

The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize is a biennial international award that honours outstanding achievements and contributions to the creation of liveable, vibrant and sustainable urban communities around the world.

The Prize is awarded to outstanding cities for their innovation, effective governance, and leadership, addressing urban challenges and fostering holistic benefits for communities worldwide.

LEE KUAN YEW WORLD CITY ○ PRIZE

2010 - 2024



LEE KUAN YEW WORLD CITY PRIZE





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LEE KUAN YEW WORLD CITY ○ PRIZE



About the Prize

Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize is a prestigious international award that honours outstanding achievements and contributions to the creation of liveable, vibrant and sustainable urban communities around the world. The Prize is awarded to cities and recognises their key leaders and organisations for displaying foresight, good governance and innovation in tackling the many urban challenges faced, to bring about social, economic and environmental benefits in a holistic way to their communities.

www.worldcityprize.sg

Co-organisers

The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) is Singapore's land use planning and conservation agency. We strive to create an endearing home and a vibrant and sustainable future city through far-sighted planning and innovation, in partnership with the community. As the main government land sales agent, we manage the sale and development of State land to meet our land use needs. URA promotes architecture and urban design excellence in the city.

www.ura.gov.sg

Set up in 2008 by the Ministry of National Development and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC)'s mission is to distil, create and share knowledge on liveable and sustainable cities. CLC's work spans four main areas – Research, Capability Development, Knowledge Platforms, and Advisory. Through these activities, CLC hopes to provide urban leaders and practitioners with the knowledge and support needed to make our cities better.

www.clc.gov.sg



Prize Sponsor

Keppel Ltd. is a global asset manager and operator with strong expertise in sustainability-related solutions spanning the areas of infrastructure, real estate and connectivity. Headquartered in Singapore, Keppel operates in more than 20 countries worldwide, providing critical infrastructure and services for renewables, clean energy, decarbonisation, sustainable urban renewal and digital connectivity. Keppel creates value for investors and stakeholders through its quality investment platforms and diverse asset portfolios, including private funds and listed real estate and business trusts.

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MESSAGE FROM CHAIR OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE



Prof Cheong Koon Hean is the Chair of Centre for Liveable Cities and the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, and a Professor of Practice at the Singapore University of Technology and Design, with a distinguished career in public service and international advisory roles.

Cities are the engines of our global society that drive economic growth, cultural diversity and technical innovation, but they also face a multitude of complex challenges. From congestion and pollution to social inequality and climate change, urban areas are constantly grappling with issues that impact the lives of millions. The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize has shone a light on cities around the world that have demonstrated exceptional innovation in addressing these challenges.

A unique strength of the Prize lies in its inclusivity. It welcomes applications from cities of different sizes, stage of development and geographic locations. Past Laureates and Special Mentions span a broad spectrum of environments and cultures. Among the Prize winners are mature developed cities like New York City, Vienna and Seoul, and developing cities like Bilbao, Medellín and Suzhou. Although each city has its unique context, they possess some common characteristics: visionary and forward-thinking leadership, innovative solutions within resource constraints, and an effective governance structure that enable the execution of its plans. These cities have demonstrated sustained urban transformation that brought real benefits to their population and the environment. Such a diversity of cities ensures a rich resource of imaginative ideas for tackling a wide range of

urban issues. By recognising these success stories, the Prize fosters a platform for learning and exchange, allowing cities to learn from each other's experiences and adapt best practices to their own situation.

This year, we spotlight the megacity of Mexico City for its impressive strides made to enhance a highly complex city and to improve the lives of its people amid challenging conditions. At the same time, we would like to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of urban centres like Cape Town, Melbourne, Rio de Janeiro and Wellington. These are cities that have made determined and continuous efforts to advance their cities through creative urban interventions.

Mexico City's journey is a lesson on the transformative power of learning from others. By actively seeking out international best practices and adapting them to their specific challenges, the city has implemented impactful initiatives in a short period of time. For instance, Mexico City's transportation solutions have brought significant benefits to its citizens. While cable cars, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems, and cycling networks are not new concepts, their deployment at scale while focusing on affordability has greatly improved mobility, especially for the less privileged.

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The seamless integration of these various modes of transport has led to a better quality of life for all. Learning from other cities and by leveraging technology, public safety and access to government services were markedly improved. The focus on human-centric programmes, such as the PILARES programme, also resulted in the development of community centres city-wide and these facilitated community-bonding and provided upskilling opportunities for the low income.

Looking beyond the Laureate, the 2024 Special Mention cities offer further inspiration. Cape Town's agile governance in tackling its water crisis provided valuable lessons in disaster management by leveraging a mix of conservation measures, community engagement and technological innovations.

Melbourne's laneway initiative showcased how cities can bounce back from unforeseen challenges, turning the most locked-down city during the pandemic into a vibrant revival of its laneways benefiting local artists, businesses and most of all, its residents. Rio de Janeiro took bold moves to redefine its central area and waterfront. Wellington stands out for its steadfast dedication to conserving and restoring natural habitats in both urban and natural areas through innovative programmes that draw on extensive community participation. More of such inspiring stories can found throughout the pages of this book, serving as a testament to innovation and resilience.

The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize plays a vital role in identifying and celebrating these success stories. Through its rigorous evaluation process, the Prize ensures that the best examples are brought to the forefront, allowing cities around the world to learn from each other and adapt solutions for their unique needs. This spirit of collaboration and knowledge sharing is essential as we work towards building more liveable, sustainable, and equitable urban centres for the future.

Prof Cheong Koon Hean
Chairman
Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize
Nominating Committee

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIZE SPONSOR



Keppel is proud to be the sole sponsor of the biennial Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize for seven consecutive cycles since its inauguration in 2010.

The Prize honours the achievements of cities that have undergone remarkable transformation and improved the lives of their citizens. It also pays tribute to the vision and legacy of Singapore's first Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, who had played an instrumental role in Singapore's evolution into a distinctive, clean, green and highly liveable city in a short span of a few decades.

Since the Prize's inception, 7 laureates and 20 special mentions have been recognised from around the world – cities which have demonstrated strong leadership, governance, and creativity in tackling complex issues of urbanisation, holistically and sustainably.

I extend my warmest congratulations to 2024's Prize winner Mexico City, whose innovative urban initiatives have uplifted the lives of millions of citizens. Congratulations also to the Special Mention recipients, Cape Town, Melbourne, Rio de Janeiro and Wellington, for their success in building resilient and inclusive communities. Their journeys and achievements are showcased in this special publication, which serves as a source of inspiration and valuable insights for all of us.

Amidst challenges caused by climate change, energy and resource security, rapid urbanisation and growing income inequality, the role of cities in uplifting lives and shaping our collective future has never been more important.

Mr Loh Chin Hua
Chief Executive Officer
Keppel Ltd.



The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize stands as the most prestigious award for cities around the world, recognising and celebrating outstanding achievements in liveable, vibrant, and sustainable urban communities. As the Prize Secretary, it is my honour to work with the Prize Secretariat team to produce this special publication, which showcases the exceptional contributions of our latest 2024 Laureate and Special Mentions, and the many great cities recognised before them.

I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Mexico City, our 2024 Prize Laureate, for their exemplary efforts in transforming their city into a more liveable, sustainable, and resilient urban hub. We also honour the outstanding achievements of our Special Mentions: Cape Town, Melbourne, Rio de Janeiro, and Wellington. These cities have demonstrated remarkable vision, inspiring leadership, and innovation in addressing the complex challenges of urbanisation.

Through the Prize, we have had the privilege of learning first-hand from these cities' urban initiatives. Their stories demonstrate the power of effective governance, collaboration, and community engagement. From Mexico City's citizen-centred urban transformation to Cape Town's innovative water management solutions, each city has offered valuable insights into the complexities of urban development.

The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize continues to engage the good cities recognised by the Prize under our new City Network for the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIZE SECRETARY

This initiative provides more opportunities for cities to share best practices, exchange insights, and foster collaborative learning and partnership. As we connect cities and spark new conversations through the Prize, we are excited to foster the continued sharing of knowledge across cities.

As we celebrate the achievements of our 2024 Prize Laureate and Special Mentions, we also look forward to welcoming more cities into the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize community. We are eager to discover and recognise the innovative urban solutions and initiatives of many cities that are making a positive impact on the lives of citizens around the world.

Join us in celebrating the achievements of our Laureate and Special Mentions and learn from their experiences. Together, let us shape a better urban future – one that is liveable, sustainable, and resilient for all – and create a brighter tomorrow for generations to come.

Ms Yap Lay Bee
Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize
Secretary

LEE KUAN YEW WORLD CITY PRIZE



PRIZE CITIES



2024 PRIZE LAUREATE MEXICO CITY



Stitching the
urban fabric

*Parque Lineal Gran
Canal transformed
a formerly degraded
space into a vibrant
public space
© Mexico City
government*

THE JURY'S CITATION

2024 PRIZE LAUREATE MEXICO CITY

Mexico City is recognised for its outstanding commitment in uplifting the lives of citizens through innovative and sustainable urban initiatives, especially for the less privileged. In navigating the challenges of a large metropolis, Mexico City's successive leadership stands out for its visionary approach, effectively tackling pressing issues on the ground with passion and dedication.

The successful implementation of transformative initiatives within a short period of time reflects not only the city's capability to kickstart new initiatives, but also the commitment to see through their completion quickly. This showcases the city's remarkable ability to convert challenges into an exemplary model for urban development.

Citizen-centric urban and digital agenda

Mexico City's success is rooted in its commitment to addressing the needs of all residents, regardless of their socio-economic status. The city's inclusive policies are manifested through a series of social programmes, ranging from free education for children and youth, to dignified ageing for the elderly. In particular, the PILARES programme (Puntos de Innovación, Libertad, Arte, Educación y Saberes' or Points of Innovation, Freedom, Art, Education and Knowledge) is a highly-effective and well-utilised solution for providing a safety net for marginalised citizens. With 294 community centres established citywide within a five-year period, PILARES offers social programmes to foster community bonding, organises courses for continuing education, supports the police's youth rehabilitation efforts, and helps vulnerable groups obtain useful life skills for employment.

ADIP (Agencia Digital de Innovación Pública) is a new department that leverages digital technology to drive innovation to improve public service and reach, public participation, and productivity. The results have been extraordinary. From 2019 to 2023, the agency simplified 2,100 government transactions to 500, halved the response time, and moved 70 per cent of transactions online. This is supplemented by the provision of free Wi-Fi infrastructure and coding schools to help low-income families and at-risk youths acquire useful skills.

