wohnen, Zurich

Mehr als Wohnen, Zurich

Private developers are also leveraging this trend, with another example being Burwood Brickworks, by Frasers Property in Melbourne's outer east. The master-planned community has been designed on principles of convenience and connectivity – integrating a mix of uses, walkable green spaces and cycleways. The site is anchored by a retail centre which creates vibrancy through its dining precinct that interfaces with a plaza, boutique cinemas, as well as a destinational rooftop-farm and eatery.

Anecdotally, the farm-to-table concept has attracted visitors from over 40 minutes' drive away, thus showing the power of a curated tenant mix

to attract audiences to a previously non-distinct suburb. It also presents the value of servicing a residential community beyond daily convenience needs with compelling uses that bring people together.

Burwood Brickworks, Melbourne

Hyper mixed-use

City fringe developments are also pushing the boundaries of mixed-use – with a breadth of offers to build a sense of community whilst maximising smaller footprints and diversifying risk.

A particular example is the Kalkbreite Co-operative in Zurich, a citizen-led residential development. The site combines housing with workspaces, cultural uses, hospitality and service premises, accommodating

256 residents and generating 200 jobs across 5000 square metres of commercial space. This diverse mix of uses is connected via corridors within the building that encourage neighbours to collide and connect. Key to its success is the presence of commercial space which improves the viability of the co-op and allows a greater provision of affordable housing. Kalkbreite is an exemplar of what is termed a 'hyper mixed-use' hub that leverages commercial use to deliver affordable and localised living.

Kalkbreite Co-operative, Zurich
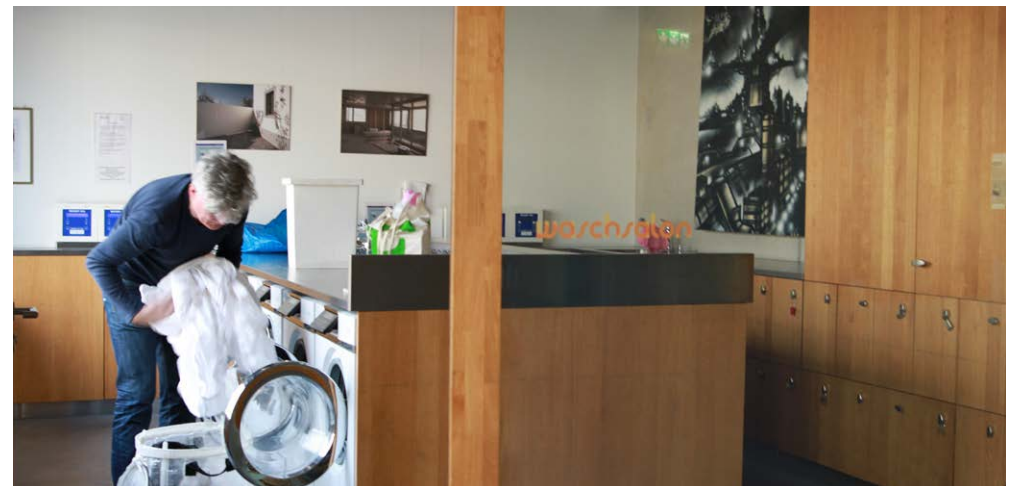
"Hotels should take back this central role within their respective neighbourhoods to connect people, take care of one another and be warm and inviting spaces for everyone – just like the inns and taverns used to be in the old days."

Veerle Donders, Concept and Brand Director at Zoku, 2020

*Zoku,
Amsterdam*

Conversely, commercial developments, such as hotels, which were typically singular in use, are now diversifying their product offering to connect more with their local communities.
A particular example undergoing this change is Zoku, a work-live hotel in Amsterdam with a mission to reduce loneliness. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Zoku adapted their hotel rooms into bookable "WorkLofts", and offered weekend wellness retreats, as well as a private dining experience with a resident Michelin Star chef.

Ms Donders anticipates leveraging these learnings for future developments – complemented by Zoku's signature interior design that creates "cozy, smaller 'nooks' within larger spaces that feel breezy enough for people to feel safe".

Shared spaces

As the way we live changes, new types of space are designed to respond to our behaviours. One such example is the increasing presence of "third" places that encourage repeated and incidental interactions. This trend builds on an increasing acceptance of – and preference for – shared living. In its most progressive form, this co-living trend extends beyond housing to provide communal spaces and shared streets within neighbourhoods. In terms of benefits, the design of these spaces builds social capital and supports the unique sensitivities of children, families and elderly.

In the home
The willingness to up your home to share space can be evidence of a neighbourhood's social capital, indicating trust and goodwill amongst residents. This belief is central to tc plus's G-Lab concept which extends shared living space to a neighbourhood level. G-Lab is designed as a private home that can be lived in – with the added capability of transforming into a communal space for the neighbourhood to enjoy for free. A range of different

spaces inside the house operate on a spectrum between private and public, with moveable dividers and curtains used to open and close different parts of the house.

This concept successfully blurs the boundaries of private and shared space and challenges the traditional Western notion of the home being private and personal – where one would otherwise leave the home to be part of the community. Such concepts are likely to gain more traction in a post-pandemic world where both community connections and the need for flexible space will be increasingly important.

G-Lab concept by tc plus

Right: Three Generation Playground, Singapore

"If you provide quality play spaces for the elderly, alongside spaces for children, the older residents are less likely to complain about the noise!"

Local parent interviewed by Natalia Krysiak in Singapore, published in *Designing Child-Friendly High Density Neighbourhoods*, 2020

In the playground

Residential playgrounds are also becoming broader in their use-case and appeal – evolving into spaces that can be shared by multiple demographics at once. This is particularly true for high-density neighbourhoods in Singapore, evidenced by the implementation of "three-generation playspaces" in many of the city's apartment clusters. The spaces combine open playgrounds for children, leisure and game-based zones for teenagers, and exercise equipment of older generations. According to Natalia Krysiak, Architect and Founder of Cities for Play, this shared experience develops a sense of empathy towards the needs of others and responsibility towards younger generations. Interestingly, areas with three-generation playspaces have experienced a reduction in noise complaints from older residents – likely as they are now part of the action. Such spaces reveal the levels of increased harmony that can be achieved when places are designed for a wide breadth of ages.

In the streets

Walkable neighbourhoods are a global phenomenon, widely recognised as having higher levels of social capital, wellbeing, and uplifts in property value. Using WalkScore (an index based on the presence of amenities within walking distance), US think tank City Observatory discovered that a single additional point of WalkScore is worth USD$3500 in additional home value. Further to this, of the 51 metro areas studied, 44 experienced an increase in average values in walkable areas relative to car-dependent ones over the period 2012 to 2019.

Designing in walkability is a more traditional but no less effective way of increasing shared spaces in a neighbourhood. The Spanish city of Pontevedra is an example of the positive impact shared streets can have on these groups. Over the past 20 years, the city has introduced a cost-effective and incremental approach to removing vehicle traffic from the city centre to create a safer and more inclusive urban environment. A once stagnant and sometimes unsafe city centre has been transformed into a friendly and inclusive walker's paradise through "nudge" policies –

that is, interventions that influence behaviour whilst preserving freedom of choice – rather than implementing expensive projects. Taking a pedestrian-first stance, the local government has introduced parking restrictions, removed sidewalks and one-way streets, that have made moving around by foot easier and safer. This has expanded the volume of shared space available to citizens and created more opportunities for interaction. Most importantly, it has created an urban environment where children, the elderly and families feel safe to travel by foot and play freely. Since 1999, car fatalities have been reduced to zero and 80 per cent of children walk to school alone every morning.

Pontevedra should inspire property owners and local governments who are tentative about retrofitting their places. This example proves that an incremental and cost-effective approach over the long term can provide lasting value.

Metrominuto walking map, Pontevedra

Insights & implications

- Precincts for older generations and people with disabilities are shifting away from segregated typologies, using porous spatial design and a curated tenant mix for broader appeal to bring all members of society together.

- Suburban developments can become more competitive and attain destinational appeal when a holistic level of mixed uses are integrated. The most compelling offer cultural, community, humanitarian, workplace and agricultural use whilst catering to diverse demographics through tailored residential product.

- Hybrid-home concepts, which integrate flexible community spaces into a private home, represent a valuable offer in a post-pandemic world, where both community connections and the need for third spaces will be increasingly important.

- Hotels and hospitality operators are repositioning their offer, becoming increasingly conscious about serving the local context in which they find themselves. They are developing more experiences to connect people whilst creating new revenue streams.

Above: G-Lab concept by tc plus

Left: Zoku, Amsterdam

02
Economic flexibility

Nimble approaches to financing and ownership are challenging traditional economic models to build more resilient and sustainable local economies.

