

PARTNERSHIPS

1.1 PLACE-KEEPING - AN ISSUE THAT MATTERS

Open spaces are highly relevant locally and citywide. They can range from the small pocket-park in a neighbourhood to a large park of citywide or even regional importance. They can be either grey (squares and streetspace) or green (parks), and can fulfil multiple functions for social life: cultural activities; biodiversity and ecosystems; and business environments.

They also have an economic value for both public and private sectors through individual and commercial spending power and the proven impact on surrounding property values. So the role of place-keeping (maintenance, care, joint responsibility and ownership in the broadest sense) within the long-term safeguarding of open spaces is not only important for cohesion within local communities but can create economic benefits as well.

Why must it be sustainable? Because in economically difficult times, place-keeping budgets are the first to suffer, despite their significant contributions to health, wellbeing and local economy. And while funding is available for construction and retrofitting, it is not available for maintenance or staffing; and while political credit exists for exciting new open spaces, it does not do so for their day-to-day management. Poor or non-existent place-keeping can lead to a waste of resources due to the cost of future regeneration when it is cheaper to systematically maintain.

1.2 WHY IS IT AN ISSUE FOR POLITICIANS?

For place-keeping to become an integral part of planning, design and economic improvement at the most fundamental level, the baton must be carried by the politician who has it in his/her power to ensure it is given the same level of importance within masterplanning and regeneration as place-making.

And place-making needs to be accorded the same gravity as other dimensions of well planned urban infrastructure. Economy and prestige, and health and happiness have their roots in, and benefit from, well designed open spaces sustainably cared for long term.

There is a political choice to be made: safeguard open space investments and their positive effects or condemn them, their surrounding communities and local businesses through underfinancing.

1.3 THE FIVE THEMES

MP4 analysed some of the many good place-making and sustainable place-keeping examples throughout Europe which bring together public and private stakeholders and create strong, longstanding partnerships.

This process identified five themes particularly pertinent to quality, sustainable place-making and place-keeping, namely: governance, partnerships, finance, policy, and evaluation. These are the catalysts for enduring open spaces and enriched neighbourhoods.

This document deals with Partnerships. Its four sister documents each discuss one of the following themes: governance, finance, policy and evaluation.

Get Move Boys



2 PARTNERSHIPS - KEY ISSUES

The term **partnerships in place-keeping** describes an association of partners that has developed an agreed shared responsibility for the long term management of a place. Partnerships may be informal, based on a mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities or formal, based on written agreement. In partnerships roles and responsibilities are delegated horizontally rather than the traditional 'top-down' governance, demonstrating the overlap with the MP4 theme governance.

Three main place-keeping models have been identified. In the **state-centred model** the local authority delivers place-keeping with minimal external input from others. Internal partnerships may develop within the organisation but this model can suffer from excessive bureaucracy and unwillingness to change. The **market-centred model**, such as public-private partnerships, involves a profit-driven organisation with a commercial interest in place-keeping, whereas the **user-centred model** involves user based, not-for-profit organisations such as charities and community groups which are primarily interested in the quality of the place for users. Networks and contacts that make use of local knowledge and enthusiasm are very important in this model.

Place-keeping is complex and a partnership approach is necessary to ensure an holistic approach, particularly where the ownership and management of spaces becomes divorced. The ability to apply a combination of state, market and user-centred models across an area can be instrumental in providing effective public space place-keeping. Involving the public, private and third sectors (voluntary, community) makes the most of a wide range of necessary skills, knowledge and resources.

Developing an efficient partnership for place-keeping is not without its problems. It implies a long-term commitment from partners and can be resource intensive. Involving many partners can make co-ordination difficult, particularly



Sheaf Valley Park

if there is no formal agreement in place. Private partners are still a threat for many people, so a dominant focus on public sector and third sector roles prevails. Sustaining trust is time consuming, requires resourcing and can be difficult as it is often reliant on the behaviour of individuals. Members may not be fully representative of open space users, and may have differing agendas, making achieving consensus difficult.

Partners may lack capacity (skills, motivation, resources, understanding) and need on-going support from the public or third sector. They may be concerned about taking on the liabilities that responsibility for place-keeping can bring. The perception that responsibility should lie with the local authority can lead to a lack of motivation and willingness to commit to long-term involvement after the initial 'place-making' phase.

Despite the difficulties a partnership approach to place-keeping can bring many benefits. Involving partners

from different sectors can enable complex problems to be solved and can give access to additional resources such as funding, skills knowledge, land or ideas. Agreeing a shared aim and responsibilities can improve relationships between stakeholders and help resolve conflicts. It may bring partners organisational or personal benefit or gain, such as public relations opportunities, commercial advantage, developing professional or social contacts whilst for others it may be fundamental to the organisation's ethos to work with others to deliver place-keeping.

3 EXPERIENCE FROM THE MP4 PARTNERSHIP

3.1 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (BIDs), DE

Hamburg, Germany: public-private partnerships to improve business areas.