Improving accessibility and public safety

Mexico City's willingness to experiment in the face of complex challenges has yielded innovative solutions. For example, Biblioteca Vasconcelos is a public library that allows everyone access to culture, complemented with high-quality spaces in the marginalised Buena Vista neighbourhood. Parque Lineal Gran Canal is a linear park that showcases the city's commitment to transforming degraded areas into safe and vibrant public spaces. Moreover, Mexico City's proactive stance towards learning from international communities and making difficult policy change – a key shift being the transformation of police operations that included partnership with the community. This resulted in a successful public security strategy that significantly reduced its homicide rates.

Mexico City is highly commendable in integrating diverse transportation modes to serve both its resident and transient populations. The city introduced a new integrated transport card to consolidate services from multiple transport providers and provide seamless access to options like the Metro, Metrobús Bus Rapid Transit, Trolleybus, and Cablebús cable car. The world's longest cable car line in Iztapalapa is particularly impactful, by reducing travel time significantly at a low cost for the low-income neighbourhood it serves. Furthermore, the city's extensive bike-share programmes and dedicated lanes underscore its commitment to affordable and sustainable transportation.

Involving residents in transformational efforts

Mexico City ensures meaningful, inclusive participation by creatively engaging its disadvantaged citizens in environmental strategies. To illustrate, it employs about a thousand women as 'pollinators' under its re-vegetation efforts, which have transformed 1,500 hectares of desolate land into parks and urban forests. Residents also receive training to become installers for the city's rainwater harvesting system, prioritised for the most marginalised areas. With 4,000 on-the-ground staff to reach residents with limited access to resources, Mexico City ensures that its initiatives positively impact its citizens' lives.

Mexico City's success is rooted in its commitment to addressing the needs of all residents, regardless of their socio-economic status. The city's inclusive policies are manifested through a series of social programmes, ranging from free education for children and youth, to dignified ageing for the elderly.

Mexico City's commitment to inclusivity and sustainable transformation is a deeply inspiring story for other cities, especially those with rampant growth and significant marginalised communities. Its strategies demonstrate that significant results can be achieved within a short period of time with focus and determination.

While Mexico City may continue to face many social, economic, environmental, and political challenges as a growing megacity, sustained efforts guided by a long-term vision and plan to continuously improve the quality of life of all its residents can help the city continue its positive trajectory to become a model of urban innovation and inclusivity for other cities.



PILARES as a social safety net

Left: Social and recreational activities at PILARES La Pulga © Damien Woon

Top-right: Children at play at PILARES La Pulga © Damien Woon

Bottom-right: Residents at a community garden at PILARES Valentín Gómez Farías © Sandra Perez Nieto/arq911





Integrated transport solutions

Top-left: A resident with her integrated transport card © Mexico City government

Bottom-left: The Cablebús Line 2 at Iztapalapa © Damien Woon

Right: A resident using a shared bike © Mexico City government

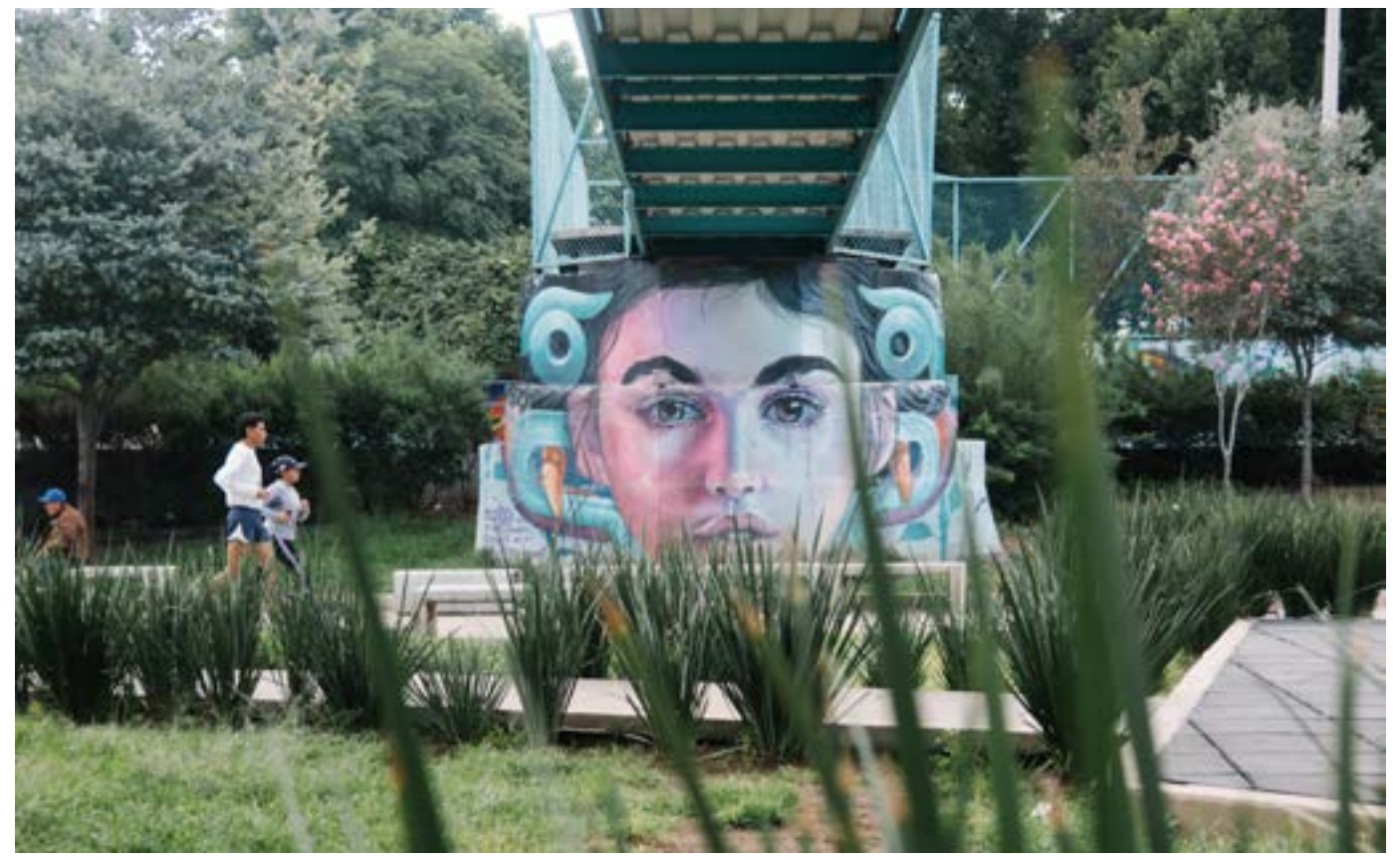


High-quality public amenities

Left: The hanging bookshelves of Biblioteca Vasconcelos © Damien Woon

Top-right: Museo Nacional de Antropología © Damien Woon

Bottom-right: Residents at Parque Lineal Gran Canal © Damien Woon



INTRODUCTION BY THE MAYOR



Martí Batres Guadarrama is a Mexican politician who serves as the interim Head of Government of Mexico City. He is the former President of MORENA and has held various legislative positions, including Deputy of the Mexican Congress and President of the Senate.

Mexico City, the beating heart of our country, is nestled within a metropolitan area of over 24 million people, serving for more than 700 years as the central hub for what is now Mexico since the Mexica made this valley their home.

With a rich history spanning over five centuries, our city has evolved from a small island within a vast network of lakes to a sprawling megalopolis, now home to nine million residents and hosting an additional six million individuals who cross our borders daily for work or study. However, today, like many large cities worldwide, we face immense pressure to cultivate a more equitable, sustainable, liveable, and prosperous urban environment.

Nearly six years ago, Mexico City embarked on a transformational journey to shape a city fit for the future. Our vision is grounded in the fundamental belief that every individual, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, deserves access to essential rights and opportunities. Therefore, we have initiated a comprehensive strategy aimed at nurturing a welfare state – one that places paramount importance on quality education, inclusive economic growth, efficient transportation systems, and environmental sustainability. By prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable, we aspire to forge a city where every citizen can

flourish, where safety and well-being are not privileges but fundamental rights. This vision propels our actions, urging us to continue pushing boundaries, confronting inequalities, and crafting a brighter future for all who call Mexico City home. Here, I aim to outline the main pillars of our strategy and highlight some of the results we have achieved thus far.

Education and social programmes

One of the fundamental elements of our project is ensuring access to education. We firmly believe that nothing is as transformative for a society as guaranteeing that every individual has the opportunity to attend school. With this objective in mind, we established a pioneering programme called 'Mi Beca para Empezar,' a universal scholarship benefiting over 1.2 million children enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 9th grade. This initiative aims to eliminate the heartbreaking dilemma faced by many families: choosing between sending their children to school or facing the harsh reality of school abandonment due to financial constraints. Independent analysis conducted by Mexico City's Council for the Evaluation of Social Programmes (EVALUA CDMX) revealed that following the implementation of this program, 66 percent of the poorest families, belonging to the first income quintile, now benefit from direct government

welfare programmes. In the absence of this program, only 25 percent would have had such support. Complemented by a broader spectrum of social programmes implemented over the past five years, this initiative has contributed to a significant reduction in poverty, with rates decreasing by nearly 21 percent. Notably, the success of 'Mi Beca para Empezar' has led to its integration into the core proposals of former Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum, who initiated the programme, as part of her presidential candidacy for Mexico.

If implemented at the national level, this programme would mark the second instance of an education investment initiative created during this administration being elevated to the federal level. The first such programme, La Escuela es Nuestra, is a participatory education infrastructure initiative that empowers parents of children enrolled in public schools to participate in decision-making and oversight regarding investments in education infrastructure.

The previous programmes are only a part of a larger strategy that has seen education-related investments increase fourteen-fold compared to previous administrations. These investments include the creation of two new public universities – the first in Mexico City in 20 years – providing an additional 50,000 free places. Additionally, there has been a 20 percent increase in the capacity of the city's managed high school education service. Crucially, 294 PILARES have been established as newly built community centres across the city, with a focus on underserved communities. These PILARES, designed by some of Mexico's most renowned architects who contributed their expertise for free, now host Latin America's largest free public coding school and the region's largest exercise promotion programme, facilitated by over 1,900 instructors.