02 Introduction

Local economies are a vital part of neighbourhoods. Over the past ten years we have seen a growing interest in alternative methods of financing, investing and local business support, driven by a perceived failure of traditional and inequitable economic models. Taking a macro view, this propensity to seek fairness is part of a broader shift in collective consciousness, particularly for GenZ and Millennial audiences. According to a 2017 Cone Communications survey, nearly 75 per cent of this age group are willing to retract loyalty from a brand if it does not share similar values in economic development and social justice.

Within the built environment, the demand for a more equal and secure future is being met with supportive initiatives from government, business and grassroots communities. In our neighbourhoods, this is manifesting in new home ownership models, the sustainable integration of small businesses and arts spaces into developments, as well as the creation of diverse jobs and access to public services and resources which help

give people a stake in the economy. Investment in local economies from the private and public sector can result in resilient neighbourhoods that are competitive and achieve stronger growth, especially in uncertain times.

Detroit Tiny Homes, Detroit

Equitable ownership

Housing affordability continues to be an enduring urban challenge in the world's major cities. In particular, the issue disproportionately affects low-income households paying high rent, inhibiting their ability to enter the private housing market. In the United States, the cost of renting has risen faster than renters' income for nearly 20 consecutive years. In Australia, the issue is similar, with the average weekly rent now $235 – up from $152 in September 2007. At these rates, only 6.4 per cent of rental properties are affordable to a couple with two children, earning minimum wage.

Past solutions have relied on compromised quality of living, but a new trend is emerging that bypasses traditional financing and investment models to make home ownership more accessible. An example of this is Detroit Tiny Homes, carried out by Cass Community Social Service. The organisation is building 25 "tiny homes" offered to disadvantaged and low-income people through a "rent-then-own" program. Residents pay USD$1 per square metre in rent, which acts similarly to a mortgage

repayment, whereby residents are able to own their home after seven years, provided payments have been met.

Although "tiny" (23–37 square metres), each home is on its own lot, built on foundations, and designed as fully operational permanent housing. The program also requires residents to participate in a wider social program, which includes volunteering, joining a homeowner's association, and working with a financial coach. Not only does Detroit Tiny Homes provide stable housing to disadvantaged communities and offer a realistic pathway to home ownership – it also provides the opportunity to build equity and improve generational wealth. In turn, this enables economic mobility and residential stability which can break cycles of poverty.

Another residential development which supports generational wealth is Kāinga Tuatahi, situated in Ōrākei a suburb of Auckland (New Zealand). The medium-density urban papakāinga (meaning village in Māori) comprises of 30 townhouses and is set on Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei ancestral land. The development model has seen Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei act independently as the land owner, developer, facilitator and even bank – allowing the integration of their tribe's aspirations for long-term security, autonomy and wellbeing. The particular measures which supported these aspirations included: the ability to purchase homes with a 5 per cent deposit, setting mortgage rates at the equivalent of affordable market rental rates, and reducing costs by only selling the home, not the land. These steps were instrumental in helping overcome systemic barriers in financial literacy and existing debt experienced by the community.

It is important to note that the embedding of cultural values at Kāinga Tuatahi is an extension of the Te Aranga Māori Design Principles. These provide practical guidance for enhancing the presence, visibility and participation of mana whenua in the design of the physical realm. In the consenting context, mana whenua refers to the indigenous people (Māori) who have historic and territorial rights over the land. It refers to iwi and hapū (Māori tribal groups) who have these rights in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland.

"What does it mean to live here? It's a sense of well-being. It's great to be safe and warm. Having my own home makes me feel like a proper grown up. I don't have to live with my parents – instead they're going to live with me."

Kirimoana Willoughby, Resident at Kāinga Tuatahi
Auckland Design Manual, Kāinga Tuatahi Medium Density Papakāinga Terraced Housing.

Kāinga Tuatahi Papakāinga, Auckland

New Story, Fuseproject and ICON

Housing affordability is also being achieved by technological advancements which dramatically reduce construction costs. At times, these innovations are often slow to reach those that need it most, but one project is breaking the mould. Touted as "the world's first 3D community", a tri-collaboration between design studio Fuseproject, New Story, a non-profit specialising in solutions to homelessness, and homebuilding technology company ICON – have delivered a collection of 3D-printed homes in Latin America. Leveraging the cost efficiency of 3D printing technology, the project will include affordable, high-quality homes of 55 square metres that can be constructed in 24 hours, with the design reflecting the cultural and lifestyle habits of this particular community. For example, covered patios connected to the homes allow residents to use outdoor spaces for cooking and eating. Here we witness a maturing of 3D printing technology – which, when combined with localised research, offers a scalable solution that can be adapted to urban challenges in diverse contexts.

"Our approach addressed the important questions related to climate, family structure and the role that the homes can play in creating a larger community."

Fuseproject, 2019

Small business financing

Small, local businesses are an [integral] part of neighbourhood economies. Technology has afforded lower barriers of entry for these groups, but there are still significant hurdles to overcome. In response, start-ups and businesses are increasingly looking towards alternatives to conventional business set ups.

Child care

A model which is challenging this is Grasshoppers in the Park, a co-operative nursery that is redefining the traditional model of childcare in the UK. Child care in the UK costs up to [27 per cent] of a family's income – more than double the OECD average of 12 per cent – and up to a third of families have gone into debt to pay for child care. The New Economics Foundation and the Family and Childcare Trust are now using the Grasshoppers model to pilot affordable child care to lower income families. The model uses a banded fee structure linked to family income, and the opportunity to reduce fees in exchange for parents working at the nursery. These activities include everything from taking children on a walk to the park, to running community events such as swap shops and fundraisers. The success of the model, however, cannot solve all childcare challenges. Claire Schofield, Director of Membership, Policy and Communications at National Day Nurseries Association, says childcare co-ops "can't be a substitute for the major reforms to our childcare policy and funding needed to provide the volume of high-quality, affordable places that parents need".

This model presents an interesting proposition for developers of both greenfield sites and inner-city developments looking to foster a sense of community: pairing an essential service with cost savings in exchange for local involvement presents as a win–win, but may not suit time-poor individuals.

"Co-production...can't be a substitute for the major reforms to childcare policy and funding needed to provide the volume of high-quality, affordable places that parents need."

Claire Schofield, Director of Membership, Policy and Communications at National Day Nurseries Association

Grasshoppers in the Park, UK

Retail

High streets and local retail businesses are also entities which leverage alternative methods of funding. In particular, this is often done through business and traders associations, which have long supported the vibrancy of local neighbourhoods. The state of Victoria leads the way in Australia, being home to 68 business improvement area programs in main street centres which are funded by special rates or charges with contributions from over 18,660 businesses or property owners. The funds are spent on centre branding, marketing, business development resources – which ultimately help attract audiences to these centres, giving potential to increased dwell, spend and advocacy. According to Mainstreet Australia, in 2019–2020 these groups generated a combined AUD$11.4 million, supplemented by over AUD$2.8 million of direct funding from local councils – which resulted in economic activity of AUD$140 million in main street centres. While such associations are nothing new, their presence is significant in providing a more targeted approach to the prosperity of businesses and retail streets, that councils do not have the resources for.

Creative anchors

Arts and cultural spaces provide an important opportunity for people to meet, interact and learn, which ultimately enhances wellbeing. Private property developers and local governments are also recognising the value of integrating and preserving such spaces to their competitive advantage – reaping benefits of uplifts in property values, talent attraction, as well as a diversified local economy, as evidenced by various academic studies.

Affordable workspaces and studios are a key part of this, and there is a growing movement towards utilising vacant spaces. LOLA (Leegstand Oplossers Amsterdam) is an organisation that repurposes temporarily vacant public buildings for community use. Not only does this program activate local neighbourhoods by occupying vacant space, and provide affordable spaces to keep talent local – it also works to create social connections between disparate groups and marginalised communities. Perhaps most importantly, the organisation has worked with local government

and property owners to build trust and create flexible agreements. According to LOLA director, Simon van Dommelen, the company willingly accepts fragile lease terms (such as vacating premises with little notice) in exchange for extremely low rents. LOLA hold to their word and operate with agility, proving to property owners that "uncertainty does not equal risk".

*LOLA Luid, Amsterdam*

LOLA Luid, Amsterdam

Arts and cultural spaces can also provide a competitive anchor for neighbourhood development. An example can be found in Vancouver, where False Creek Flats has transformed from an industrial area – to a grungy contemporary arts hub – and now into a fully fledged neighbourhood. Its current state sees an eclectic mix of arts, education, creative and digital business, life sciences and tech as well as residential housing. Arts and culture businesses make up 20 per cent of the onsite mix, and the City of Vancouver intends to maintain this critical mass.

