

# HEALTHY URBAN PLANNING

– through infrastructure and identity

# Introduction

This publication is about physical changes in domestic areas built during the 1960's and 1970's. The subtitle 'through infrastructure and identity' is chosen to underline the need for effortful changes (e.g. the infrastructure) so as to achieve desired social improvements (such as increased safety and a positive identity).

Funding for the development and launching of this publication has come from the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning and is part of a national effort to invest in safer environments, especially as seen from a gender perspective. Incessant throughout the publication is the conviction that the physical environment affects our safety and trust in both other people and the society as a whole. Women make up the group that most often express a feeling of insecurity in the area in which they live and hence, would benefit most from safety building measures although other groups would obviously benefit too. A growing trust between neighbours can also lead to the detection of other irregularities at home. However, this publication only deals with external spatial environments.

Invaluable help and contributions have been provided by a group which includes representatives from Helsingborg City's administrative departments (i.e. the City Council, Culture Department, Environment Department, Social Services Department and various sections of the Department of Urban Planning) and from the public utility housing company Helsingborgshem. Illustrations and texts have been discussed and reviewed in order to gain an understanding of our different views and inputs into the improvement process. In addition, representatives of North Skåne Tenants Association have attended an evening discussing the various dialogue illustrations. **Many thanks to everyone who has so patiently provided with useful comments and feedback!** A number of viewpoints and interests have been made known during the process. Based on these more often than not conflicting interests, I have endeavoured to put together this publication in the hope that it will promote a continued dialogue on future improvements. Good luck!

Helsingborg October 2010

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*A previously marshy area between residential houses in Vapnagård, Helsingör has been redeveloped into a beautifully landscaped pond.*



# Summary

## Dialogue basis for improvement measures

The purpose of this publication is to support measures taken to improve areas built during the 1960's and 1970's. To say that these areas are in need of improvement may sound as if all previous plans were widely off the mark. This is obviously not the case. One should not forget that much was and still is very good. However, the ideals did not take into account individual needs for small-scale living and personal meeting places. As a result, social aspects such as safety and trust between residents suffered. Based on surveys carried out, we now know that residents in those areas feel less safe than residents in other areas and that women feel less safe than men in general.

The illustrations in this publication are meant to initiate discussions. The intention is to illustrate **possibilities** and clarify what can be changed in order to facilitate the introduction of positive influences. The reason for choosing pictures as a principle tool is that they can help overcome any differences that various contributors may have owing to their background, education, profession and personal values. All of the illustrations focus on the physical environment. In addition, the pictures provide clear links to measures that may facilitate meetings, monitoring, social control and an increased trust between people.

## Right or wrong

It should be pointed out that the texts and pictures incorporated into this publication must not be seen as an indication of what is right or wrong. Experiences from the preceding *Healthy Urban Planning – designing for people* from 2007 show that the greatest rewards and understanding are achieved when prior to starting work, we exchange observations and ideas on the basis of illustrated examples. The success of such collaboration is dependent on everyone feeling that they have something to gain from an individual desire for greater safety to a collective desire for improved public health and economy. It is then the responsibility of the individual participants to decide what is right or wrong in their specific area based on the dialogues and possibilities that come forward. The greater participation, the more know how is required to make a conscientious decision.

## The combination of infrastructure and identity

The subtitle 'through infrastructure and identity' suggests that structural problems contribute to a feeling of insecurity. Something is missing. A deficient infrastructure often lacks good connections to the rest of the city and hence, there is a need for improving communication links within as well as to and from the area in question. Good research starting points are the peripherals of a residential area. Would new buildings result in improved connections to the rest of the city? Are there barriers that could be eliminated through new additions?

A lack of identity is often found on large-scale housing estates. Places that feel more private and that are perceived to belong to a small group of residents are missing. It is important that those individuals who are most familiar with an area, whether they live or work there, are welcomed to contribute to and participate in the process of change. Talking about the advantages and needs of the local area may in itself help the aim of increasing trust in each other.

The measures proposed here in terms of infrastructure and identity may provide the opportunity and resources necessary to influence factors such as safety and health. The illustrations in this publication are an attempt 'to kill two birds with one stone'. The following requests are made frequently

- To inspect and improve **access routes** and features
- To inspect and improve boundaries, access routes and the furnishing of **spaces**
- To investigate where **further developments and densification** would bring the greatest benefits



# Purpose and background

The purpose of this publication is to serve as a pre-dialogue basis for changes being made in residential areas planned in the 1960's and 1970's. The ample illustration materials are intended to show the possibilities and consequences of different designs in the most comprehensible way possible to as many people as possible including the general public. The illustrations also aim to raise questions about what is needed and what options are available within the framework for improvements. It is important that such questions are raised at an early stage in the process to allow for a timely identification of conflicting interests and how to best address these.