Public transport and mobility

As a crucial step towards reducing inequality and improving welfare, Mexico City has made unprecedented investments in expanding public transportation coverage, particularly in underserved areas.

Key projects include rebuilding the city's busiest subway line, increasing its capacity to move over one million people daily. The trolley system infrastructure has been expanded fourfold, and a unique elevated trolley system has been created, cutting transportation times by 70 percent. Additionally, the city has increased its Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) buses by 40 percent, with three of the seven BRT lines now fully electrified. Moreover, 400 kilometres of new bike lanes have been built, alongside an expansion of the bike-share programme to nearly ten thousand bikes. The city has also invested in modernising light rail infrastructure, some of which has not been updated since 1893. Notably, the city has introduced the world's longest cable car lines through a new system called CableBus built in record-breaking time.

This CableBus system, comprising three lines, transports nearly 200 thousand people daily, significantly reducing commute times, especially in hard-to-reach areas in the northern, western, and southeastern parts of Mexico City. The longest line, located in the Iztapalapa Borough, stretches nearly 11 kilometres, making it the world's longest cable car line.

The overarching vision behind these investments is to provide quality, low-cost transport to areas away from the city centre. Importantly, this expansion has been managed without increasing fares, in contrast to previous investments.

Resilience and the environment

Another crucial pillar of our vision for the city is water management and sustainability, driven by the increasingly evident effects of climate change. As we grapple with prolonged droughts, water investment has nearly quadrupled in the last five years compared to the previous five. Among many significant investments aimed at reducing waste and increasing efficiency through technology and remote monitoring, we have also implemented the country's largest rainwater collection system. This system is installed in all public schools and nearly 70,000 households.

This initiative is part of a larger strategy to make the city more resilient and sustainable. Actions include creating the world's largest urban solar plant, situated atop the Central de Abastos, the world's largest public market. Additionally, there has been unprecedented creation and improvement of 18 large-scale parks, adding 1,500 hectares of green areas and the planting of more than 45 million trees.

While there is still a long way to go, some of these actions have already yielded positive results. Between 2018 and 2022, the number of clean air days increased by 20 percent, and we have already achieved 98 percent of our net carbon emission reduction targets. This is equivalent to taking nearly 300,000 internal combustion vehicles off the roads every day.

Public safety and security

Complementary to these policies, and particularly relevant for the Latin American context, this administration has overseen

an unprecedented improvement in public safety. The homicide rate has fallen to its lowest level since 1989, representing a net reduction of 55 percent between the start of this administration and the end of 2023. High-impact crime, which includes homicide and violent robbery, has decreased by nearly 56 percent in the same period. This reduction is not only evident in official statistics but is also reflected in independently measured victimisation surveys conducted by Mexico's national statistician Office, INEGI. At the beginning of the administration, 92.3 percent of adults felt unsafe in the city, while the latest survey shows this has been reduced to 55 percent – the largest reduction on record and the most positive result since the survey started 11 years ago.

These results have been achieved through a concrete four-pillar strategy:

- 1 Attention to root causes, which involves the implementation of targeted social programmes, particularly designed for young people.
- 2 More and better police, which includes increased training, stricter consequences for misconduct, and a crucial 64 percent salary increase for the nearly 70,000 police personnel in the city.
- 3 Intelligence, achieved by creating the most advanced criminal investigation unit in a local government in Mexico, coupled with technological strategies such as creating the continent's largest public CCTV monitoring infrastructure.
- 4 Coordination between all related agencies, facilitated by daily security meetings headed by the Head of Government of Mexico City at 7 am.

Innovation and digitalisation

Finally, an overarching theme of our vision has been the implementation of innovation. Since the start of the administration, we have achieved several milestones. We created the world's largest public free Wi-Fi network, expanding from 70 points to 34,000. Additionally, we digitised more than 75 percent of government procedures, up from less than 5 percent at the beginning of our term.

Moreover, we built the largest certified public cloud in Latin America, and we have significantly invested in our local software development factory to meet most of our tech needs in-house. These efforts reflect our commitment to leveraging technology for the betterment of our city and its residents, ensuring efficiency, accessibility, and innovation in public services.

Mexico City stands as the most developed city within Mexico, and perhaps the region, yet significant inequalities persist. For this reason, our administration has focused on creating a more equal and just society. We are part of a broader political movement in Mexico that believes in prioritising the needs of the poorest for the benefit of everyone. It is through this vision that we have centred the objectives of our project: to generate a welfare state that provides quality free education, jobs, transportation, access to services such as water and sanitation, and guarantees the safety of all citizens, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Through our application to the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, we aimed to convey these values and the actions we have

Through our application to the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, we aimed to convey our values and the actions we have undertaken to create a more sustainable and liveable environment in Mexico City. It serves as motivation to continue working in favour of all the millions of residents who call Mexico City their home.

undertaken to create a more sustainable and liveable environment in Mexico City. We were thrilled when we were notified of the awarding of this prestigious honor to Mexico City. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Prize committee and Singapore for choosing us. We believe it will prove to be an enormous opportunity to share the ideas we have successfully implemented here, so that other cities around the world facing similar challenges can find inspiration to solve the problems that affect us all. Moreover, it serves as further motivation to continue working in favour of all the millions of residents who call Mexico City their home.

Creative Solutions for Stronger Communities

Mexico City has made significant progress in improving the quality of life for its citizens and building stronger communities. The city has addressed various challenges through creative solutions and visionary leadership, resulting in notable improvements in transportation and digital infrastructure over the past five years.

Creating thriving communities

A key aspect of Mexico City's inclusive and sustainable efforts is in the way it adapts and creates meaningful and delightful places as safe havens for its most vulnerable communities to flourish.

PILARES centres as vital community hubs – Mexico City's PILARES programme supports vulnerable communities through 294 community centres in underserved areas. These hubs offer free services and activities, including life skills education, employment training, and recreational programmes for all ages. Selected centres are designed by local and international architects in collaboration with citizens, serving as new community landmarks. By combining architecture, education, and community development, PILARES uplifts neighbourhoods and fosters social cohesion. The programme transforms urban spaces, providing essential resources and opportunities for residents to come together, learn, and thrive.

Distinctive library brings people together – Biblioteca Vasconcelos, designed by architect Alberto Kalach, brings communities together in Mexico City. Completed in 2006, the library features striking 'hanging' bookshelves and offers

public access to its vast collection. This vibrant hub fosters a sense of community, connecting locals and tourists alike in a shared love of knowledge and nature.

Renewal of Parque Lineal Gran Canal benefits 100,000 families – Mexico City's urban renewal efforts have revitalised neighbourhoods, providing valuable public spaces and facilities. The 2021 Parque Lineal Gran Canal project transformed a walled-up abandoned canal that physically separated neighbourhoods between Mexico City and the State of Mexico into a 1.8-kilometre linear park with public spaces and sporting facilities. This revitalisation benefits 100,000 nearby families with daily access to a unique green space, connecting communities and promoting social cohesion and community life.

Involving residents in transformative efforts – Mexico City has a 4,000-staff taskforce that engages with residents directly, especially those with limited access to resources, to inform them about government programmes and support their access to benefits. Residents are also involved in environmental efforts, such as improving access to clean water. Citizens receive training on using and maintaining rainwater-harvesting systems, installed for free in water-scarce areas. These systems can support most of a

household's water needs for eight months in a year, providing a sustainable solution to water scarcity. This inclusive approach ensures that initiatives benefit all citizens, promoting a more equitable and sustainable city.

Addressing complex challenges with creative solutions

Another successful aspect of Mexico City's transformative efforts is its ability to develop swift, innovative solutions to complex problems focused on creating better experiences, services and equal opportunities for its residents.

Creating seamless travel with integrated identity – Mexico City implemented an ambitious plan to enhance travel across all modes by creating a unified name, logo, and integrated mobility map. Developed with citizen input, this single visual identity creates a more coherent public transport image, focusing on a seamless commuter experience. The city also introduced an integrated mobility card as a single payment option for diverse transport systems, further streamlining travel. This unified approach aims to make transportation more efficient, convenient, and accessible for all citizens.

Offering alternative mobility option in the air – Mexico City's innovative Cablebús line 2, completed in 2021, has become a lifeline for residents in Iztapalapa, one of the city's poorest neighborhoods. The world's longest cable car reduced travel time from over two hours to 25 minutes at a low cost of seven Mexican pesos (USD \$0.41) per ride. Without this line, commuters would take multiple minibus trips to reach metro stations, making this a game-changer for mobility in difficult terrains.

Mexico City Key City Narratives

By leveraging technology and innovative solutions, cities can create more equitable access to services, streamline government transactions, and enhance the overall quality of life for residents, ultimately building a more sustainable and inclusive future for all.

Using technology to improve people's lives – In leveraging technology to benefit residents and provide equitable access to digital services, Mexico City consolidated its digital efforts in one agency, the Digital Agency for Public Innovation. The agency created the centralised "Llave" platform, allowing residents to access most city services, with six million users to date. The city also deployed an extensive network of free Wi-Fi hotspots, growing from 90 to 31,000 between 2019 and 2021. This innovative approach streamlined government transactions, reducing 2,000 processes to 500 and halving response times, enhancing residents' digital experiences and access to essential services.

Integrating Public Transportation Solutions

Mexico City Case Study 01

About the case study



Above: The integrated transport card © Mexico City government

Mexico City's mobility transformation integrates transportation systems, introducing innovative solutions like the world's longest cable car line, modernised metro, and bike-share programmes, enhancing efficiency, accessibility, and sustainability for citizens and visitors.

Year implemented	Ongoing
Type	Transportation
Location	Citywide

Key issues

Mexico City is working to enhance its transportation systems, reducing travel times and providing secure transportation for all citizens. This involves integrating various transportation modes, including the Metro, Metrobús, Electric Transportation Services, Passenger Transport Network, Ecobici, and Bike Stations, into a seamless and efficient network. The city is prioritising increased access to opportunities for marginalised communities, particularly in densely populated areas.

Objectives

Through its mobility transformation, the city aims to improve the quality of life for its residents and visitors, promoting economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. Ultimately, Mexico City is striving to create a more liveable, sustainable, and resilient city, where citizens can move freely, safely, and efficiently. The city's electromobility project and modernisation of the metro system aim to reduce congestion, decrease travel times, and enhance the overall commuting experience, making Mexico City a more attractive and competitive destination.