The local authority has identified that arts businesses across Vancouver are struggling to find industrial space to suit their needs. In response, they have launched a "Space Matching" program which matches a business to a tenancy in The Flats. Applicants are invited to put forth their requirements, such as square meterage, wet/ dry facilities, ICT, lease terms and preference to co-share. This is an exemplar of a management process that supports local enterprises, whilst strategically preserving the arts and culture proposition of the site, and thus its competitive difference.

False Creek, Vancouver

"The health of Vancouver's arts and cultural sector relies heavily on The Flats. By protecting affordable industrial spaces, Vancouver can foster creative exchange, and help animate a vibrant local economy."

City of Vancouver, *Welcome to your Flats (draft plan) Part 1*, 2017
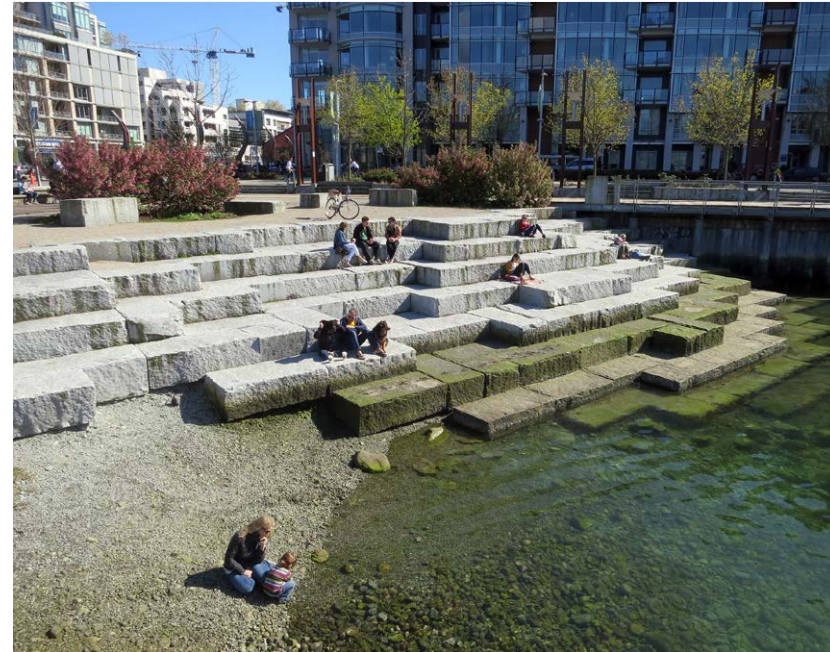
Insights & implications

- Cycles of poverty can be overcome through holistic pathways to home ownership. Best practice goes beyond modest housing product and realistic pricing and encompasses fair rent-to-own terms and social programs for financial management.

- Essential services such as child care can be made more affordable through models of "value exchange", where parents share their time in exchange for reduced fees. Such models present an interesting proposition for developers of both greenfield sites and inner-city developments looking for new ways to foster a sense of community.

- Governments and developers can preserve the character of an area by strategically preserving affordable space for arts and cultural operators. The knock-on effects can be talent attraction, uplifts in property values and a stronger local economy.

- Maturing 3D printing technology is enabling the creation of affordable, high-quality homes – at scale. When combined with localised research, we see the potential for solutions that can be adapted to the challenges of diverse urban contexts.

Above: Grasshoppers in the Park, UK
Right: Vauban, Freiburg

03
Sustainable systems

Sustainability is being integrated from all angles, be it design and construction, initiatives for eco-friendly habits or city branding to attract talent.

03 Introduction

Oceanix City, Bjark Ingels Group

The increasing prevalence of natural disasters linked to climate change places a market expectation on governments and nearly every industry sector to actively participate in creating a more sustainable future. As a result of this rising awareness, environmental practices are now becoming fundamental for the design of new neighbourhoods and the retrofit of existing ones.

This is manifesting in a number of ways. From a design perspective, communities are becoming car-free, embedded with closed-loop systems, and/or built from recycled materials. For the most progressive governments, an opportunity exists to reframe their identities to align with their adopted sustainability initiatives, carbon targets and new policies in a bid to remain competitive and attract progressive talent and businesses.

Healthy habits

Behavioural change

Sustainability is a priority to many, but it can often be overwhelming to know where to start and create an impact on an individual level. For example, a poll by the American Psychological Association discovered that 56 per cent of US adults consider climate change to be the most important issue facing society today, yet four in ten have not made any changes in their behaviour to reduce their contribution to the issue. This trend, where values often do not follow through to action, seems to be a worldwide trend.

Now start-ups are emerging to connect local initiatives to individuals wanting to adopt more environmentally sustainable lifestyles. One in particular is ShareWaste, a platform that connects individuals with food scraps to nearby neighbours with composting systems. The app fills the gap for those who would like to compost but may be time-poor, not have space for a bin or are living in a council area that has not mandated composting services. The app's global presence shows the appetite for such an initiative.

Another similar example is One Small Step (formerly called The Neighbourhood Effect). The company was founded on the premise of behavioural economics that proves our behaviour is socially contagious – and that an accumulation of positive change at an individual level, can ripple out into our peers and wider community for greater impact. Currently in beta-testing, the app offers tailored programs to help individuals live more sustainable lives. Recommended behaviours are broken down into small actionable steps, with the intent to build motivation and a sense of achievement. The application also connects users to nearby services, businesses and community initiatives that are assessed as climate-friendly.
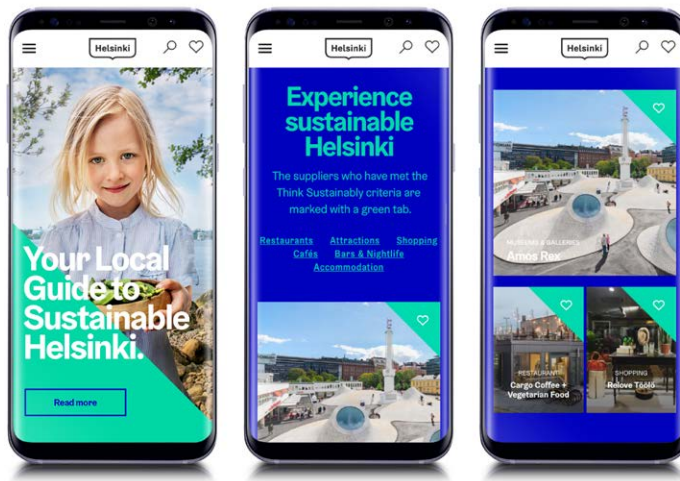
Both One Small Step and ShareWaste approach behavioural change from the angle of convenience. In doing so, they leverage the power of the neighbourhood proximity to enable easy adoption.

Above: One Small Step app, Australia
Right: ShareWaste app, Global
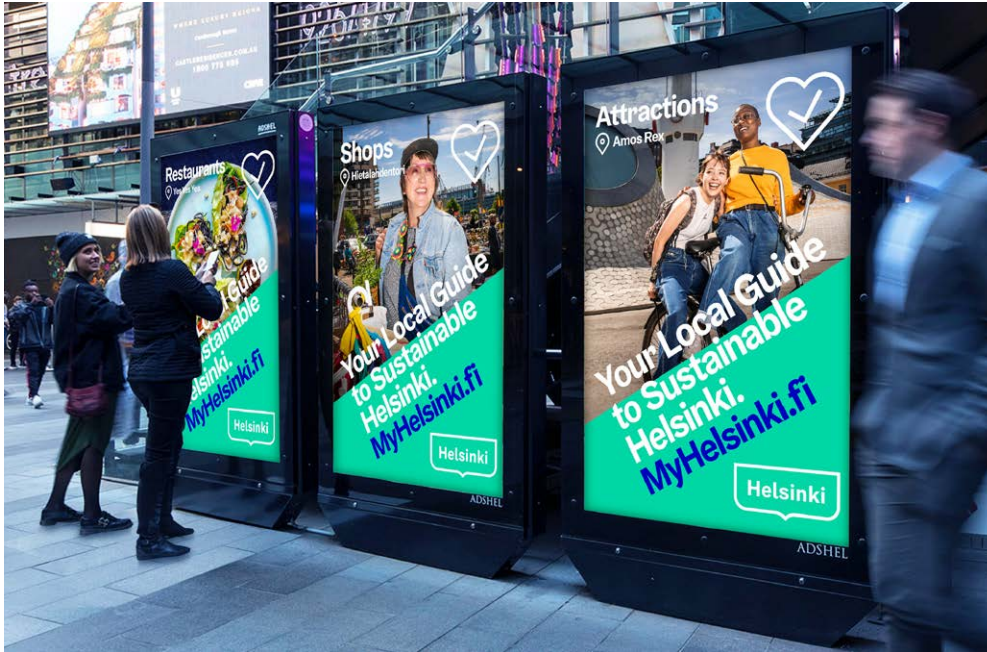
MyHelsinki.fi, Finland

City stance

Cities and towns are also beginning to reframe their identities through the lens of environmental issues on which they take an active stance whilst simultaneously encouraging greener choices by residents and visitors. In the United Kingdom, 705 communities have achieved "plastic-free" status from Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), a national maritime charity which unites whole communities against single-use plastic, including straws, cutlery, carry bags and coffee cups. "Plastic-free" status is achieved through SAS' criteria: lobbying government support; encouraging businesses to abolish single-use plastic; raising awareness with schools and youth groups; arranging events; and establishing a steering group for the long term. This approach rightfully considers the entire system at play and helps to ensure holistic change. A number of cities globally are also aspiring to similar plastic-free goals – Milan, Montreal, and Taiwan, to name a few.