For those readers who prefer a little more background to the illustrations and captions, the publication starts with a general description. However, those who are keen to get a dialogue going can start directly on page seven (which then contains a few repetitions). The idea is that manageable sized working groups shall be able to discuss the illustrations under each caption in order to determine the relevance of these in their particular neighbourhood. The end result should provide answers to the following general questions: What do we want to achieve with the change? What new opportunities should we anticipate?

Some of the pictures provide 'a before and after' illustration of a specific area. However, the pictures are of a general character to also relate to other existing areas. Naturally, each location and environment is unique and needs to be analysed and processed to allow for the relevant stakeholders to assess the possible implications of the changes proposed.

## The urban design

The ideals of the 1960's and 1970's project can be described as light, clean, green and traffic free.

The result was spacious apartments with bathrooms and access to modern laundry rooms. Large green public areas were introduced as well as streets just for cars. Pedestrians and cyclists were instead provided with other traffic free walking and cycling routes.

Residential dwellings, shops and offices were located to different areas. With the introduction of the family car, the distance between home and work was no longer a major concern. Planning became more large-scale and larger areas were made use of. Since the 1950's, the use of urban land per capita has quadrupled in the Swedish cities.

Because of the nonexistence of offices and other workplaces, the residential areas became empty of people during daytime. Despite many people living in the same area, it did not promote or motivate to outdoor activities. This large-scale living combined with the absence of places where you could meet and get to know your neighbours lead to a growing anonymity. It is evident from today's housing surveys that the absence of safety is a predominant aspect of living in these areas, especially among women.

It may sound as if everything that was planned during this era was wrong. This is obviously not the case but the ideals of that time did not take into account individual needs for small-scale living and personal meeting places. This does not mean that history should be turned on its head and we should start building residential areas as in the old times when a connection between the public street area

and private courtyard was essentially maintained. However, a greater awareness of the importance of clear boundaries is needed to support a sense of attachment to an area among the residents as well as the identity of that area.

## Why should we make changes?

Many of the residents in areas planned in the 1960's and 1970's are very happy and content with where they live. Trees and vegetation have now matured, contributing to a variety and density that perhaps was not there at the start. So why should we change anything – changes that perhaps are not seen as improvements and could even lead to an increase in rent? Many of these areas are in need of a technical facelift. However, at the same time carrying out such work, it would not be wrong to tackle the absence of safety as reported by the residents in various housing surveys.

The subtitle 'through infrastructure and identity' suggests that structural problems contribute to a feeling of insecurity. Something is missing. A deficient infrastructure often lacks good connections to the rest of the city. The nonexistence of through traffic adds to the difficulty of finding a central meeting place that would even attract people from outside of the area. The roads have act as barriers and lead to further isolation of the residential areas.

Surveys carried out indicate that people moving into these areas come from a poorer socioeconomic background than those moving out. The stability and economy of a residential area would benefit from fewer residents relocating to other areas. A residential area where people are content and proud of its identity has a greater

chance of holding on to its residents even in case of changed circumstances or when the residents can afford a more expensive home somewhere else. Another reason for making changes is thus to improve the identity of the area and hence, raise its status.

## Isolated areas

An isolated location combined with a lack of diversity has also led to a lack of flexibility. Where older residential areas adapted and changed over time, the areas planned in the 1960's and 1970's have found it more difficult. These areas were designed to fulfil the specific functions of its time, not for future changes. Isolation often leads to a place undeservedly falling into disrepute- one 'knows' what it is like to live there without even having set foot in the area. Despite only a few of the houses being high-rise buildings and many others being two to three floor apartment blocks and one floor houses, these areas are often referred to by the public and media as large-scale concrete ghettos. Name changes and self-invented names for different neighbourhoods and locations indicate a desire to disassociate oneself from larger residential areas with a bad reputation. Another consequence of isolation is the subsequent lack of interaction between different types of people. For example, the pupils at the local school, often situated in the centre of the residential area, usually come from similar backgrounds, the downside of which is that they are not given much opportunity to integrate with pupils of diverse backgrounds and cultures. Tolerance and an understanding towards others is a fundamental prerequisite for trust in our society and hence, it is in the best interest of the society to give different groups of people an opportunity to integrate.