Key strategies

Firstly, the city has launched the Integrated Mobility Card, an access pass that seamlessly connects various transportation modes. This card, designed with international security standards, ensures transparency and prevents fraudulent activities, promoting trust and peace of mind among users. Additionally, the city has implemented the Cablebús system, specifically targeting densely populated areas to reduce travel times and provide secure transportation.

Secondly, the city has introduced an elevated trolleybus system in the eastern zone to alleviate congestion and enhance transportation. This innovative solution serves a daily ridership of 76,000 users, significantly improving mobility for those living in densely populated areas. Furthermore, the city has initiated a comprehensive modernisation plan for the metro system, aiming to reduce waiting times and increase transportation capacity. This plan, started in 2021, minimises breakdowns and generates cost savings in train maintenance, ultimately enhancing the overall efficiency and quality of the metro system.

Lastly, the city has promoted eco-friendly transportation options through bike-sharing programmes like Ecobici and the Muevete en Bici open streets programme. Ecobici, the largest bike-sharing system in Latin America, offers residents and visitors an environmentally friendly mode of transportation, complemented by an extensive network of dedicated bike lanes. The Muevete en Bici programme temporarily closes streets to cars, allowing citizens to walk, cycle, and skate, fostering a sense of community and promoting sustainable transportation.

Impacts

The impacts of Mexico City's transportation initiatives have been profound, with significant improvements in cycling infrastructure and public transportation accessibility. The Muevete en Bici programme has attracted thousands of participants, promoting a culture of sustainability and community engagement, while the expansion of bike lanes has made multi-modal commuting more accessible, reducing reliance on private vehicles and decreasing environmental pollution.

The integration of bike-share into the transit card has also made affordable transportation options available to residents, with 6,000 bicycles available for use throughout the city, complemented by an extensive network of dedicated bike lanes totalling approximately 250 kilometres in length. This has further enhanced the city's commitment to providing sustainable and equitable transportation solutions for all residents.

The Cablebús Line 2 has revolutionised transportation in the Iztapalapa district, reducing commute times from over two hours to just 25 minutes, and providing an affordable transportation option at seven Mexican pesos (approximately 40 cents USD) for residents. Additionally, the Metrobús system, comprising seven lines, over 700 buses, and dedicated lanes, has improved public transportation options, while the modernisation of the metro system has increased efficiency and reduced waiting times, showcasing Mexico City's dedication to providing efficient and accessible transportation solutions for its citizens.

Bridging the Digital Divide for All

Mexico City Case Study 02

About the case study



Above: LLave CDMX © Mexico City government

Mexico City's digital transformation initiative prioritises vulnerable residents and leverages technology to promote digital inclusion, improve service delivery, and drive administrative efficiency.

Year implemented	In progress
Type	Smart city initiative
Location	Citywide

Key issues

Mexico City faced challenges in providing connectivity and access to information and communication technologies, particularly in underserved areas. This led to a digital divide, with many residents, especially in low-income neighbourhoods, lacking access to the internet and digital services. Additionally, government services were often inefficient, relying on physical paperwork, and lacked transparency.

Objectives

The objectives of the project are to provide free Wi-Fi to bridge the digital divide and empower citizens with access to information and communication technologies, establish a digital authentication system (LLave CDMX) to enable government validation of digital identity and simplify access to public services, implement a Digital Record to provide a centralised platform for citizens to access and view shared documents, reducing the need for physical paperwork, and automate administrative process management through the Procedures Digitiser tool, streamlining procedure handling and making government services more efficient and transparent.

Key strategies

Free Wi-Fi: The expansion of free Wi-Fi is a major project which has already provided internet access to over one million citizens through 31,081 access points. This achievement was made possible by utilising existing infrastructure and minimising environmental impact. This initiative enables citizens to access digital services and information, promoting digital inclusion and bridging the gap for underserved communities.

LLave CDMX: LLave CDMX is a digital identity system that simplifies and digitises procedures. This innovative solution has reduced the number of government procedures from 2,000 to 565, increasing efficiency and reducing bureaucratic delays. Additionally, the Digital Agency for Public Innovation has developed over 280 proprietary software solutions, achieving technological independence and providing citizens with digital tools and services. This demonstrates the city's commitment to leveraging technology for citizen-centric services.

Procedures Digitiser: The Procedures Digitiser involves homogenising and standardising business processes, creating a tool to reduce development time, and implementing a new platform development strategy. By enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, this project reduces errors and facilitates seamless interactions between stakeholders.

Impacts

Free Wi-Fi: Since 2019, Mexico City has increased its free public WiFi hotspots from 98 to a Guinness World Record of over 21,500. By the end of 2024, the number is projected to reach 34,001, extending coverage to the most vulnerable periphery areas, public schools, and transportation citywide. The project has successfully provided internet access to over 8.8 million residents, representing 95 percent of the population, with 110.2 million connections and 12.9 million unique users.

LLave CDMX: The LLave CDMX digital authenticator has resulted in a savings of 1.3 billion Mexican pesos by digitising procedures, reducing opportunities for corruption and ensuring resources reach government accounts. Digitising procedures also contributes to savings in paper, energy, and water consumption. From a social perspective, this initiative simplifies administrative processes, making them clearer, easier, more accessible, and accurate for the public.

Procedures Digitiser: The Procedures Digitiser has significantly reduced the time required for digitising procedures, achieving a six-fold reduction in time needed. This project also brings substantial cost savings, reducing man-hours by 80 percent and development time by 75 percent. The digitalisation tool empowers the functional team to participate in digitising procedures, expanding the capacity to digitise and improve service delivery. The project aims to create a unique platform for agile interaction between the government and citizens, simplifying administrative processes and enhancing convenience.

2024 SPECIAL MENTION CAPE TOWN



Crafting a
Picturesque
Landscape

*The City of Cape Town
showing its waterfront
context and the
Table Mountain in
the background
© africa4life/123RF*

2024 SPECIAL MENTION CAPE TOWN



The Jury's Citation

Cape Town is recognised for adeptly managing climate change repercussions and other disasters, addressing their implications for daily life and future sustainability.

Overcoming the challenges of a severe water crisis from 2017 to 2018, and the COVID-19 pandemic, Cape Town successfully adopted an agile governance approach to swiftly build and deliver rapid, effective systemic responses to extreme events.

Agile governance

In 2018, Cape Town faced a severe water crisis with dams reaching critically low levels, prompting strict water usage limits to 50 litres per day. The government reacted swiftly through quick planning and budgeting, leading to the implementation of the Water Augmentation Plan to diversify and boost water supply through desalination, groundwater extraction, and water re-use. Learning from the crisis, Cape Town has turned emergency measures into permanent solutions, exemplified by the Faure New Water Scheme plant. Designed with insights from an emergency demonstration plant during the 2018 crisis, these initiatives aim to ensure long-term water security for the city.

Data-driven decision making and implementation

Cape Town's robust data ecosystems have been pivotal in facilitating swift decision making during crises, particularly in addressing the needs of vulnerable residents. Adopting a data-driven approach, the city developed the Social Vulnerability Index and Economic Nodes Index to identify vulnerable citizens during water crises. These indices guided targeted responses, including strategic water network shutdowns and the siting of water collection distribution points. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Covid Vulnerability Viewer identified infection risks, guiding public health interventions, and supporting vulnerable areas economically and socially.

Additionally, in its Day Zero campaign, Cape Town utilised comprehensive data infrastructure, such as the open and real-time 'Water Dashboard', to effectively communicate information regarding water scarcity, increasing public awareness and promoting responsible water usage. The multi-faceted campaign has effectively mobilised citizens' response to implement water conservation strategies swiftly, contributed to a commendable reduction in water consumption by 57 per cent during the crisis, and managed demand to successfully avert 'Day Zero'.

*Left:
The City of Cape Town with
the Table Mountain in the
background © Eugene Lau*

Futureproofing the city

Cape Town's Integrated Development Plan 2022-2027 prioritises resilience through long-term strategies, developed collaboratively with stakeholders. This strategic plan guides future development, emphasising strategic investments in urban systems and public infrastructure for economic growth and enhanced resilience with clear targets that are reviewed annually and published for accountability. For example, the New Water Programme aims to increase water supply by 300 million litres daily, diversifying sources of water and improving infrastructure for the long term.

The city is also pursuing Independent Power Producers for energy diversification to increase the reliability of electricity supply. These strategies demonstrate Cape Town's commitment to sustainable development and resilience so as to build greater public confidence and support. Projects like the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, an iconic 123-hectare mixed-use precinct which supports local entrepreneurship and drives positive social and environmental change, further demonstrated the city's commitment towards fulfilling the needs of the community.

While Cape Town's efforts to become more resilient to climate change are commendable, ongoing challenges demand continuous improvements in public infrastructure and urban systems to prevent the occurrence of future severe crises similar to the previous water crisis. Other vital challenges also need to be addressed, such as tackling social housing shortages, creating jobs, managing the growth of informal settlements, and enhancing their living conditions. Sustained efforts to meet citizens' basic needs can improve lives, cultivate hope and community spirit, enabling Cape Town to reach its goal of being the City of Hope.



- Right:
- 1 A dry dock at Victoria & Alfred Waterfront © Toufiq Andry
 - 2 Busker programme © Toufiq Andry
 - 3 Watershed building © Toufiq Andry
 - 4 New pedestrian promenade at Victoria & Alfred Waterfront © Toufiq Andry
 - 5 Battery Park © Toufiq Andry
 - 6 Victoria & Alfred Waterfront © ggfoto/123RF

INTERVIEW WITH THE MAYOR



Geordin Hill-Lewis, a member of the Democratic Alliance, made history as the youngest mayor of Cape Town at 34. Born in 1987, he studied political science and economics at the University of Cape Town and worked as a researcher and analyst before being elected to the City Council in 2016.

What inspired you to apply for the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize?

Cape Town compares itself to leading cities across the world. Yet it operates across the dual dynamic of being a developing city and a city of middle-income status. Cape Town is committed to learning from others in addressing the unique dual challenge of enabling economic growth whilst confronting the realities of a rapidly densifying, developing city with significant growth in lower income quintiles.

The Prize is an example of the measures that cities can take to amend their growth trajectories for the better. It also serves as a reminder of the constant innovation and commitment required by local governments to serve the needs of residents today whilst working towards a better future.