Another angle to this trend is the championing of eco-conscious businesses to influence consumer choice. One particular initiative is "Think Sustainably", launched by the Demos Helsinki think tank and supported by the City of Helsinki government. Local businesses, galleries and restaurants are scored based on environmental and social sustainability criteria which include accessibility, discrimination prevention, waste management and greenhouse emissions, among other metrics. The MyHelsinki.fi website (responsible for marketing the city) displays a green seal on participating businesses, allowing visitors and locals to make eco-minded choices.

The website is also Helsinki's front door to prospective visitors, international business and future talent. Credible sustainability initiatives like this can be a strategy for city growth and competitiveness, by attracting the growing cohorts of ethically minded consumers – namely Millennials and Gen-Z, the majority of whom are much more willing to spend more on sustainable products than Gen X or Baby Boomers. As these consumers come of age and become more influential in business, they have a greater potential to exercise their preference for places which resonate with their values.

Circular systems

Generative neighbourhoods

Unsurprisingly, cities are a major culprit for the toll placed on our environment. According to the International Resource Panel (IRP), it is estimated that more than two-thirds of the world's energy is consumed in cities, which account for over 70 per cent of global CO_2 emissions (cited in *Circular Economy in Cities* by World Economic Forum, 2018). In an effort to change the trend, circular economy principles are increasingly viewed as an imperative in the creation of master-planned communities, the retrofit of existing residential areas, and city infrastructure. This translates to a need for places to generate their own resources and recycle waste in ways that aim for zero landfill.

One model upholding such principles is ReGen Villages. The scalable model sees the creation of self-sufficient residential communities, made possible by the company's VillageOS™ software which rapidly master-plans and designs in circular infrastructure. The villages are planned such that a circle of homes exist in a closed-loop system that produce their own solar and biogas power, grows organic vegetables, farms fish and chickens, harvests water and recycles waste into fertiliser. Developments also have public squares and electric vehicle charging stations. Homes will start at €200,000 plus about €500 a month for food and services. Projects require approximately €25 million from private investors and sovereign wealth funds (who are promised a return).
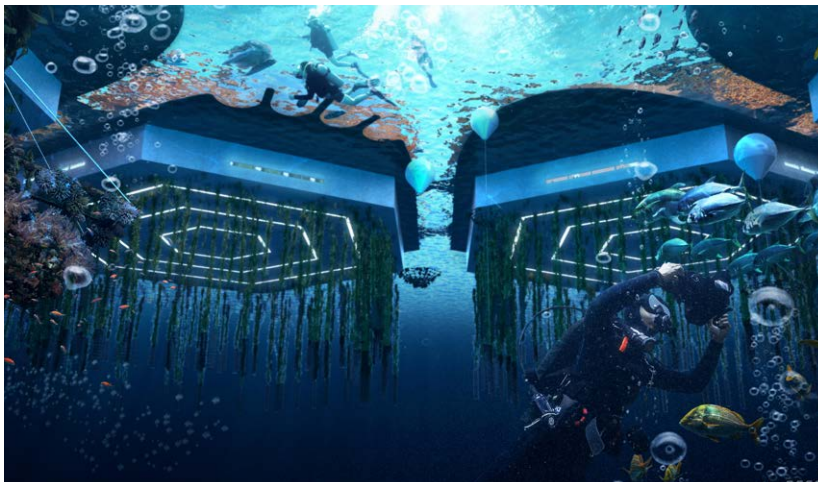
Many of ReGen's proposed locations are outside city centres, which allows a redistribution of the pressure placed on major hubs and governments. Such a tact is reflective of wider trends in the slowing rate of globalisation and preferences for localisation or at least nearshoring of activities.

ReGen Villages, Netherlands

*Oceanix City,
Bjark Ingels
Group*

Taking decentralisation a step further, a more futuristic example is Oceanix City. The "floating city" concept, by Danish firm Bjark Ingels Group (BIG), represents a resilient alternative to land-based living and boasts all the amenity of a typical neighbourhood. The modular system comprises of two hectares that can support up to 300 residents, with mixed-use space for living, working and recreation. Single neighbourhoods can be clustered in groups of six to form larger villages of 12 hectares with up to 1650 residents. The concept has captured support from the United Nations, with the Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed reflecting that "floating cities can be part of our new arsenal of tools" (addressing the High-Level Round Table on Sustainable Floating Cities, 2019). The design and technology utilised enables climate resilience in a number of ways: neighbourhoods can rise with the sea level, wind and water can be harnessed for energy production, and construction from biorock material enables the regeneration of marine-life habitats.

While this is a highly considered concept that embeds resilience and circular practices from scratch, it could beg the question, are we not better to invest more in resolving land issues than relocating elsewhere?

Oceanix City, Bjark Ingels Group

Repurposed materials

The life cycle of buildings and major infrastructure have typically followed the linear path of "produce, use, dispose". Around the world, construction and demolition debris represents a huge amount of a country's annual waste and landfill. In the UK, 59 per cent of the country's waste was from construction projects (according to the Department of Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs 2018); in Australia in 2017, 32 per cent of construction waste ended up in landfill.

The building and construction industry are beginning to take heed of the toll and are exploring ways to repurpose materials. A particular residential example is the Bajes Kwatier in Amsterdam. The project sees the redevelopment of the former Bijlmerbajes prison complex led by a consortium of designers: OMA, FABRICations and Lola Landscape Architects. The sustainability strategy commands the reuse of 98 per cent of the existing prison site materials. According to OMA, concrete will be recycled and reused, prefabricated elements from the existing walls are to be reused as cladding for new residential buildings, prison bars will be used as balustrades, and the cell doors are to become edge panels for the new pedestrian bridges. In addition, all of the buildings will be 100 per cent energy neutral, spanning typologies of residential and commercial with 30 per cent dedicated to social rental apartments. This also shows the huge potential for repurposing materials at scale – particularly when made a core focus of project's strategy from the outset.
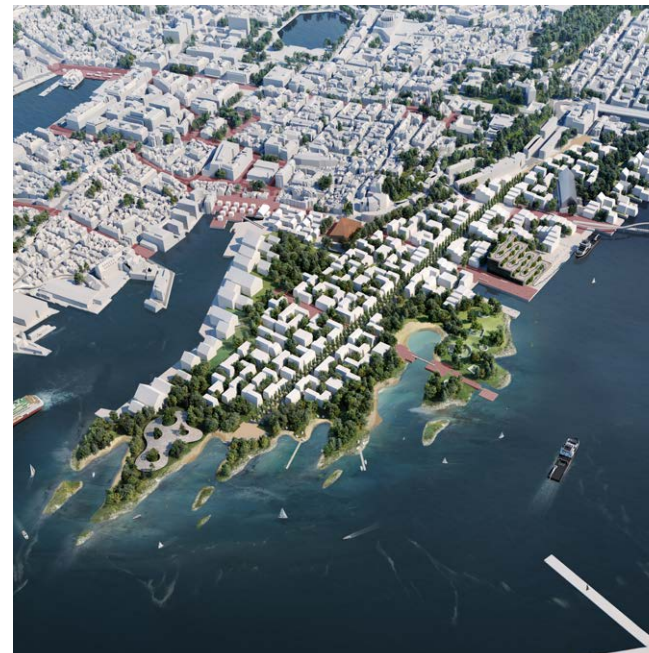

Bajes Kwatier, Netherlands

A larger scale example is a proposed "zero-emissions" neighbourood in Bergen, Norway. The project will see the redevelopment of a port area to include affordable housing, businesses, car-free areas, and climate resilient design to withstand harsh weather events. Further to this, the project consortium is being highly conscious about sourcing construction materials.