A change may for example entail improving connections to and from an area. Connections that in turn will make it easier for people to meet and attract people to public places. Such changes may also relate to people's activities and movements, better services, new functions and more frequent experiences. Changes that is generally intended to get people together and to support the development of an entire area but also individual places within that area for the purpose of creating a more positive identity.

Another way to express better connections is to talk about more integrated areas. Integration is a diverse and frequently used term. According to the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the definition of an integrated residential area is an area offering the same access to services and supplies as the rest of the city.

## Why is identity important?

Is it at all possible to talk about a place without mentioning its identity, i.e. something that describes that specific place? Places *without* an identity often constitute a transition without defined boundaries, specific experiences



*Mature trees in Krokbäck in Malmö*

or characteristics. The absence of names for footpaths, courtyards and public places in many of these places indicate that they do not have the characteristics, boundaries or magnitude to even be worth a name. Nor have the residents had an opportunity to put their own stamp on different places in their area.

An identity is created in our minds and helps us to understand and relate to our surroundings. Identity provides character through history, ease of orientation, security and context. The urban environment has the capacity to both support and counteract this concept. In order for residents to be proud of and feel happy in their own neighbourhood and to allow for positive experiences, the character and identity of the area must be strengthened and exposed.

## Identity and memories

There are identities in our surroundings that are visible and obvious to everyone. *The large tree blooms so beautifully in the spring.* Then there are the slightly less visible connotations and individual memories linked to the same place. *The tree stood originally in the garden of the old manor house. The primary school children used to hang their paper swallows in the tree. I was kissed for the first time under that tree.* However, the same place can also have a negative identity. *I no longer dare to walk there in the evening.* These and similar identities emanate from both the residents and people working in the area.

In neighbourhoods where two out of three residents move out within a period of ten years<sup>1</sup>, it is very difficult to link certain anecdotes to specific places, especially when there are other historical anecdotes linked to the same area based on what others think and often on what the mass media reports. It goes without saying that a large-scale residential area ought to have a variety of historical anecdotes tied to a number of places in order to neutralize a potentially one-sided identity. Safety and trust are concepts that can be linked to a positive identity.



*Many of the areas constructed during the 1960's and 1970's have been branded as concrete ghettos, despite the fact that they actually look like this.*

## The effects of infrastructure on movement patterns

The infrastructure mentioned in this publication only refers to the movement patterns of people, i.e. along streets and footpaths but also the type of traffic moving along these routes. How places and routes are connected and how they relate to specific target points has an effect on the flow of people. How frequented a place is usually determines how safe we feel in that place.

A clear infrastructure results in a clear hierarchy from large dynamics to small pathways and routes. The transparency of such hierarchy contributes to character and identity. Uniformity is created when every street in a residential area looks the same, is equally wide and fulfils the same function. Consequently, there is no difference between the major routes that ought to bring in large volumes of people to the area and parallel or transverse smaller routes. The result is a sparse flow of people and street life. An already deserted area is perceived as even more desolate as there are too many similar dispersive routes. Thus, there are no unique meeting points or locations. This is particularly evident in areas with unconnected modes of traffic.

Depending on the probability of surveillance, social control and in particular, the presence of other people, the location and character of such routes will also have an impact on feelings of trust and safety. Having a busy street outside your own private garden is not as appealing as having it outside the public entrance of a residential house. Then, it is better if the private garden faces other private gardens. The locality of public places should help identify who is a resident and who is a visitor in the area. However, this does *not* mean that the locked gating systems as in the disputed 'gated communities' should be promoted. Providing a clear distinction between public routes and more private routes that for example lead to private gardens, etc., is sufficient.

## Unattractive place or creative loophole?

Because identity is about subjective assessments, it is not uncommon for one and the same place to have both a negative and positive identity. This is to some extent of minor importance as it could even be a desirable scenario for different groups to favour different areas. A shabby place that would never appeal to the established business world may for example be the perfect place for the modest scrap dealer. Perhaps the unkempt bushes behind the sports ground act as a favourite hideaway for the teenagers in the neighbourhood. Places like these are referred to as creative loopholes and are often characterised by a permissive and not too specific function.<sup>2</sup> They exist so that one or a few individuals may (emotionally) claim them as 'theirs'. The difference is of course when the negative identity of an area fails to attract because of a high volume of refuse, lack of safety devices or any other type of negligence. Then the negative identity becomes a problem for the area.