Tell us more about some upcoming new projects for your city

MyCiTi Phase 2A – MyCiTi BRT services are expanding to the metro-southeast through Phase 2A, a five-year programme involving 19 construction projects. This initiative aims to provide safe, rapid, convenient, and affordable public transport to over 30 communities, improving access to jobs, learning, social, and entertainment opportunities.

The project includes dedicated bus lanes, stations, stops, and safe non-motorised transport facilities, as well as the first elevated traffic circle in South Africa. The project promotes urban densification, efficient land use, and is part of the City's energy efficiency journey, with plans to procure electric buses.

Minibus Taxi – Cape Town is piloting a project to formalise minibus taxis, using them on feeder routes alongside MyCiTi trunk routes, towards an integrated transport system with a single ticketing system.

Water management – The city aims to enhance basic services and improve the urban environment, committing to become a water sensitive city by 2040. To achieve this, the City is investing heavily in water infrastructure, increasing its Water and Sanitation budget by 223 percent over three years to R7.8 billion (approximately USD \$520 million) in 2025/26. This includes a R8.6 billion (approximately USD \$570 million) upgrade of wastewater treatment works over three years.

The Potsdam Wastewater Treatment Works upgrade, the Western Cape's second-largest infrastructure project, aims to more than double the plant's capacity to 100 million litres per day by 2027. The City is also exploring public-private partnerships to finance further upgrades.

Additionally, the New Water Programme aims to add 300 million litres of water per day from new sources by 2030, including water re-use, desalination, and groundwater extraction. A state-of-the-art new water scheme at the Faure Wastewater Treatment Plant will produce up to 100 million litres of clean drinking water per day, utilising cutting-edge technologies and best practices.

Partnering private sector – Cape Town is exploring public-private partnerships for infrastructure projects, including the Faure new water scheme and desalination plant, to overcome national budget constraints and deliver large-scale projects.

Data and Climate Change Strategies – The city council has approved the second Data Strategy, prioritising data management, access, and informed decision-making for the third consecutive planning cycle. Progress has been made in institutionalising data reform, with the city becoming increasingly data-driven. Data informs decisions on budget allocation, utility reform, infrastructure planning, and service expansion. The Data Strategy guides implementation, yielding gains across departments.

The Climate Change Strategy's scope is expanding, influencing initiatives like heat plans, eco-system management, informal settlement upgrades, and sustainable procurement.

Affordable housing – The city is releasing state-owned land for affordable housing development, including social housing projects in the inner city and well-located nodes. The land release for affordable housing pipeline offers city-owned land at sub-market value to incentivise developers to build affordable housing.

Recently released land will yield 1,500 social housing units out of 3,300 total units. The city has 6,500 social housing units in the planning pipeline across 50 land parcels.

Rental – Cape Town supports micro-developers building affordable rental units, especially in informal areas, and is addressing infrastructure backlogs and incentivising development through initiatives like the Development Charges Fund.

Informal settlements – The city aims to improve living conditions and service delivery in informal settlements by intervening in their physical layout and implementing the Informal Settlements Upgrading Programme (ISUP), a 25-year plan for upgrading existing and future settlements.

Load-shedding – The city developed its Energy Strategy 2023 in response to South Africa's ongoing electricity crisis. The strategy outlines a path to 2050, transitioning from a centralised, fossil fuel-based energy supply to a decentralised, carbon-neutral energy supply from diverse sources. The strategy includes systemic interventions and projects to reduce load-shedding, alleviate energy poverty, and optimise energy use. These include:

- Adding up to 1GW of independent power supply to end load-shedding
- The Pilot Wheeling Pilot Project, allowing customers to buy energy from third-party suppliers
- An online application portal for solar photovoltaic installations
- The Power Heroes programme, aiming to reduce electricity demand and protect customers from load-shedding

The city is also conducting scenario modeling and analysis to support the reform of the municipal electricity utility, focusing on financial stability and resilience. These efforts aim to mitigate the impact of load-shedding and create a more sustainable energy future for Cape Town.

Local autonomy – The Advocacy Programme seeks to devolve national powers to the local level, enhancing urban functionality. This includes devolving policing functions to tackle criminality, rail functions for affordable transport, and energy regulation to diversify energy sources and mitigate load shedding.

Water, Air, and Energy Lab – The lab, a collaboration between J-PAL Africa, the City of Cape Town, and Community Jameel, aims to develop evidence-based solutions for clean air, water, and energy access. It will identify challenges, expand data access, co-design solutions, generate evidence through pilots and evaluations, and provide technical assistance for scaling effective policies. The lab will address the energy crisis, prevent future water crises, and utilise the city's data systems to evaluate and scale innovations that positively impact residents.

What are the ongoing key challenges faced by your city?

Cape Town's population has grown 3 percent annually for the past decade, projected to reach 5.8 million by 2040. However, economic growth has lagged at 1 percent per annum, challenging the city to provide services and opportunities to a growing population living in poverty. Therefore, fostering meaningful economic growth is the city's primary focus.

Increased economic activity enables the city to expand its redistributive policies. Cape Town faces similar challenges to growing African cities, including rapid urbanisation, inequality, and a growing urban poor population. National economic stagnation and an energy crisis have fueled informality, with many residents seeking shelter in informal settlements lacking basic amenities. This has led to increased illegal connections to the city's infrastructure network, straining resources.

Limited employment opportunities, particularly for youth, have contributed to a rise in crime, posing significant challenges for the city's financial stability, service delivery, social cohesion, and quality of life. To mitigate these issues, the city is diversifying its energy supply, investing in independent power producers, renewables, and small-scale embedded generation to ensure basic services and protect the economy from failing national government services.

How has your city continued to invest in your people and urban communities?

Cape Town's strategic responses to urban challenges set it apart in South Africa and Africa. The city aims to be a City of Hope, where residents have opportunities, safe neighbourhoods, and access to basic services like water, sanitation, housing, and transportation. The city wants to maximise employment opportunities and resident contributions to the urban fabric.

The 2023/24 "Building Hope" budget prioritised infrastructure investment, allocating a record R10.9 billion to improve basic services for the poor and address population growth pressures.

The budget also expanded the social safety net for vulnerable residents, increasing social support to R4.3 billion (approximately USD \$286 million). This includes rates rebates and free basic services like water, sanitation, and electricity for low-income households.

The city plans to increase investment over the next three years, with capital expenditure reaching R14 billion (approximately USD \$930 million) this year and R18 billion (approximately USD \$1.2 billion) next year. Over the next ten years, R120 billion (approximately USD \$8 billion) will be spent on infrastructure projects, primarily upgrading and expanding water and sanitation infrastructure. The budget prioritises poorer communities, aiming to make Cape Town a more equitable and sustainable city.

How can your city inspire others?

Cape Town is a model for other South African cities, offering technical advice and inspiration on environmental issues and resilient infrastructure growth. The city's experience with water shortages, drought, and energy crises has equipped it to support others in developing proactive response plans. Its handling of the energy crisis is a first in South Africa, showcasing the potential of private sector and public participation.

Cape Town's data-driven approach to decision-making and predicting future scenarios is unique in South Africa and the African continent. This enables programmatic responses to climatic shocks, stresses, and urbanisation challenges, making for a more informed and responsive government.

Cape Town is committed to learning from others in addressing the unique dual challenge of enabling economic growth whilst confronting the realities of a rapidly densifying, developing city with significant growth in lower income quintiles.

The city's ten-year infrastructure reports, outlining plans for expansion and accommodating a growing city, are unparalleled in Africa. The infrastructure capital pipeline is the largest in South Africa, managed through a sophisticated corporate capital project management department.

Cape Town is pushing boundaries to empower local communities, with devolutionary ambitions in policing and rail authority, demonstrating its commitment to building a sustainable, safe, and functional urban environment for all residents.

A Journey Towards Stronger Resilience

Cape Town has demonstrated effective governance and community collaboration in addressing challenges like its water crisis and COVID-19 pandemic. Its approach offers a valuable example for building resilience, showing how cities can navigate and recover from extreme events.

Strengthening resilience through crises

Cape Town's water crisis from 2017 to 2018 is a lesson for all cities, serving as a reminder that such a crisis could happen to any city. Its proactive and swift efforts in addressing this water crisis and other challenges provide insights on finding viable solutions, showing the importance of charting longer-term plans, developing robust data systems, and building stronger communities, in raising the city's resilience to better manage and adapt to emerging challenges.

Proactive campaign galvanises the community – Beyond water tariffs, strict water usage and other measures implemented, it was the dedicated communications campaign carried out in 2017 and 2018 that impressed upon residents, businesses, and everyone else on the critical urgency to work together to avert the water crisis. A drastic position was taken, with city officials declaring 12 April 2018 as "Day Zero".

As part of the campaign, a water dashboard published real-time updates on dam levels, water restrictions, consumption, water augmentation plans and day zero projects. A city-wide map was shared showing the water consumption levels of every household effectively communicating water scarcity

complexities. In addition, clear guidance and useful information on water-saving tips were shared by government and civic groups. The result was a significant reduction in water consumption by June 2018 and increase in water supply that helped to avert the disaster. More importantly, the campaign left a legacy of a more resilient community with a deeper understanding of water use and management.

Leveraging data to manage crises – Cape Town's robust data ecosystems also played a pivotal role in supporting swift decision-making during its various crises, particularly in addressing the needs of vulnerable residents. During its water crisis, the city developed its own social vulnerability and economic nodes indexes to help identify vulnerable citizens. These indices were used to guide the phased shutdown of water networks and establish distribution points for daily water rations, providing greater sense of certainty and accountability to residents and businesses in managing water access.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Cape Town developed a vulnerability viewer to identify high-risk areas. This data guided public health interventions like testing and vaccination programmes. The data also identified areas most affected by

the pandemic's economic and social impacts, such as job losses and food insecurity. This information enabled targeted social relief efforts, ensuring support reached vulnerable businesses and communities, and addressing specific needs effectively.

Integrated longer-term plans build resilience – Cape Town has taken proactive steps to secure its future water supply. The Water Augmentation Plan and Water Programme aim to increase water sources through desalination, groundwater extraction, and water re-use. The goal is to add 300 million litres per day from new sources by 2030. Additionally, the city developed an Integrated Development Plan (2022-2027) in collaboration with stakeholders. This plan outlines strategic investments in urban systems and public infrastructure to drive economic growth and enhance resilience. By diversifying its water sources and investing in infrastructure, Cape Town is building a more sustainable future.