The Business Improvement Districts model (BIDs) is an example of a proprietor-led public-private partnership that has been running in Hamburg since the introduction of dedicated legislation in 2005. Private proprietors that want to jointly improve the area around their properties are able to make a formal application to the local administration to create a BID for a maximum five year period. Once approved, an obligatory fee can then be collected from all local proprietors in the affected area to contribute to place-keeping activities. These include improved street cleaning and waste collection, facility management of the open spaces, ranging from car park management to communication with stakeholders, and 'place-making' improvements to the area.

3.2 LÖVGÄRDET AND ERIKSBO, CITY OF GOTHENBURG, SE

Exploring management transferral in residential areas

The City of Gothenburg has developed a practice for transferring maintenance responsibilities based on voluntary agreements with third parties. In residential areas, where there is split responsibility between Housing Companies and the local authority for the management of publically accessible space there is often uncertainty about responsibilities and differing levels of maintenance, which can be an issue for residents. The purpose of transferring responsibilities is not financial, but rather increased efficiency and a higher level of maintenance (value to the public) through improved organisation of site management. In the two city districts of Lövgärdet and Eriksbo partnership working has included involving the local residents, alongside the Housing Companies, to develop proposals for improvements and on-going place-keeping to recreational areas within the residential areas.

3.3 THE FLEMISH LAND AGENCY, FLANDERS, BE

Bringing together private, public and people

The Flemish Land Agency (VLM) is responsible for the organisation and management of open space and shaping policy within the rural and peri-urban areas of Flanders. VLM has no mandate to manage land so to achieve its aims the organisation must work in partnership with others including government organisations, municipalities, landowners and farmers. Involving all sectors in partnerships helps to ensure the integration of place-making with place-keeping. VLM employs a range of negotiated formal agreements to ensure ongoing management to improve biodiversity and raise awareness of environmental issues. The 'land development' agreement focuses on cross-sector consultation to build an agreed long-term vision rather than focus immediately on built investment. The co-operation with many partners, although complex and requiring careful management, brings many opportunities, provides flexibility and adds richness to what VLM is able to achieve. The fact that this organisation is able to act independently of local interests can be advantageous in negotiations with landowners other local stakeholders.

HafenCity



Futher information:
BIDs and NIDs
www.urban-improvement-districts.de

Lövgärdet



Futher information:
Gothenburg
www.goteborg.se

Oostkampus



Futher information:
VLM
www.vlm.be

4. KEY FINDINGS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

After analysing the practice of place-making and place-keeping around Northern Europe and implementing innovative pilots, the transnational MP4 partnership has come to the following key findings and policy recommendations on partnership in place-keeping based on practical experience;

- Delivering place-keeping through partnerships can bring many benefits, but it may not be the easiest option. Establishing and maintaining a strong, effective partnership with high capacity that is flexible and able to evolve to take advantage of opportunities is a complex process that requires long-term commitment
- Co-operation is an evolutionary process, especially if it's a new experience for the stakeholders. Not all countries or sectors have experience of working in this way and it takes time and effort to develop a shared vision, aims and goals. Stakeholders need to be involved as early as possible and treated as equals, and responsibilities need to be delegated to help create a sense of ownership and to build consensus. There is an important role for a trusted mediator or apolitical organisation which can form the link between government organisations and other stakeholders



Allotments, Craigmillar

- The roles and responsibilities of partners need to be clear and agreed and formal, written agreements can help to clarify these. Many informal partnerships do work well if time is given to develop trust and understanding between partners. However, if partners do not deliver on their commitments there may be no way to remedy the situation
- Partnerships need to be flexible, able to change over time as new opportunities arise, partner commitments or priorities change and the needs for the open space evolve. Continuity however is very important and this is a role that local governments can provide
- Community partners in particular can lack capacity to deliver effective place-keeping on their own and need ongoing support from local authorities or third sector partners to build this and to develop wider support networks
- The transfer of place-keeping responsibilities from local authorities to other partners raises concerns over liabilities and that the type and level of management of a space may change or deteriorate. In general there is a reluctance from community partners to take on this responsibility. For such transfers to be effective it is important to ensure that the size and type of space matches the partnership's capacity and is one for which they have a sense of ownership. Ongoing support should be made available
- Good communication between partners, within a partner's own organisation, and with the users of the open space is essential. Getting the right information in the right way to the right people requires careful thought and the use of a variety of media, including an up-to-date website to ensure that partnership activities are accessible and to promote engagement with a wide range of stakeholders
- When involving private sector partners, there is a need not only to build trust but to make clear what the perceived benefits for them may be.

MP4 is a European project (2008-2012) that focuses on innovative approaches for planning and designing, maintaining and using private and public open spaces. MP4 stands for 'Making Places Profitable, Public and Private Open Spaces.' It was funded through the European Union Interreg IVB programme for the North Sea Region. The nine project partners in six countries demonstrated how place-making, which is improving open spaces physically, can offer positive social and economic benefits on the long run. Its main aim, however, was to identify transferable successful methods of sustainable, long-term maintenance (place-keeping) and to influence planning policies from European level downwards to local neighbourhoods to ensure place-keeping is not only incorporated into citywide masterplans, but given as much consideration as place-making in every open-space investment.

For more information on MP4, please visit www.mp4-interreg.eu.



City of
Göteborg



The
University
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HCU

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Lawaetz-Stiftung