## Involvement of residents

In order for a change to be seen as an improvement, it is important to instigate a dialogue with everyone involved in that change as soon as possible. Getting residents and others involved in the process of changing an urban environment is a fundamental starting point for strengthening local identity, especially as it entails developing places that lack identity or are difficult to define. Those who already live and work in an area make up its existing identity and hence, must be given a chance to contribute with their own visions and knowledge of the area. The first objective domain of the Swedish National Institute of Public Health and one of the most fundamental prerequisites for public health is *Participation and influence in society*. An influence and opportunity to shape your own situation in life is strongly associated with health.<sup>3</sup> In addition, citizen participation is of great importance for the understanding of democratic processes and sustainable development.

# Before the dialogue begins!

## Who should get involved and help improve?

The people living and working in an area are obviously the experts on that place. The earlier these experts can get involved in the process of improvement, the better the end result. Other experts who ought to participate are property owners and property management companies who know the area from a manage and economic viewpoint. Naturally, representatives of the departments of Urban Planning, Traffic, Parks and Recreation should be involved but other participants from the municipality such as the Environment, Culture, School and Social departments must not be forgotten. A great responsibility rests on those who manage and lead the dialogue in the change process. A transparent framework and clear responsibilities must be given to every participant.

## Why change?

Initially, there must be an understanding of and belief in the potential rewards of participating in the improvement work. The question that must be asked is: What do we stand to gain from this? For instance, improved social wellbeing might be one primary objective. The property management company may want to see fewer relocations and less vandalism. For the tenant, it could mean a safer environment and more opportunities for activities in the area. For the local shop owner, an expanded service base and for the local community, improved public health and a better economy and so forth. What is most important is that the participants see the potential benefits of and essentially agree on why changes should be made.

## What is to be improved?

What type of measures should be taken into consideration prior to making any physical improvements in an area? The dialogue illustrations are intended to serve as a basis for discussions on what one would like to and can improve. Many areas have mature green areas and residents that are content and happy. Maybe there are not that many changes to make after all! Perhaps it is enough to make passages, responsibilities and boundaries clearer

and to provide opportunities for individual initiatives, meetings and experiences. Preserving parklands that now boast beautiful mature trees is of great importance.

However, it is also important to introduce possible new housings and other functions in the area. In Sweden, we have quadrupled the acreage per capita since the middle of last century. As a result, we have seen an increase in distances and transports, neither of which has been positive from a land or climate/environmental management perspective. The question is not *whether* a densification of existing residential areas is possible but *in which areas, how, where and when*. Good research starting points are the peripherals of a residential area. Would new buildings result in improved connections to the rest of the city? Are there barriers that could be eliminated through new additions? Densification is not just about erecting new buildings but also about adding new places for children to play and residents to meet, perform sports, etc.

## The dialogue illustrations

The illustrations showing physical changes before and after should not be seen as an indication that some changes are better than others. They merely aim to show the potential effects of structural changes on movement patterns and/or relationships to the surrounding environment, which in turn may have an effect on the general perception of safety and identity. The participants in the improvement work must at some point during the dialogue decide on what is right or wrong in their particular area.

Most of the dialogue illustrations, no matter under what caption they can be found, are linked to measures that facilitate personal meetings and contribute to an increased trust between people. Five captions have been created so as to give structure to the arrangement of dialogues. However, several of the pictures could well relate to more than one caption. Perhaps this should be seen as evidence that the measures are interconnected and that it is always helpful to try and see more possibilities and consequences than what is obvious at first sight!

*Before and after in a residential area in Örebro.*



## Working together

Prior to starting any improvements, it would be constructive for the participants involved to agree on a few common objectives. People living and working in the area are obviously deemed definite participants. Open-mindedness among property owners and planners makes the process easier and avoids future disappointments. Consideration and time must be given to questions.

### Challenge:

*Joint endeavours that allow for different viewpoints and interests.*



**1a.** A first challenge would be to establish a common framework for the work and area in question and together identify target objectives and needs. Everyone involved must be able to see the advantages of an improvement.

The concept of constraint is also about recognising what is better supported in a nearby area.

**1b.** All places have something to be proud of, something one would want to preserve and highlight or reinforce (functional, historical, cultural, appearance). It is important to review and analyse these values together with the residents early on in the process. Green and large open spaces must not be forgotten.

In this photo, the history of the place has been inscribed on the stones along the pathway!