Creating unique destinations

Cape Town is notable for its well-curated precincts that support local businesses and drive positive change. A prime example is the 123-hectare Victoria & Alfred (V&A) mixed-use waterfront destination, located in the oldest working harbour in South Africa. Over two decades, the waterfront underwent significant transformation, emerging as one of South Africa's top tourist destinations. Today, it offers a diverse range of shopping, dining, entertainment, and seafront attractions. This precinct has made a substantial economic impact, contributing over USD \$2 billion to Cape Town's GDP and creating over 20,000 jobs. In 2019, it attracted 24 million visitors, solidifying its position as a hub of activity.

Cape Town Key City Narratives

Cape Town's story is a testament to the power of agile governance, community engagement, and data-driven decision making in building resilience and addressing extreme challenges.

Active curation keeps V&A waterfront relevant – The V&A Waterfront's success is due to its effective management. The public spaces are regularly used for various activities and events, making the area lively and attractive to visitors and locals. In 2019, a busker programme was launched to support street performers and help them improve their skills. The Watershed building, a former industrial shed, was also repurposed as a hub for local crafts and design, providing a platform for local businesses to showcase their products. This approach has helped create a vibrant and inclusive environment.

About the case study



Above: Water management © City of Cape Town

Cape Town’s disaster plan for the 2018 water crisis included data-driven strategies to manage water supply, identify vulnerable areas, and establish water distribution points, ensuring a targeted and effective response to the drought.

Year implemented	2018
Type	Disaster risk management
Location	Citywide

Key issues

South Africa faces a severe water crisis, relying heavily on rainwater for urban, industrial, and irrigation needs. With an average annual rainfall of only 495mm, rainwater levels are unpredictable, unevenly distributed, and decreasing due to global warming. Cape Town experienced its most severe drought on record from 2015 to 2018, with dam levels dropping substantially – Theewaterskloof Dam, the largest dam, held only 13 percent of its capacity in January 2018.

If the water supply had been turned off, the consequences would have been catastrophic, including a significant risk of water and sanitation-related diseases, infrastructure collapse, and job losses – approximately 300,000 jobs in agriculture and tens of thousands more in the service sector. Cape Town implemented water conservation measures, but the drought highlighted the need for more effective disaster planning and management. The severity of the drought threatened public health, economy, and food security, necessitating urgent action to address the water crisis.

Objectives

The city’s disaster plan aimed to monitor dam levels and water usage, reduce demand, implement water-saving measures, and develop new supplies. The plan informed the Water Strategy and Programme, seeking to increase reliability, prevent future restrictions, and protect public health, economy, and food security, while addressing the impacts of extreme low rainfall and drought.

Key strategies

Cape Town’s Disaster Risk Management department developed a corporate disaster planning exercise to address its lack of hazard plans for slow-onset events like droughts. This aligned with the city’s strategic objectives to be a safe and well-run city, leading to the Water Augmentation Plan and Critical Water Shortages Disaster Plan (‘Disaster Plan’). These plans enabled the city to manage its operational responses to water shortages effectively.

The city implemented its Water Augmentation Plan to diversify water supply from surface water to groundwater and other sources. The Disaster Plan took a cautious approach, assuming little additional supply measures until the next rainy season and prepared for a worst-case scenario. The city set out principles to inform its response, including minimising impact on human life, continuing critical services, prioritising vulnerable communities, and protecting infrastructure.

The city activated the Disaster Plan in three phases: Preservation Restrictions (implementing water restrictions, communication campaigns, and punitive tariffs), Disaster Restrictions (enforcing a daily water allowance of 25 litres per person), and Full-scale Disaster Implementation (executing emergency water distribution and evacuation). Through active information-sharing and transparency, the city kept its inhabitants updated through an open-source format, published water-saving tips, and updated a water dashboard weekly.

Impacts

Cape Town’s Disaster Plan relied heavily on integrated, up-to-date, scale-appropriate data, critical in designing the response to the drought. The city developed its own Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) and Economic Nodes Index (ENI) to inform the phased shut-down of the water reticulation network and establish Points of Distribution (PODs) for daily water rations. This data-driven approach enhanced predictability and accountability, allowing for a consistent approach and messaging when ‘Day Zero’ (date when water supply would be cut off to ensure rationing during drought) seemed imminent.

The city collaborated with partners to apply behavioural insights to its communication of data. Consumption heat maps with resolution down to erf numbers were published, allowing residents to track their performance relative to consumption targets and their neighbours. Water distribution locations were determined based on social, technical, and economic considerations, including population density, land ownership, and safety.

The SVI and ENI were developed to determine the sequence for cutting off water supply. The SVI used 2011 national census data, updated with proxy data and City officials’ knowledge of communities. The ENI comprised two components: economic importance and vulnerability to water supply reductions. The city’s data-driven approach ensured a more effective and targeted response to the drought, and its collaboration with partners enhanced the effectiveness of its communication strategy.

Transforming a Neglected Space into a Green Oasis

About the case study



Above: Green Point Park © City of Cape Town

The Green Point Park project transformed a neglected public space into a thriving urban oasis, showcasing biodiversity, sustainable water management, and educational resources, while promoting social cohesion and economic growth.

Year implemented	2011
Type	Urban rejuvenation
Location	Green Point

Key issues

Before its transformation, several key issues hindered Green Point Common's potential as a public space. The site's disjointed layout and underutilisation resulted from a lack of coherence and function. Sports clubs dominated the Common, limiting opportunities for other uses by residents. Neglect and disrepair characterised many clubhouses and facilities.

Environmental concerns posed significant challenges, as poor soil conditions and severe prevailing winds impeded development. Moreover, finding a sustainable water supply source for irrigation was crucial, as relying on potable water was not financially, morally, or environmentally viable. Finally, the community raised concerns about the redevelopment's impact on traffic, noise, visual impact, financial viability, and environmental sustainability.

Objectives

The development was guided by principles like environmental quality, safety, and integration. The design aimed to create an interactive ecological space showcasing local biodiversity and indigenous plant species. The park would feature flexible public areas for sports, recreation, and education, with free entry. It would also integrate with surrounding buildings, including the 2010 Cape Town Soccer Stadium. A key goal was sustainable water use, with plans to harness spring water from Table Mountain for irrigation, storing it in ponds and wetlands across the park.

Key strategies

Green Point Park was developed with several key strategies in mind. The city's environmental principles were integrated into the public urban setting to create a sustainable space. Water-wise horticulture was used throughout the park to minimise water consumption and showcase drought-resistant plants. The city's diverse array of indigenous flora and fauna was displayed to promote biodiversity and educate visitors. The park's design took a strategic approach to demonstrate how humans, nature, and flora can coexist constructively in an urban environment.

The city's commitment to sustainability was evident in the park's maintenance activities, which embedded environmental best practices and regular soil and water testing to ensure long-term sustainability. Specialist consultants and invertebrate studies were employed to monitor the development of fauna in the park's water bodies. Additionally, the city prioritised visitor safety, implementing extensive security measures including 24-hour visible security, strict opening and closing hours, 24-hour CCTV surveillance, and access control. These measures aimed to create a welcoming and secure environment for all visitors to enjoy.

Impacts

Green Point Park has had a significant positive impact on the urban environment and local community. The park now showcases biodiversity, with endemic trees and plants attracting fauna such as birds and even apex predators like the African clawless otter. The park's green space also provides a habitat for local wildlife, offsets carbon emissions, combats air and noise pollution, and contributes to lessening urban crime. Additionally, the park's water features, ponds, and wetlands use water sourced from Cape Town's original springs, saving approximately 580 million litres of water annually.

The park has also become an educational hub, with resources built around the water bodies to teach young city residents about nature and water dynamics. The biodiversity show garden and experiential educational garden provide interactive learning experiences. The park has also hosted various events, including the Formula-E Racing World Championship, which generated significant economic spinoffs and promoted sustainability.

The park's impacts extend beyond the environment, with property values in the surrounding area increasing dramatically since its development. The park is well-served by public transport and has become a hub for social cohesion, attracting over one million visitors annually from diverse backgrounds. The city's continued investment in the park has contributed to economic growth and job creation, demonstrating that sustainability and economic activity can coexist and even thrive together.

2024 SPECIAL MENTION MELBOURNE



Reinforcing
a Highly
Liveable City

*Yarra riverbank
with the Melbourne
CBD skyline
© keitma/123RF*

2024 SPECIAL MENTION MELBOURNE



The Jury's Citation

Melbourne is recognised for being a city emblematic of resilience and innovation and redefining the urban landscape through a series of transformative initiatives over many decades, reaffirming its status as one of the most liveable cities in the world.

Confronting challenges brought forth by the pandemic, Melbourne has shown steadfast adaptability and foresight.

Post-pandemic recovery and liveability

In the wake of COVID-19, Melbourne adopted several innovative approaches to recovery. The Flash Forward Laneways initiative that converted neglected alleys into vibrant streets not only revitalised the economy, but also injected vibrancy and excitement into the city, bolstered local businesses and fostered a renewed sense of community and local identity. Despite the rising housing cost, Melbourne's commitment to its essential workers is evident in its innovative affordable housing strategies. Developed through public-private partnerships, these strategies allowed key workers, such as nurses, to reside within the proximity of the city, mitigating commuting challenges and strengthening community fabric.

Building upon previous efforts to transform the Yarra River from an industrial waterway to a recreational corridor, a new initiative under the Greenline Project boldly celebrates Aboriginal culture and Melbourne's unique ecology, further rejuvenating the waterway. These initiatives demonstrate Melbourne as a city where society not only perseveres but also thrives with a sense of belonging through tumultuous periods.

Enhanced infrastructure and traffic management

Melbourne made remarkable progress towards sustainable transportation by achieving one-third modal share between walking, public transport, and private transport through its compact and mixed-use development strategy in the city that prioritises public transportation and active mobility infrastructure. The city's dedication to constantly improve urban mobility and reduce traffic congestion is evident in ongoing ambitious projects like the Metro Tunnel and the Sub-Urban Rail Loop. These transformative projects are envisaged to further address traffic congestion and reduce burden on existing tram lines. The Metro Tunnel is set to cut travel times by up to 50 percent on certain routes, while the Sub-Urban Rail Loop is anticipated to generate 50,000 jobs and inject AUD 25 billion (approximately USD 17.5 billion) into the Victorian economy. The Metro Tunnel is nearing completion, while the construction of the first phase (26 kilometres) of the Sub-Urban Rail Loop (90 kilometres) is currently underway.