According to *Fast Company*, a business and technology news publication, the project architects are hoping to salvage concrete from other city demolitions for use in the neighbourhood's future development. Flemming Rafn, a member of the consortium and founding partner at Tredje Natur, also acknowledges the complexities in the embedded emissions in different materials, imparting that "as the city finalizes the design, it will need to carefully calculate the full life cycle impacts of each decision".

Zero-emissions neighbourhood, Bergen, Norway

"Working with a regenerative mindset in real estate is not only the best business case for the planet, it is also an instant 'win' for the owners and users of the city."

Flemming Rafn, Co-Founder, Tredje Natur

Car-free mobility

New developments

It is clear that pollution, congestion and lack of community space are key hindrances to urban livelihood. According to various academic studies, contemporary cities devote up to 70 per cent of public space to accommodate motor vehicles, while only 25 per cent is suggested for a sustainable design. Despite the current imbalance, developers and city governments are implementing strategies to reduce car usage, reclaim public space, and enhance walkability. The commercial incentive is the creation of places that are more liveable, attractive to talent and tourism and able to command a premium.

A key example of a low-car development is the district of Ørestaden in Copenhagen. Car ownership is disincentivised by the absence of street parking, having the city's most expensive parking permits, and locating free parking 1 kilometre from the village centre. Such measures have proved successful, with the rate of car ownership in the district being 27 per cent lower than the rest of the city.

The scheme also succeeds due to the adequate public transport connections.

Proving the concept can be scaled, the city of Utrecht is creating the Netherlands' first high-density, car-free residential district for more than 12,000 people. The new district of Merwede will have similar disincentives, with parking being highly expensive, unallocated, and at a ratio of one space for every three households.

From an urban design perspective, the reduction of cars enables the human experience to be prioritised. Speaking to The Guardian, the project architect Marco Broekman imparts the car-free nature of the district allows a "focus on essentials for a high-density area, which is the quality of public space, city on eye level, green, biodiversity, climate adaptation and meeting places for social interaction".
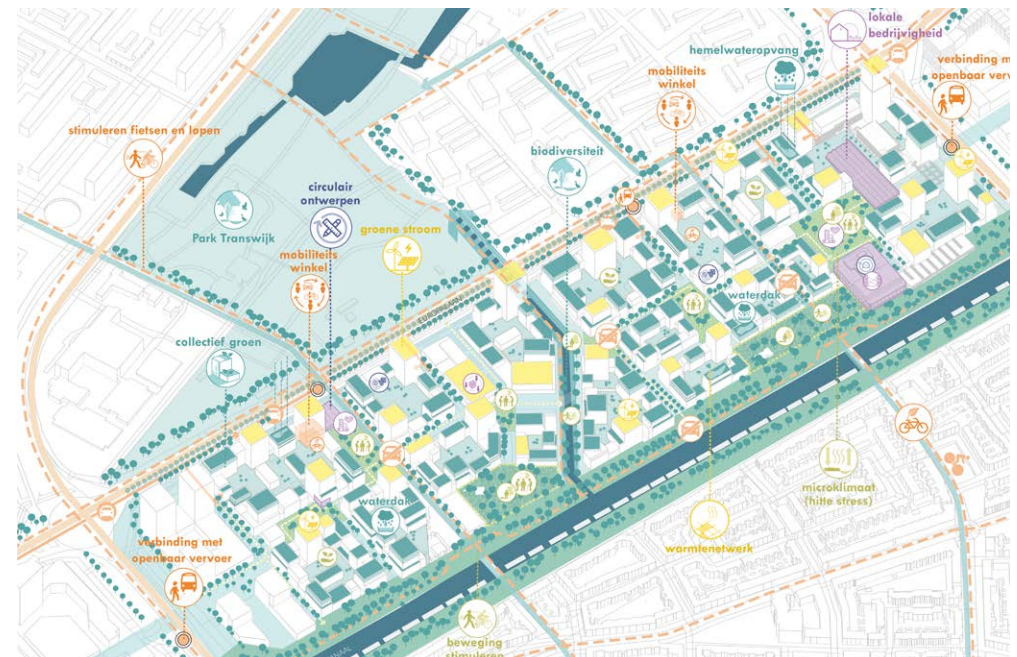
Above: Ørestaden, Copenhagen
Below: Merwede car-free district, Netherlands

Existing retrofits

Car-free living can also be achieved in existing neighbourhoods of dense urban areas. Barcelona's Superblocks project has proved this. Superblocks are designated areas of approximately 400 m x 400 m that have pacified interior roads accessible primarily to active transport (i.e., walking and cycling), and secondarily to residential traffic with a maximum speed of 20 kilometres per hour. As a result, residents are able to socialise, play, enjoy lower levels of air and noise pollution and more active lifestyles. According to modelling by Barcelona City Council, it is estimated that if the potential 503 superblocks are implemented, journeys by private vehicle would fall by 230,000 a week, as people switch to walking, cycling or public transport. Reductions in nitrogen dioxide could also result in the prevention of up to 667 premature deaths.

While the benefits are outstanding, it is important to note that certain challenges need to be overcome with such projects, namely increased road congestion in other areas and managing gentrification with rising property values to ensure longstanding residents are not priced out from the market.

Above: Aerial view of Barcelona
Left: Las Ramblas, Barcelona

Car-free neighbourhoods,
Vauban, Freiburg

Insights and Implications

- Strategic design decisions have the power to influence sustainable behaviours at a neighbourhood scale. Disincentives towards car ownership are particularly successful when parking is inconvenient, cost prohibitive or nonexistent.

- Cities are wearing their sustainability initiatives on their sleeves – marketing their activities for a competitive edge and growth. These strategies have the power to attract cohorts of ethically minded consumers, namely Millennials and Gen-Z. If these groups become more mobile in business, they may direct their location choices to cities that resonate with their values.

- Residential developments in regional towns and third-tier cities are set to be increasingly self-sufficient, leveraging circular economy principles to produce their own food and regenerate local biodiversity.

04
Tech enablers

Tech platforms are enabling community connections, decentralised experiences and insight-led urban outcomes.

04 Introduction

Work on Wheels, IDEO

The way our cities are planned and developed is integral to the functioning of our neighbourhoods, shaping the places we live, work and play. As technology becomes more integrated with the planning system we are experiencing a growth in evidence-based "smart cities". These changes have disrupted traditional planning approaches and assist with the allocation of space, urban functionalities and community development processes.

To harness these changes, governments, tech innovators, public asset owners – and even automotive companies – are joining forces to reach new levels of urban capability. Research initiatives are being undertaken at a range of scales – building, precinct, neighbourhood, suburb and city – with the intent to capture data, user-test technology in situ and drive the development of scalable solutions which can positively affect the way we live.

Data-led development

Research

Taking a macro view, we are living in an age of accountability where societal structures are being questioned and people are advocating for a better future. The trickle-down effect for the built environment is that design and planning decisions need to be evidence-based and aim for people-first outcomes. Fortunately, the last decade of innovation has seen the development of tech platforms that allow developers and councils to take a data-led approach.

One particular research tool is Brickfields Consulting's Place IQ. The benchmarking study quantifies behaviour, spend and dwell – directly tied to town-centres, retail, commercial, leisure and residential assets. The data is cut by demographics and complemented by qualitative research; the result is a rich picture for how communities use – or don't use – public spaces. Critical to the process is that Brickfields translates the insights into an actionable onsite strategy that guides investment and delivers meaningful experiences.

Platforms are also emerging which aggregate and analyse social media data without bias. Neighbourlytics is a market leader, drawing on data from publicly available sources (i.e., social media platforms, review websites, travel wikis and event promotion pages, among others). Local stories are also captured, providing a nuanced perspective on how locals view certain places and what gives them pride. Such information can support a development response that is authentic and genuinely celebrates local character.

Neighbourlytics have also created the "Social Prosperity Standard", a standardised tool for understanding social wellbeing based on local activities and lifestyle choices. The argument is that wellbeing factors correlate to economic productivity, which has wider positive effects. The survey structure and its results aim to create a framework for city planning and investment.