**1c.** The property owners and local authorities who take the initiative to improve must make clear what they intend to do. Information about possible limitations, other ongoing work in the vicinity or anything else that is of significant value must be revealed (e.g. safety regulations, noise abatements, window replacements, etc.) It is about conveying knowledge and taking into consideration the opinions of others.

**1d.** The aim is for as many people as possible to have their say. One of the groups that may prove hard to reach is young people. An extra effort should be made to reach this and other hard reaching groups – perhaps with the help of new methods and forms of media.

## 2. Coherence with the surrounding city

A city district is only a city district when it actually forms part of a city. Hence, it makes sense to start looking at how a residential area relates to its surroundings. Is it easy to get to and from the area? Are there good public transport services? Is the area itself and its access routes sufficiently visible? Is there anything in the area that is or could be an attraction to both local residents and neighbouring areas?

### Challenge:

*A natural and coherent contact with the surrounding city.*

**2a.** When areas are well connected to their surrounding environment, they are often said to be integrated. According to the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the definition of an integrated residential area is an area offering the same access to for example service as the surrounding city. However, not all residential areas can have a health clinic, chemist, library and other similar services. How functional is the area in this respect – is it easy to reach the rest of the city? Does one feel safe when walking to and waiting by the bus stop?



**2b.** Finding a residential area can sometimes be difficult and a welcoming sign telling you that you have reached the area in question is often needed.

Yet, what is the actual purpose of the sign? Could it be replaced with a more positive welcoming?



**2c.** Many residential areas from the 1960's and 1970's have different types of access routes depending on modes of traffic. The access route for pedestrians and cyclists is usually via a subway underneath a street. This is a safe way although perhaps not the most welcoming. Are there such access routes in the residential area and how could these possibly be improved?





2d. Outside Malmö City Hall, the pedestrian subway has been made so wide that the street above it looks rather like a bridge over an already existing space.



2e. Public transport services may in turn have other access routes into the area. This is an example of a bus lane being the only connection with a nearby residential area (not visible because of greenery blocking the view). What is the advantage of allowing other modes of traffic to use the bus lanes to and from the area?



2f. *BEFORE*: This is a rather typical street between two neighbourhoods. Traffic density is around 5,000 vehicles per day, which constitutes a lightly trafficked thoroughfare. The street has no pavements or cycle lanes and you cannot see over the greenery. Pedestrians and cyclists have been given their own footpaths and cycle lanes inside the green barrier.



2g. *AFTER*: Could the street look like this? The two neighbourhoods are clearly linked. The land is more effectively used. Terraced houses that were not previously found in the area have replaced the hedges and bushes. The old footpaths and cycle lanes have given way for gardens. What values have been lost and what can you replace these values with? Would it be possible to plant trees along the street?

2h. Footpaths and cycle lanes are important but they are sometimes located between instead of through neighbourhoods. This can be very disorientating. A lack of activities along the route does not contribute to a feeling of safety either. Perhaps alternative routes are needed. Residential areas that are hidden behind a barrier of trees and bushes often struggle to find an identity. Rumours based on hearsay or newspaper articles are easier to believe and accept.



2i. Noise barriers and other perimeters are sometimes needed. But why should the streets in the city have the same standard as roads on the countryside? This renders it more difficult for residential areas inside such barriers and perimeters to have a natural and coherent contact with the surrounding city. This particular road in Helsingborg is to be changed into a city street with easy connections to and from existing residential areas.



2j. *BEFORE*: This shows another road, beyond a footpath and cycle lane, surrounded by walls that form a barrier between two residential areas of different socio-economic status. The walls are hampering the possibility of the residents from the two areas making contact or exchanging experiences.



2k. *AFTER*: Extending the approach streets to the main road would not only make an exchange possible between the two areas but the addition of a new access route could also help them attract passing road users to local businesses and cultural facilities.





2l. Nevertheless, breaking down the barriers between two areas does not necessarily entail removing the functional space in-between. This space may act as an excellent link between the areas or a perfect place for wildlife and exciting games – or simply a place of tranquillity and silence. In fact, one of the reasons for involving the residents in the improvement work is to gain awareness of places with this type of distinguishing features.



2m. The coherency of a residential area with the rest of the city is often linked to something positive and unique. For example, Stapelbädd Park in Malmö is not only used by people living in the neighbourhood but also attracts visitors from the entire city and region.



2n. This is something that is unique to this neighbourhood – a residential swimming complex owned by the property management company!

This could contribute to a positive identity and attract the ‘entire city’ to the area. If attracting the entire city to a place is the main ambition, then getting to and from that place must be made easy.