Emphasis on design excellence and collaboration across sectors

Melbourne’s well-designed public realm and urban spaces, and its Design Excellence programme, are a testament to its continued emphasis on urban design quality. This recent initiative, coupled with collaborative efforts with industry leaders, has elevated Melbourne’s ambition towards building architectural design excellence. By encouraging architects and developers to subject their proposals to rigorous design review, Melbourne has established a culture of collaborative design innovation.

Melbourne, though compact, serves as the heart of Greater Melbourne, supporting over five million people in the metropolitan area. Some of its urban transformation successes can be attributed to close collaboration between State and Municipal governments, as evident in initiatives like Melbourne M9 that fosters collaborative strategies. State involvement in major upcoming projects, such as the Metro Tunnel, Sub-Urban Rail Loop, and the Southbank Art Precinct, reflects a unified urban development approach. When completed, these projects will further reinforce Melbourne’s continued commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and good governance.

Melbourne’s appeal attracts many to relocate for residential, professional, and educational purposes. While the city faces a shortage of affordable housing, efforts to introduce social facilities in new residential areas and innovation in high-density housing designs aim to sustain Melbourne’s status as one of the most liveable cities in the world.



- Right:
- 1 Flash Forward Laneway Programme © City of Melbourne
 - 2 Arts Precinct renewal © Hassell Architects/Diorama
 - 3 Queen Victoria Market renewal © Lendlease/NH Architecture/City of Melbourne
 - 4 Design Excellence Programme © CHT Architects
 - 5 Southbank Boulevard © City of Melbourne
 - 6 Metro Tunnel Project © Victorian Government

INTERVIEW WITH THE LORD MAYOR



Sally Capp, Lord Mayor of Melbourne since 2018, prioritises a prosperous economy, supporting rough sleepers, and environmental sustainability. She chairs the Council of Capital Cities Lord Mayors and is a member of the Federal Government's Urban Policy Forum and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2023.

What inspired you to apply for the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize?

In applying for the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, we reflected on the lessons we can share with other cities. Melbourne's success in embracing partnerships and collaborations has enabled us to overcome challenges, drive innovation, and enhance liveability. We believe this approach has global value and can be replicated by other cities.

The Prize represents excellence in urban development, and applying for it has allowed us to assess our progress and inspire innovation in peer cities. Despite being geographically isolated, Melbourne is a leading, world-class city, acclaimed for its liveability, sustainability, and cultural offerings. We have been ranked the world's most liveable city, and currently hold the third position globally and first in Australia.

Melbourne is also a top city for student experience, ranking number one in Australia and fourth globally in 2024. After facing significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have bounced back by leveraging our collaborations with the private sector, government, and local and international community. Many of our programs have been replicated throughout Australia, demonstrating our ability to lead and achieve with purpose.

Tell us more about some upcoming new projects for your city.

The City of Melbourne is undertaking several initiatives to enhance liveability and sustainability. The Queen Victoria Market renewal project, in partnership with Lendlease, will transform the surrounding precinct with modern facilities, public open space, and new commercial and residential offerings. This AUD \$1.1 billion (approximately USD \$770 million) urban renewal project will complement the traditional market experience and bring new residents and workers to the city's north.

The Make Room project, in partnership with the Victorian Government and Unison Housing, will provide supported accommodation for rough sleepers, helping them transition to secure housing. The facility will accommodate up to 50 residents at a time in individual studio apartments, alongside living areas and wraparound support services.

The Greenline Project will create four kilometers of interconnected green space along the city's main waterway, enhancing liveability, sustainability, and economic development. This project has received federal funding and has won the top award at the 2024 Australian Urban Design Awards. It is projected to attract over one million additional visitors to the city every year, benefiting local businesses.

The Power Melbourne project, in partnership with Origin Energy, will create a network of neighbourhood batteries to enable greater storage and uptake of renewable energy, helping Melbourne become a city powered by 100 percent renewable energy by 2030 and reach zero-net emissions by 2040. This project will particularly benefit people who live or work in apartment buildings and cannot install their own solar panels.

What are the ongoing key challenges faced by your city?

We are partnering with other levels of government, businesses, philanthropic organisations, developers, community, and not-for-profit leaders to create a more liveable, more accessible, and affordable city. Melbourne has an estimated shortfall of 6,000 safe and affordable homes – if we do nothing, it will reach 23,000 homes by 2036. Our Homes Melbourne team is identifying and creating opportunities for affordable housing to support key workers, lower-income households, and those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to mitigate this gap.

Cities lead the way in climate action: what we do to reduce emissions and combat climate change has a ripple effect into our regions. By 2030, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation predicts Melbourne will be significantly affected by warmer temperatures and heatwaves, lower rainfall, intense storm events, and flash flooding. By 2070, we are predicted to be experiencing more than double the number of heatwaves, an 11 percent reduction in rainfall, and a significant increase in storm events. That is why we are committed to being a leader in responding to climate change by reducing our carbon footprint, building resilience to extreme weather, and increasing urban biodiversity.

How has your city continued to invest in your people and urban communities?

Melbourne partners with the Victorian Government and private sector on major infrastructure projects, including the Metro Tunnel and Stations, enhancing travel times and capacity for an extra 500,000 people weekly. We invest USD \$21.5 million annually in parks, gardens, and open spaces, expanding our urban forest and cooling the city. Our Melbourne Clean Team operates 24/7, investing USD \$24 million to keep streets clean and graffiti-free.

We collaborate with the private sector, universities, and government to nurture our entrepreneurial culture, which has seen a 56 percent increase in early-stage Ecosystem Value, from USD \$15.5 billion to USD \$24 billion. We have invested USD \$4 million in critical safety infrastructure and resources, including expanded CCTV camera networks and safety lighting.

Melbourne hosts a vibrant events calendar, enticing over 4.6 million people annually, injecting USD \$98.9 million into the economy. Most events are accessible to all, with a free element. We were the first organisation certified carbon neutral through the federal Climate Active Programme, starting with Melbourne Fashion Week in 2018.

These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to creating a liveable, sustainable, and accessible city, investing in infrastructure, green spaces, cleanliness, innovation, safety, and events, building a vibrant city for all.

How can your city inspire others?

Melbourne is uniquely positioned to inspire others by demonstrating responsible and sustainable urban development. We have a history of delivering liveable and sustainable initiatives, and we are committed to continuing this work.

In 2022, we conducted a Voluntary Local Review of our progress against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), becoming the first city in Australia to do so. We have integrated the SDGs into our planning process, aligning each goal with relevant major initiatives. This common language allows us to speak with other cities, local partner agencies, and multiple levels of government.

We are also proud of our Melbourne Renewable Energy Project (MREP), which we created in 2017. This project brings together local governments, cultural institutions, universities, and corporations to collectively purchase renewable energy from a newly built facility. Following its success, a second purchasing project was launched in 2020. These projects now supply energy to power town halls, bank branches, universities, and streetlights across Melbourne, making us an organisation powered by 100 percent renewable energy and reducing the city's total emissions by 5 percent. We are helping other cities across Australia facilitate their own iterations of the project and have assisted 39 other Councils to establish their own shared renewable energy schemes.

The City of Melbourne is an active member of global climate organisations and partnerships, including C40 and ICLEI. We were represented at COP28's first-of-its-kind Local Climate Action Summit, which recognised the critical role Mayors and local leaders play in reducing emissions and addressing climate risk. We have also joined Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht-Rockefeller Foundation Resilience Center (Arsht-Rock) "City Champions for Heat Action" initiative, appointing Co-Chief Heat Officers (CHOs) to build heat resiliency for Melburnians.

As a geographically small central city with a large transient population, we have a strong economic impact through leveraging partnerships. We have a wide and varied group of stakeholders and organisations involved in the city, including various arms of the Victorian and Australian governments, universities, major businesses, business associations, and community groups. The Victorian government has invested significant resources in projects and initiatives that support the city's transformation.

Our Postcode 3000 policy has also been instrumental in transforming Melbourne into one of the world's most liveable cities. The policy provided incentives for people living in the central city and for property developers to create housing, resulting in a vibrant and urbane downtown area. Today, Melbourne's residential population has swelled from 685 city dwellings in 1982 to over 40,000 dwellings.

In terms of economic development, Melbourne's wider metropolitan area is now Australia's biggest and fastest-growing capital city, forecast to be home to 600,000 jobs and 270,000 residents in the next decade. We are building towards strong economic targets of USD \$78.5 billion of economic activity this financial year and firmly on our way to achieving our target of USD \$98 billion Gross Local Product (GLP) by 2031. We continue this economic trajectory by leveraging partnerships domestically and internationally. Invest Melbourne, our domestic and international business attraction authority, secured 67 businesses, including two headquarters, creating 1,651 jobs and USD \$281 million in capital expenditure in 2022-23. Our Business Concierge service supported 51 small businesses to start-up, halving the time required to get up and running.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we supported residents, visitors, and traders through various avenues, including the Melbourne City Revitalisation Fund and the Melbourne City Recovery Fund (MCRF). The MCRF Funds were a first-of-its-kind partnership programme between the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Government, established to jointly deliver festivals, events, public infrastructure works, and upgrades to support reactivation of the City.

Our Melbourne Money scheme, offered in partnership with the Victorian Government, spurred almost USD \$65 million of spending at our restaurants, bars, and cafes across three successful dining and rebate schemes. This success inspired

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the Victorian and New South Wales governments to create their own popular dining and entertainment voucher programmes.

Finally, our FOGO High-rise trial has introduced a Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection service in high-rise apartment buildings, a crucial step forward in our sustainability goals. This service is now available to residents of participating apartment buildings six storeys and above, giving more people the opportunity to act sustainably, reduce waste costs, and improve the environment.

Designing A Highly Liveable City

Melbourne is consistently ranked as one of the most liveable cities globally. It has sustained and improved its liveability through robust governance, strategic moves like enhancing public spaces, and extending its rail network. This has injected new vitality and built resilience, helping the city bounce back from COVID-19.

Activating and creating meaningful public spaces

Melbourne enhances its liveability by revitalising public spaces and creating new ones, ensuring a fresh and vibrant atmosphere. This approach provides opportunities for the community to celebrate its diverse cultures and come together. By activating public spaces, Melbourne fosters a sense of community, promotes social connections, and supports local events and initiatives, making the city a more enjoyable and inclusive place to live and visit.