Above: Social Prosperity Standard, Neighbourlytics

Below: Toowoomba Grand Central, neighbourhood centre activation outcomes, Brickfields Consulting
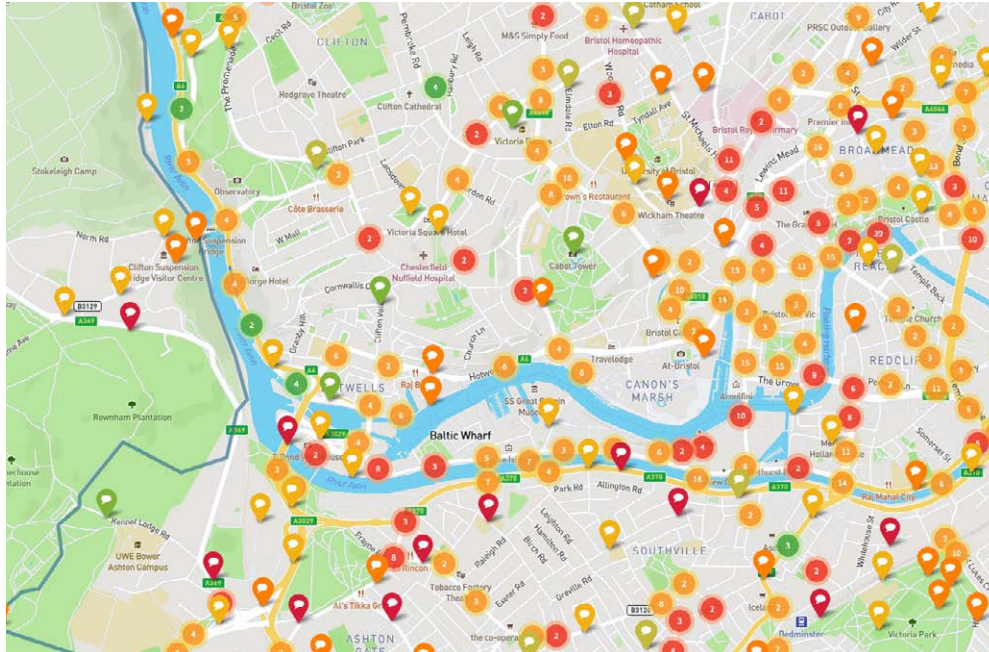
Above: Commonplace platform, City of Bristol community responses, Bristol, UK

Above right: Proposed bike path (consultation outcome), Bristol, UK

Consultation

Community consultation is another area benefiting from digital platforms. The savviest tools are those that can capture opinion tied to specific geo-locations or pain-points in a neighbourhood. A particular example achieving this is Commonplace, a digital consultation platform that captures and maps local opinions on a particular place.

For developers this presents an excellent tool in heat-mapping existing challenges of a place, down to the exact location – all in real time. The City of Bristol used the tool to ascertain where to direct investment to rectify deterrents to cycling and walking. The

online dashboard consisted of a map which located and commented on specific road issues, accompanied by a Google street view. Participants were invited to submit their own locations and comments, and "agree" with issues that resonated with them. The number of "agrees" per issue were tracked, with the data highlighting the most significant pain-points. The outcomes made it clear to council where to prioritise investment and thus build credibility with the community. Processes such as these are a win–win for both parties, with the council being able to de-risk investment and make impactful choices with prior buy-in.

Community connections

Technology is also helping to foster social connections within local neighbourhoods, both for the purpose of reducing loneliness, sharing goods, as well as spearheading local initiatives. A particular example is Nextdoor, an application which showcases the resources and happenings in a neighbourhood. Neighbours can connect, share recommendations on local businesses (particularly tradesmen), loan goods and tools and access local news. During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the platform launched an interactive Help Map, which connected neighbours to those in need within their local area. Individuals could advertise the help they needed, while others could list what services they could provide, be it grocery shopping, cooking or child care. For neighbourhoods that may have low rates of people knowing each other personally, such platforms provide an avenue to amplify the local experience, be it through acts of kindness or supporting local economies. (It is important to note that Nextdoor has recently come under scrutiny for crime reporting and racial profiling, and is implementing measures to manage this.)
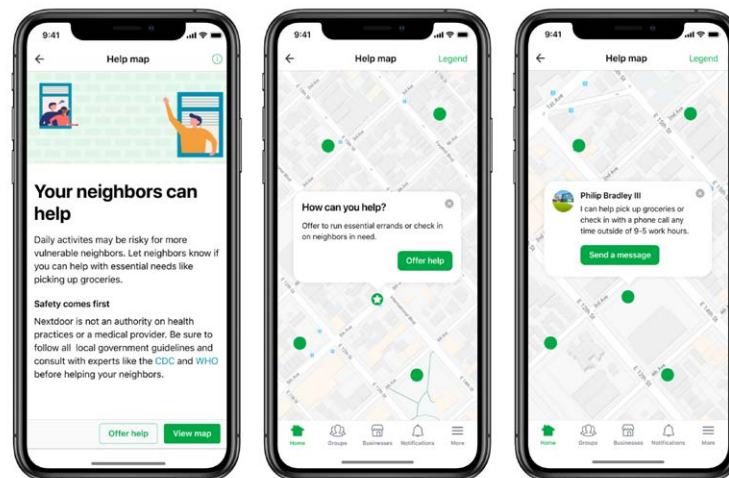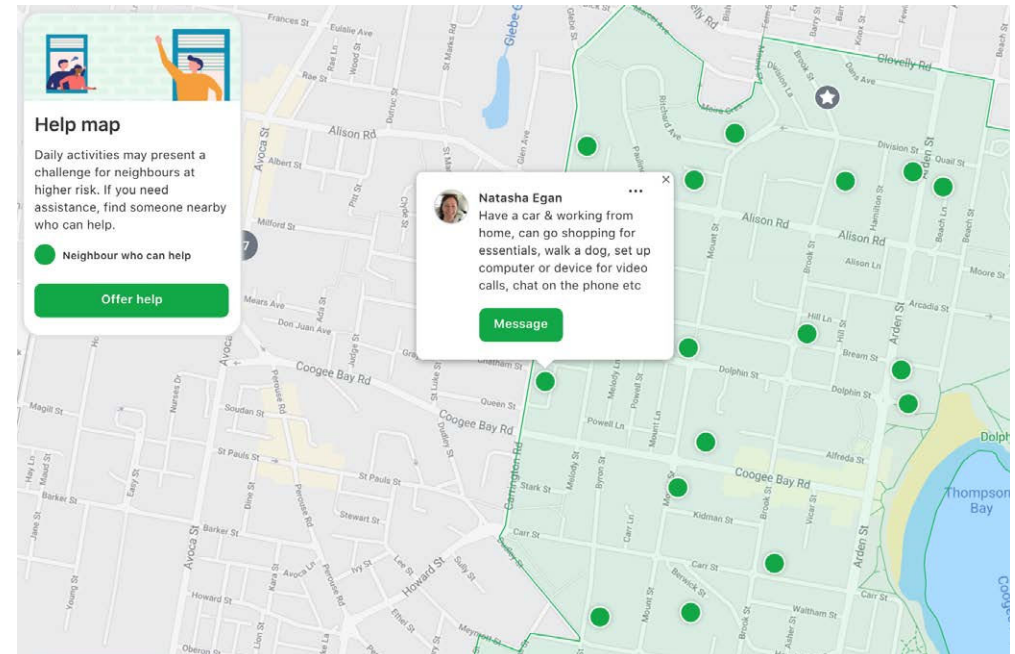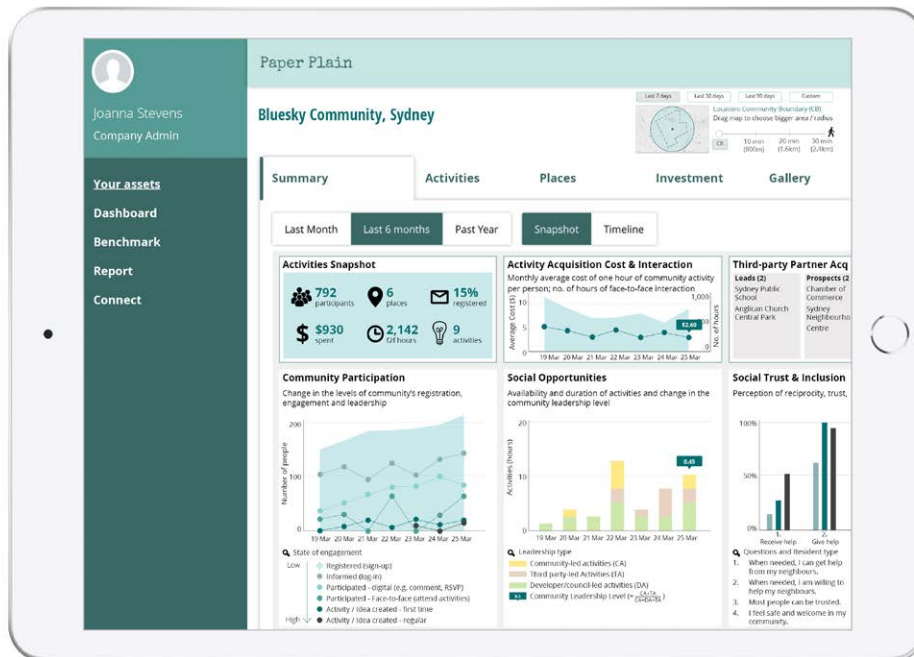