2o. This photo shows the shortest route from the residential area to the bus stop and shop. There are no escape routes or chances of monitoring the area. The proximity of alternative and safer roads is important.

### 3. Coherent routes within the area

Communications within areas from the 1960's and 1970's were often determined by technical rather than human circumstances. The previous traditional block structure, which was now abandoned, made a clear distinction between front and back yards, private and public areas. The new planning opened up all areas and you could walk through other people's back yards or at the rear of and next to private gardens, etc. *Too* many opportunities to move around usually result in fewer contacts with your immediate neighbour or other residents in the area. Chance meetings become less frequent.

#### Challenge:

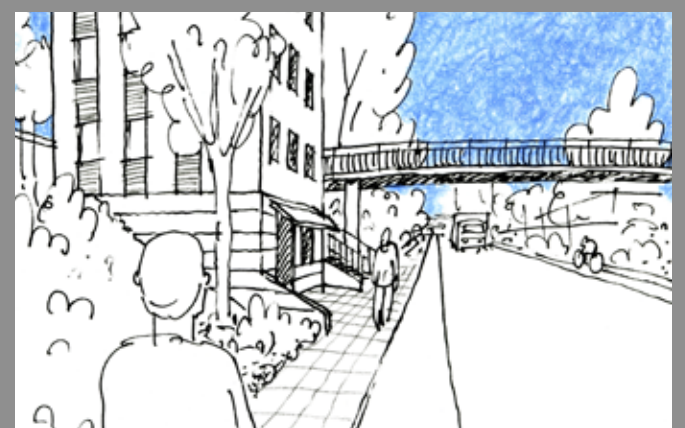
*More distinct passages and boundaries in the area*

**3a. BEFORE:** In a typical area with separate routes for traffic, cars drive on streets without pavements (red lines) while pedestrians cross above or underneath the street (yellow lines). Once inside the area, the different routes often look alike, making it difficult to locate where you are or find an address.

**3b. AFTER:** Would it be possible to allow for pedestrians and cyclists to use the same street - without compromising on road safety? (Compare 3c and 3d) Could different features be added along the different pedestrian pathways in the area depending on whether it is a main or minor path? Would it benefit the area if cars were allowed to reach inner parts? Get a car park closer to home? Attracting businesses that depend on transportation?

**3c. BEFORE:** There are no housing entrances or anything else in this photo that facilitates street observation. This only allows for transportation by car.

**3d. AFTER:** Perhaps it could look like this with pavements and cycle lanes? Or is the area structure worth preserving for historical or cultural reasons? Could the introduction of new buildings and other additions be used to strengthen routes and meeting places?





3e. Places such as the kindergarten, school, library, shop and bus stop often become natural meeting places in a residential area. It is from these focal points that the main pathways and routes ought to start in order to attract people and be fully utilized.



3f. Once there is an insufficient amount of people passing, the number of customers starts to decline, forcing many shops to close.



3g. *BEFORE*: Routes and movement patterns can be changed.

*Photo: Örebrostäder.*



3h. *AFTER*: Here, entrances are transverse, creating a front towards public areas and routes while making the rear courtyard more private.

*Photo: Örebrostäder.*

3i. This is one of the main pathways in a residential area – except it looks more like a back route. None of the houses or entrances faces this main pathway and it cannot be seen from any of the houses. Could this be changed?



3j. It is not easy to find the right address when there are no street names. Could the naming of different paths result in new and better reference points?



3k. When a pedestrian pathway runs through a courtyard, it is important to clearly differentiate between the public and private areas. The photo shows how it is possible to combine a public pedestrian path with the front access areas of residential buildings by clearly identifying these as private and belonging to the residents.



3l. Giving pathways and routes different features and characteristics could also mean creating cosy shortcuts. Not everything needs to be organised and structured!



## 4. Trust and safety

The word 'home' has a positive connotation that represents security and solidarity. A good residential area should be able to offer very similar characteristics, i.e. a homely ambience and a feeling of safety and solidarity among neighbours if and when needed. This requires an environment that facilitates meetings and has clear boundaries but no ambiguity in areas of responsibility.

### Challenge:

*There is no place like home!*



**4a.** It is possible to create a homely ambience, even among high-rise buildings and in densely populated areas. With a detailed and carefully designed exterior environment, some sites may even be perceived as small and cosy.



**4b.** The importance of green places in a residential area and to its inhabitants cannot be stressed enough. From previous experience we know that easy access to nature and a green environment increases the feeling of well-being among residents. Why are there so few standards for green spaces and playgrounds when there are so many standards for car parks?



**4c.** Greenery can also act as an obstruction, making it difficult to find your way around an area. Hence, it is important to try to find a balance. The residents themselves realise the value of green surroundings and also know if other alternative places and routes are being used.

**4d.** The feeling of safety in a residential area is intimately linked to the street life and knowledge that other people are moving around in the area. An attractive outdoor environment increases the likelihood of people wanting to spend more time outside.



**4e.** Neutral meeting places such as a park or playground may have the advantage that you get to meet other people – perhaps someone different.



**4f.** However, safety is not just about other people moving about. The area must be designed in a way that makes it easy to observe one's surroundings. This photo highlights the problem of being able to see what goes on among the cars in the car park from the residential buildings. Could this be changed?



**4g.** The local school was often placed in 'the middle of the community'. However, many of the schoolyards cannot be seen from the surrounding buildings, making them unsafe meeting places in the evenings and at weekends. If an area is in need of densification, the new housing should perhaps be built in a position that overlooks the schoolyard!

Situated in the middle of a residential area and with empty premises in the evening, the school is a perfect place for adult education as well as other associations and clubs.





**4h.** The route to and from school must feel safe. As a parent, you should be able to let your child walk alone to and from school without having to worry about unsafe roads or your child being subjected to harassment. Bearing this in mind, perhaps one ought to consider whether there are enough opportunities for observations and control. Could the introduction of additional functions along the route help improve security?



**4i.** Being content in life often has something to do with being able to leave one's personal mark on an area. However, what is considered appropriate and permissible?



**4j.** Are you allowed to paint a pink elephant on your fence? Or would this interfere with the uniform aesthetics of the area? Who decides what is ugly or nice looking?



**4k.** 'Feeling at home' is perhaps about being able to distinguish one doorway from another. A positive 'us' identity could also contribute to a sense of contentment. 'The porch' by the entrance on the other side of the pergola gives a feeling of a small place offering a richer experience.

**4l.** When for example the front entrance of a residential building faces a transitory path, it makes it easier to keep an eye on and monitor that area, which in turn makes it a safer place in the day and at night. The space is referred to as 'our street' among the residents, indicating that it belongs more to them than the rest of the neighbourhood. This subtle indication of exclusivity is likely to facilitate contacts with the neighbours (see corresponding picture 3i).



**4m.** Here, the responsibility for cutting the grass are shown to have a somewhat diverse approach. Unfortunately, this may contribute to a less orderly overall impression. A tidy and orderly area tends to influence the attitude of those who use the area. An untidy and disorderly area indicates that no one cares or takes responsibility. This is one of the reasons why it is important to clarify who is responsible for what. Perhaps the residents themselves can take responsibility for some of the maintenance work?



**4n.** With clear boundaries on what belongs to each residential building and household, it is much easier to struck up a friendly contact with your neighbours but also to make new valuable contacts. The possibility of keeping an eye on the neighbour's home and garden can also result in less abuse and criminal activity.



**4o.** Meeting places promote contacts between residents. A selection of meeting places provides opportunities for different types of meetings from the local neighbourhood meeting at the community centre to the chance meeting with your neighbour outside your front door.





**4p.** All residential areas ought to have an open space where residents can gather and socialise with each other – or even have a party or a boots sale! The location should preferably allow for the participation of outsiders and many similar gatherings.



**4q.** Does living behind closed gates mean added safety or does it have the opposite effect?



**4r.** In this photo, a locked gate is clearly not needed to demonstrate that the courtyard belongs to the residential building in question. Does the expression 'to trust' entail giving outsiders access to your area?



**4s.** The need to protect yourself against your surroundings may sometimes have undesirable consequences. This boarded fence was erected to protect the residents on the inside...



**4t.** ...but now it is no contact between the street and the residential buildings, which have led to a more unsafe street.

## 5. New buildings and places

There could be something missing in an existing residential area. It could be anything from a particular type of housing to places where people can socialise. It could be shops, services and other workplaces. Even if the area appears to be fully developed, there may be further opportunities for densification or the addition of new features. Perhaps something distinguishable that offers an identity and something to be proud of.

### Challenge:

*Everything in its right place.*

**5a.** Rosengård residential area in Malmö introduced retail establishments along its main pedestrian route into the city centre.

This added feature has led to an increased number of visitors and made it easier to monitor the area while day time worker has risen.