Nextdoor app, Global
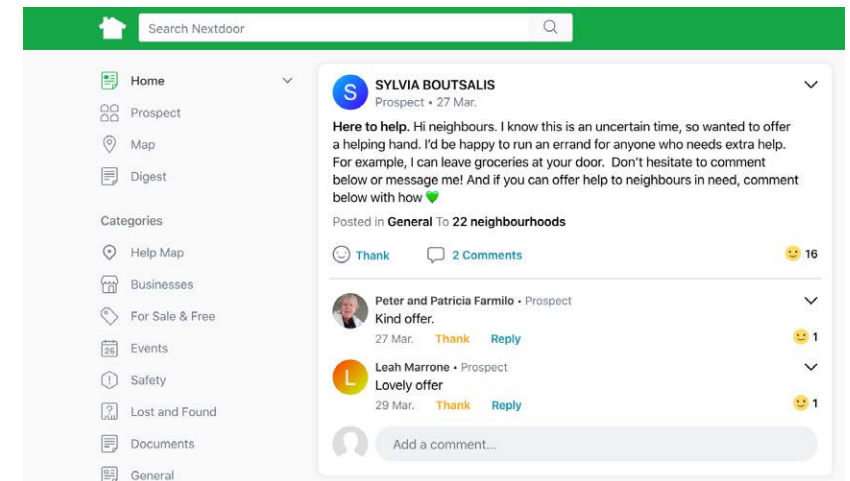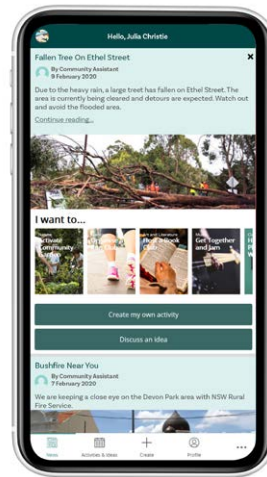
Paper Plain platform, Australia

"In Australia alone, more than 2 million people live in lone-person households, and it is expected that these households will outnumber traditional nuclear family households by 2026."

The Australian Institute of Family Studies

Platforms are also emerging to enable property developers, governments and local communities to create better neighbourhoods with stronger social connections. A particular example is Australian-based Paper Plain, a hyperlocal community-building platform that enables property developers, governments and local communities to build stronger social connections and co-create neighbourhoods. Through years of research and testing, CEO and Founder Julia Suh found that participation is a key driver of community connection, a testimony that has informed the creation of Paper Plain. The platform offers a digital space where the property developer, government, local organisations and the residents can communicate or coordinate ideas and actions for community wellbeing and neighbourhood improvement. The platform in turn is able to measure different dimensions of the community interest and participation and help the stakeholders track their initiatives and optimise their community investment accordingly. The platform has been successfully piloted in the state of New South Wales, Australia.

Decentralised experiences

Global think tanks are exploring the role of autonomous vehicles in a neighbourhood experience. What is emerging is not a car for transportation, but a hybrid vehicle that supports the decentralisation of lifestyle amenities and opportunities to socialise. This is particularly relevant for areas that are situated further from urban cities or are lacking in a comprehensive level of amenity.

One particular concept is "Space on Wheels", a speculative research project by SPACE10 and fºam Studio. The project presents seven vehicle typologies exploring experiences in workplace, discretionary retail, F&B, grocery, health care, hotel accommodation and AR gaming. In a bid to create more equitable experiences, the "Farm on Wheels" and "Mobile Treatment" vehicles aim to bring fresh food and health care to regional and low-income communities suffering from "the last mile" problem – whereby key services do not reach end users. Councils and developers with under-serviced greenfield sites would benefit from such a concept, and could even deploy these initiatives through refurbished trucks and pop-up events.

The role of the workplace in homes and neighbourhoods is a nuanced topic getting considerable attention in a post-COVID-19 world. For some it has been a welcome advancement in flexibility and quality of life gains, removing the daily commute. In other respects, it has been challenging for those living alone, in busy share houses or living with children.

While satellite co-working spaces have been growing in regional areas, the gap for lighter format mobile workspaces is also being explored as a neighbourhood offering. SPACE10 and fºam Studio's "Office on Wheels" supports this, as does IDEO's "Work on Wheels" concept. IDEO offers a scenario where public spaces can be pre-booked and the mobile office called on-demand to a designated spot. The office is kitted with a suite of remote working technology to enjoy a seamless experience. These concepts are prompting interesting dialogue on the potential of autonomous vehicles as spaces, and could serve as a revenue stream for owners and operators of public space.

Left: Space on Wheels, SPACE10 and fºam Studio, Copenhagen

Below: Work on Wheels, IDEO

Space on Wheels, SPACE10 and f°am Studio, Copenhagen

Woven City, Toyota and Bjark Ingels Group, Susono, Japan

In a bid to remain relevant, automotive companies are also creating concepts for future cities with technology and sustainability at their centre. In addition, an alternative approach to planning is being sought, particularly regarding the configuration and location of certain activities.

A case in the works is Toyota's Woven City, designed by Bjark Ingels Group, in what is envisioned to be a hybrid residential community meets research lab for urban robotics, AI and material sciences. The pedestrian experience has been given a priority by way of three separate road typologies: one for electric vehicles only; an urban promenade for shared mobility (walking, cycling, etc.); and one for pedestrians only, which resembles a linear park. A network for autonomous delivery and logistics is also relegated to below ground. The city as a whole is an opportunity to test how new technologies and residents live side by side, with a future opportunity to transfer learnings to cities elsewhere.

Overall, the project represents an interesting shift in citymaking, showing that it is not only the domain of governments and developers. Big brands and corporations – who have long had an impact of the quality of urban living – are becoming developers in their own right, innovating through the lens of their sector to reach new outcomes.

*Woven City, Toyota and Bjark
Ingels Group, Susono, Japan*

Insights and Implications

- Autonomous vehicles can play a role in creating more localised economies by providing "third spaces" for community use, be it work, play or dining. The on-demand format would bestow a new level of autonomy to residents, allowing them to add places and customise the experience of their neighbourhood in a new way.

- Property owners must accept that their place and people will always evolve. The implementation of research tools and internal practices that allow regular and informed responses to shifting audience needs are the key to retaining a place's meaning and vitality.

- With the bounty of research tools available, property owners must also hold their consultants – i.e., placemakers, urbanists, architects, brand strategists and artists – accountable to their recommendations and design decisions, ensuring proposals are not "taste-based" but insight-led.

A final word

A bright future – quotes from industry leaders

At Brickfields Consulting we are keen collaborators, knowing that any project is made richer by the collective imagination and optimism of our peers. Once again, we have reached out to our global network of clients and collaborators to capture their perspective on what the future holds for neighbourhoods.

We asked:

For owners and operators of phyiscal space, what do you see as the biggest opportunity for the future of neighbourhoods?

Here's what they said:

On connection

"Hotels should take back the central role within their respective neighbourhoods to connect people and take care of one another. Our mission at Zoku is to reduce loneliness and we've created a place where internationals mingle with locals, and neighbours to get to know one another. Each day we see the impacts of human interaction on the wellbeing of our residents and visitors and hope that more spaces within cities will take on this mission to reduce loneliness."

Veerle Donders, Concept and Brand Director, Zoku

"Recent events have highlighted the problem of loneliness in our communities. Yet, the situation is also inspiring amazingly creative solutions for local, accessible and inclusive spaces and places – that are sure to provide better opportunities for building meaningful social connection in the future."

Professor Johanna Badcock, Vice Chair, Ending Loneliness Together

"The neighbourhood is where you build connections with the customers who are most likely to support your business long term. Proximity is powerful and future neighbourhoods are ones where kindness and community connections create a world where both local businesses and residents have a neighbourhood to rely on."

Jennie Sager, Head of Nextdoor, Nextdoor

"As we take the time to reflect on how we might improve our neighbourhoods post COVID-19, we must consider the power of play to reconnect and heal communities. By encouraging play in our neighbourhoods we will enrich the lives of children (young and old) and promote the healthy regrowth of community life."

Natalia Krysiak, Architect & Founder of Cities for Play

On arts and culture

"With increasing retail and commercial vacancies in neighbourhoods in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, arts and culture can benefit from depressed rents and access property at a more affordable rate. We all recognise arts and culture as an important contributor to community vitality and desirability yet we often use them as 'activators' instead of long-term neighbourhood actors."

Michelle Tabet and Hahna Busch, Left Bank Co

"Placemaking a has been turned into shorthand for 'craft brewery, artisan bread and co-working', but when done properly, it offers a genuine chance to move away from masterplanning and marketing to a 'software not hardware' approach. Placemaking should inspire people to feel they are investors and community owners."