**5b. BEFORE:** This is not an uncommon sight with separate traffic routes and bridges for the pedestrians and cyclists. (Compare 3:c)



**5c. AFTER:** Would it be possible to build new houses facing the street? These could for example incorporate some business on the ground floor with the owner residing on the floor above.

The introduction of pavements and traffic calming islands would help drivers to keep to the speed limits in the area.



**5d.** Densification does not merely refer to the construction of new homes. In Kroksbäck residential area in Malmö, an undulating multi-sports ground has been built, providing a fun and exciting ball sports area and a unique identity for Kroksbäck.





5e. Nor does densification through the construction of new homes necessarily involve exploiting new land. This photo shows a complete renovation of an existing building to which an extra floor has been added.



5f. Optimizing an area may also involve setting aside some of the area for use as allotments or any other activity that the residents may be interested in. Working together helps build trust.

'Everything in its right place' could refer to something so simple as a couple of benches to sit on!



5g. Densification by way of new homes could also help fill specific needs in the area such as the shortage of garden apartments or homes for elderly. Different types of homes can make it possible to continue living in the area despite family circumstances changing.



5h. *BEFORE*: This is the access route to a residential area in a location that is very easy to reach from the nearby ring road.



5i. *AFTER*: Enjoying such a desirable position, the area ought to be of interest to businesses. The access route to the area is given an identity that is easy to remember and describe. A greater proportion of the adult population is drawn to the area and as a result, the local lunch restaurant is given a new lease of life (compare with the possibilities shown in picture 2b).

# Together

A large number of contributors are affected by and have an interest in the improvement work initiated by the property management companies and the municipality. These contributors bring different experiences and an array of skills. This publication highlights the importance of gathering these skills as early as possible in the process. The dialogue illustrations presented herein are meant to help overcome the fact that the contributors involved speak different languages, come from different backgrounds and sometimes show a lack of understanding of what is important for other parties involved. It is hoped that scientists, engineers, planners, professionals, residents, etc., will be able to engage in a dialogue based on the illustrations. Limitations, structures and technical measures relating to areas such as traffic and water supply must be communicated in a comprehensible manner at an early stage in the process.

Getting every contributor involved in all matters of common interest is of course the ultimate goal. It goes without saying that the changes proposed must result in improvements! The challenge is to find a common vision so that everyone, based on his or her specific knowledge and experience, can contribute to the ultimate end result. Extra consideration should be given to people living and working in the area as they are ultimately affected by the changes made. Dragana Curovic, Operations Developer for Hyresgästföreningen Region Norra Skåne (Tenants' Association Region North Skåne) was regrettably absent from the meeting during which the content of this publication was discussed. However, in conclusion, these are her comments sent to the meeting.

*"We call for a greater control of new constructions and redevelopments in residential areas. Tenants are rarely asked for their opinion on infrastructural issues or preferred locations for meeting places, that is, informal locations. An early dialogue allows for the involvement of residents and provides motivation to realise the objectives envisaged."*

## Reading tips

Urban quality of life in the new urban districts in Scandinavia - from Cities for People. <http://bo.gronlund.homepage.dk>  
Den byggda miljös påverkan på fysisk aktivitet (Built environment and Physical Activity), Johan Faskunger 2007.  
Life Between Buildings, Jan Gehl 1971  
Cities for people, Jan Gehl 2010  
Public Spaces - Public Life, Jan Gehl & Lars Gemsö 1996  
Everything at [www.gehlarchitects.com](http://www.gehlarchitects.com)  
More park in a denser city, Alexander Ståhle, a licentiate dissertation 2005  
Urban Landscapes of Fear and Insecurity, Gabriella Sandstig dissertation thesis 2010  
Doing the street, Elisabeth Högdahl dissertation thesis 2003  
Manual on public participation, Huddinge Municipality 2007  
Healthy urban planning, Hugh Barton & Catherine Tsourou 2000



Sustainable City Development, Erland Ullstad 2008  
Shaping neighbourhoods, Hugh Barton, Marcus Grant & Richard Guise 2003  
Shared space – room for everyone, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL) 2008  
The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs 1961

## Notes

1 Report by Roger Andersson, Professor of Applied Geography at Uppsala University, Institute for Housing and Urban Research IBF  
2Term invented by Professor Elisabeth Högdahl at Lund University Campus, Helsingborg  
3 [www.fhi.se](http://www.fhi.se) Objective Domain 1



HELSINGBORG

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