Mark Davy, Founder and CEO, Futurecity

"Including cultural organisations or creative industries is a sustainable investment to keeping a dynamic sense of place. As occupiers, they will provide endless creative content and their tenants will reflect the most contemporary trends."

Sherry Dobbin, Partner (Managing and Cultural Director), Futurecity

"Arts and culture can revitalise a space, turning it into a destination for tourists and reinforcing local identity. For example, including a mural by a local artist in a shopping centre can be an effective way of incorporating the centre in a cultural programme and shifting the flow of people from one part of the town to another."

Dr Gemma John, Founder HumanCity

On collaboration and equity

"For us, our biggest opportunity for the future is to really integrate people from neighbourhoods in future plans. Not only by giving them a seat at the planning table, but to enable ownership. Residents and local entrepreneurs have the greatest interest in an attractive environment, so they are the best cooperation partners."

Simon van Dommelen, Director, LOLA Amsterdam

"The base of stable neighbourhoods is not just living side by side, but it is cooperation. The legal form to bring together the diverse interests in a neighbourhood is logically enough a cooperative. There neighbours are both, co-owners and tenants, and pull at the same rope, in the same direction."

Ueli Keller, Co-Founder and Board Member, Mehr als Wohnen

"Perhaps the greatest opportunity with the Detroit tiny homes model is providing very low-income individuals and families economic mobility through home ownership, but the smaltrowelll houses also make urban development affordable, sustainable development practical and economic development desirable as a neighborhood gains density."

Faith Fowler, Executive Director, Cass Community Social Services

"Rethinking how space is used so that it's more equitable for people who've been kept out, whether due to cost of housing, their means of transportation, or the community that they belong to."

Laura Bliss, Reporter, Bloomberg CityLab

On localisation

"COVID-induced 'localisation acceleration' hopefully forces councils to collaborate with businesses to boost economic activity in neighbourhoods (minus the 'we can't allow that' red-tape) through innovative, commercial-oriented activation of public spaces that is accessible to the whole community."

Matt Malseed, Managing Director, HAMTON Property Group

"The opportunity lies in a renewed desire to meet the everyday needs of most people within a walkable distance from home. This hyper local focus provides the impetus to transition to more diverse and new types of uses and excitingly, the chance to meaningfully strengthen community connectedness."

Natalie Hoitz, Director, Urbis

"As we emerge from months of lockdown people are yearning for social connection, authentic experiences, and local amenity. Tap into this, and we have the makings of fantastic local neighbourhoods."

Jessica Christiansen-Franks, Co-founder and CEO, Neighbourlytics

"Architecture is a social construct. At Hayball, we believe in creating sustainable places by exploring new ways of living and working that strengthen communities and society. People-focused projects continue to hone our ability to analyse opportunities in our multidisciplinary approach to urban stories."

Eugene Chieng, Director, Hayball

On wellbeing

"The biggest opportunity lies in collaborating to maximise the potential that multi-purpose spaces can deliver. Spaces that deliver diverse opportunities are also ones that deliver convenience. Convenience in these modern times leads to better wellbeing outcomes, and wellbeing is an increasing priority for residents and visitors."

Dr Natalie Allen, Director and Urban Strategist, The Urban Advisory

"One of the more welcome by-products of COVID-19 has been a return to hyper-local living. Placemakers now have an opportunity to respond to this by creating communities with an increased focus on public health and safety, and a greater investment in public infrastructure such as community spaces, to enable us to better balance our new working-from-home lives."

Dominic Hunt, Development Manager, Mirvac

On data and digital opportunities

"With flexible working people are spending more time and money in their neighbourhoods, and regular interactions and proximity support hyperlocal community organisation and collaboration. Big opportunities are in creating seamless digital-physical experiences and places where one might hope to bump into locals or neighbours they know."

Julia Suh, Founder and CEO, Paper Plain

"The biggest opportunity is to use the data, which is now widely available for property owners to make informed decisions. This will thereby enable an organic and dynamic process of improvement to the different ways in which they support and involve themselves with their local community."

Gala Camacho Ferrari, Analytics and Strategy, Neighbourlyritcs

"Due to COVID-19, with the increased working from home, reduced travel and greater digital and contactless adoption, operators will need to carefully balance how neighbourhood manages both local connection and digital experiences."

Bryan Froud, Consulting Director, JLL

On sustainability

"Working with a regenerative mindset in real estate is not only the best business case for the planet, it is also an instant 'win' for the owners and users of the city. Enjoying rich urban nature, low carbon footprints, climate resiliency and social diversity just makes sense to everyone right from the get-go."

Flemming Rafn, Co-Founder, Third Nature

"The evolution to joint-use facilities, providing egalitarian civic benefits and longer body clocks for public spaces and social infrastructure, is a promising opportunity for strengthening community, maximising investment and supporting prosperous and regenerative neighbourhoods."

Vanessa Trowell, Urban Strategist, Weston Williamson + Partners

"If we live, design and build starting from trust and imagination, we will be able to shape a completely different world where architecture is generous to ourselves and to society. Architecture is a permanent process of interactions."

Tom Callebaut, Founder, tc plus

Credit

Photography

Trend 01

Oceanix
Images courtesy of OCENIX/BIG-Bjarke Ingels Group

Senakw Development, Vancouver
Images sourced from Reverey Architecture

Enabling Village, Singapore
Images sourced from WOHA

Kampung Admiralty, Singapore
Images courtesy of WOHA

FlexHouz, Canada
Images sourced from Marshall Homes

Dongsimwon, Seoul
Images sourced from SOSU architects

Mehr als Wohnen, Zurich
Images courtesy of Brickfields Consulting

Burwood Brickworks, Melbourne
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Kalkbreite Co-operative, Zurich
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Zoku, Amsterdam
Images courtesy of Zoku and Ewout Huibers

G-Lab
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Three Generation Playground, Singapore
Images sourced from Bambi Corro

Playground image
Images sourced from Lily Banse

Solar Settlement, Freiberg
Images courtesy of Brickfields Consulting

Trend 02

New Story, Latin America
Images sourced from Fuseproject

Detroit Tiny Homes
Images courtesy of Crystal Fox

Kāinga Tuatahi Papakāinga, Auckland
Images courtesy of Stevens Lawson Architects

Grasshoppers in the Park
Images sourced from Grasshoppers in the Park

Retail and mainstreet photographs
Images courtesy of Annie Spratt and Artificial Photography

LOLA Luid, Amsterdam
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False Creek, Vancouver
Images courtesy of Daniel Lobo CC

Vauban, Freiburg
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Credit

Acknowledgement

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Our Team

Trend 03

Oceanix
Images courtesy of OCENIX/BIG-Bjarke Ingels Group

One Small Step
Images sourced from One Small Step

ShareWaste
Images sourced from ShareWaste

Think Sustainably, Helsinki
Images sourced from Helsinki Marketing

Re-Gen Villages
Images courtesy of ReGen Villages Holding

Bajes Kwatier
Images sourced from OMA

Zero-emissions neighbourhood, Norway
Images courtesy of Third Nature

Ørestaden, Copenhagen
Images sourced online

Merwede, Netherlands
Images courtesy of BURA urbanism and OKRA

Barcelona, Spain
Images courtesy of Jorge Salvador and Kaspars Upmanis

Trend 04

Work on Wheels
Images courtesy of IDEO

Neighbourlytics
Images sourced from Neighbourlytics

Commonplace
Images sourced from City of Bristol

Nextdoor
Images courtesy of Nextdoor

Paper Plain
Images courtesy of Paper Plain

Space on Wheels
Images courtesy of SPACE10

Woven City
Images sourced from Toyota Woven City

Researchers

Stephanie Bhim
Samantha Choudhury
Julie Flestado
David Grant
Heidi Krohn
Jeanette Lambert
Belinda Lord
Stefanie Matosevic

Writers

Stephanie Bhim
Stefanie Matosevic

Editor

Ginny Grant

Design

Michelle Teh

About Brickfields Consulting

Brickfields Consulting delivers customer and market insights that enable dynamic and innovative property investment solutions.

Over the past ten years, we have developed a reputation in the property sector for unlocking project possibilities through a progressive and adaptable mindset. Our commissions involve a complex challenge which requires our clients to embrace change and seize future opportunities.

By partnering with the owners and operators of physical assets, we provide the insight through research which ensures that places develop a competitive advantage, allowing them to command a price premium and achieve financial returns above the market.

Brickfields Consulting offers a range of services covering four broad capabilities: user research, market strategy, customer experience and design activation. We provide custom strategy solutions as well as standard research and strategic tools.