Revitalising laneways bring people back to the city –

Melbourne's Flash Forward programme, launched in 2021, is a prime example of the city's post-COVID-19 recovery efforts. This innovative initiative aimed to revitalize Melbourne's iconic laneways, bringing more people back into the city. The largest revitalisation effort to date, Flash Forward engaged over 80 creatives to design and install over 40 works across 40 historic laneways. This programme not only celebrates Melbourne's vibrant creative culture but also breathes new life into its lesser-known laneways.

Regular activities and events are organized in these laneways to keep the community engaged and foster a sense of connection. Moreover, Flash Forward has provided a

significant boost to the creative industry, creating over 170 jobs for designers, music producers, lighting specialists, maintenance workers, and more. This initiative has not only enhanced Melbourne's cultural landscape but also contributed to its economic growth.

MPavilion introduces unique public spaces – In creating more memorable public spaces, the MPavilion stands out for unique temporary structures installed in Melbourne's Queen Victoria Gardens each year since 2014. Designed by Australian and international architects and designers from around the world, these beautiful pavilions are part of an annual five-month design festival that inspires locals and visitors to reflect on how architecture, art and design are shaping lives. Beyond offering innovative architectural designs, the engaging programmes around the pavilions contribute to the city as a dynamic hub for cultural interactions. Each designed pavilion is gifted to the city, where it is relocated to a permanent location to continue to spark conversations and appreciation of good architecture.

Future arts precinct to have extensive public realm –

Looking to the future, as part of the transformation of Melbourne's arts precinct, the focus on the public realm continues with the inclusion of 18,000 square metres of

expansive urban garden, restaurants and bars, creative spaces, and public art in the heart of the city, providing a seamless connection between Southbank, St Kilda Road and Southbank Boulevard. This AUD \$1.7 billion (approximately USD \$1.19 billion) project as announced in 2018 is the largest single cultural infrastructure project in Australia that will strengthen Melbourne's position as the arts and cultural hub.

Creating unique destinations

Melbourne is expanding its public transport systems to support its growing population, improving connectivity and accessibility. The city continues to build its strong architectural design culture with a Design Excellence Programme, promoting high-quality architecture and urban design. This initiative ensures new developments meet high standards, enhancing the city's functionality and appearance.

More seamless travel with extensive rail enhancements

– Relieving pressure on its tram lines and reducing traffic congestion, Melbourne's Metro Tunnel with five new train stations in its Central Business District (CBD) and its 90-kilometre Suburban Rail Loop connecting suburbs will not only ensure more seamless travel but could serve as a catalyst for urban renewal in developing areas. The Metro Tunnel is the biggest enhancement of its rail network since the city loop was introduced in the 1980s in the CBD. It can reduce travel times by up to 50 percent on some routes. These enhancements will help support Melbourne's growing population and improve people's access to more jobs, education, and health services.

Melbourne Key City Narratives

Melbourne's efforts in activating critical public spaces and creating new ones keeps refreshing the city's spaces, providing more opportunities to celebrate diverse cultures and for people to come together.

Elevating architectural designs with design programme –

To further strengthen its strong architectural design culture, Melbourne has developed an extensive Design Excellence Programme (2019-2030) to continuously encourage greater innovation and quality architecture. The programme includes design competitions, awards, and the setup of a design review panel and advisory committee to provide design advice on projects, public space revitalisation, code reviews. These efforts ensure that Melbourne continues to create quality environments with well-designed buildings and spaces for locals and visitors to enjoy.

Activating Laneways to Support Creatives

Melbourne Case Study 01

About the case study



Above: Laneway with art © City of Melbourne

The Flash Forward Creative Laneways Programme was a creative response to COVID-19, transforming Melbourne's laneways into vibrant public spaces, supporting local artists and revitalising the city's cultural scene.

Year implemented	2022
Type	Local economy initiative
Location	Central Business District

Key issues

Consistently recognised as one of the world's most liveable cities, Melbourne's greatest strength comes from its diversity. However, the city faced significant challenges when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020. The creative sector, a vital contributor to the city's economy and identity, was severely impacted. Lockdowns resulted in the cancellation of over 32,000 gigs and events, leading to a staggering AUD \$94 million (approximately USD \$66 million) in lost income. With 99 percent of creative professionals lacking income protection or event cancellation insurance, the need for support was urgent. Melbourne recognised the importance of revitalising the creative sector to restore the city's vibrancy and provide opportunities for people to reconnect with each other and their city.

Objectives

The programme aimed to enhance economic wellbeing, support the local economy, and activate public places. It sought to employ at least 165 creative professionals, enhance the social, economic, and cultural qualities of 40 Melbourne laneways to draw people back to the city, improve public safety, amenity, and business participation, and enhance pedestrian connectivity.

Additionally, the programme prioritised inclusivity, engaging 14 Aboriginal Victorians, 4 creatives with a disability, and 10 percent self-identified gender diverse individuals. The project also included participants from both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Key strategies

The programme was a key part of Melbourne's response to COVID-19, aiming to revive the city's vibrancy and welcome people back through reactivation and recovery initiatives. Conceived in April 2020, the programme focused on enhancing and stimulating Melbourne's renowned laneways through a responsive arts programme. It targeted street artists, musicians, and creative producers, many of whom may have been overlooked or underserved by current funding arrangements.

The programme highlighted a diversity of creative methods and approaches, featuring artists from a broad range of ethnic, cultural, and gender backgrounds. It also prioritised representation of Aboriginal creatives, supported by Aboriginal delivery staff, in line with the Public Art Framework. As a COVID-19 jobs-creation scheme, the programme employed over 80 creatives.

The programme delivered over 80 new creative offerings; a significant achievement given the constrained timeframe of 6-12 months. All work was undertaken on private property, relying on property owners' goodwill and investment. Managing the independence of creative visions with property owner desires was a complexity, but the diverse and skilled delivery staff ensured that culturally complex artists' work was well-explained and obtained property owners' buy-in.

Impacts

The programme employed 168 creative industry professionals, delivering impressive outcomes. Over 18 months, 40 major artworks were commissioned, with 15 incorporating lighting installations to support the night-time economy. Additionally, 40 new music albums were produced, significantly elevating the profile and future opportunities for musicians. The programme invested AUD \$8.9 million (approximately USD \$6.23 million) into the local economy, returning a further AUD \$8.9 million (approximately USD \$6.23 million) in valued-added spend.

The programme significantly improved the economic wellbeing of creatives (75 percent) and production teams (166 percent). Participants reported improved physical and mental wellbeing, with creatives experiencing a 47 percent improvement and production teams a 118 percent improvement. The programme also upskilled participants, with 100 percent of creatives and 78 percent of production team members recording improved skills and knowledge.

Notably, 37 percent of creatives secured new work or future possibilities, and 23 percent generated new revenue streams. All production team staff have gone on to further work, with many attributing their employability to the programme's exposure to local government.

The programme's success is evident in the testimonials of participants, who emphasised the value of fair pay and the importance of prioritising arts workers' wellbeing. The programme's focus on upskilling and employability has had a lasting impact, with participants reporting improved skills, knowledge, and future work opportunities.

About the case study



Above: Design Excellence Programme © City of Melbourne

The Design Excellence Programme is a comprehensive initiative that promotes design quality and innovation in Melbourne’s built environment, aiming to create a liveable, sustainable, and equitable city through collaborative and inclusive design approaches.

Year implemented	Ongoing
Type	Governance
Location	Citywide

Key issues

Melbourne’s urban design and architecture significantly impact the city’s appeal. Over the years, Melbourne has established a strong identity and reputation for innovative design, enhancing the city’s function, amenity, and attractiveness. As the city evolves, maintaining high design standards is crucial. However, challenges like a performance-based planning scheme, fragmented decision-making, and unclear planning schemes hinder private development. A lack of statewide urban design policy and inadequate resources for design excellence processes also pose obstacles. Addressing these challenges can improve processes and elevate design excellence as a key policy expectation in Victoria.

Objectives

The programme aims to promote high-quality design and enhance the built environment in the city. Good design is crucial to Melbourne’s attractiveness, liveability, and prosperity. Design excellence encompasses exceptional architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design, measured by factors like function, liveability, sustainability, and public contribution. It can be achieved in projects of any scale and value, not just iconic buildings. As a design capital, Melbourne exports design services globally, making it a design laboratory. Promoting design excellence supports social, physical, and environmental outcomes, fosters a creative economy, and enhances the city’s brand and identity.

Key Strategies

The programme features five key streams: Leadership, Design Review, Competitive Design, Awards, and Design Policy. The Leadership stream established the Design Excellence Advisory Committee (DEAC), a platform for industry, academia, and community members to engage with design challenges and opportunities. The DEAC comprises eight technical experts, five community members, and three technical advisors, ensuring diverse perspectives.

The Design Review stream features the Melbourne Design Review Panel (MDRP), which advises the city on improving design quality. The MDRP consists of experts in architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design, with additional technical expertise as needed. During its 12-month pilot programme, the MDRP reviewed 12 locally significant projects, demonstrating its value in enhancing design capability and complementing planning approval processes.

The Competitive Design stream prepares draft Design Competition Guidelines to elevate design quality for private development and council-owned sites. The Awards stream promotes design excellence through the City of Melbourne Urban Design Award, recognising projects and organisations that have shaped the city’s skyline and progressed design innovation. The Design Policy stream supports the Central Melbourne Design Guide, facilitating high design quality for developments in Central City and Southbank. This guide ensures consistent and high-quality design in the city’s central areas.

Impacts

The programme has delivered numerous benefits to the urban environment and local community. By enhancing the design quality and public contribution of private development of all scales, the programme has improved the overall aesthetic and functionality of the city’s built environment. The programme has enabled high-quality outcomes on city-shaping Council-led projects in the public realm, further enhancing the city’s liveability. The programme has also reinforced the city’s commitment to design excellence in the built environment, supporting the creation of a liveable city for all.

The programme has established positive and collaborative working relationships with the property and development industry, fostering a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect. It has also improved design literacy and understanding of the built environment among the general public, empowering citizens to engage more meaningfully with the design of their city. Finally, the programme has demonstrated the value of design and the design industry in enabling vibrant, sustainable, and equitable places, highlighting the critical role that design plays in shaping the city’s future.

2024 SPECIAL MENTION RIO DE JANEIRO



Rejuvenating the Waterfront for the People

*Rio de Janeiro's
rejuvenated waterfront
with the Museum
of Tomorrow in the
foreground*
© City of Rio de Janeiro

2024 SPECIAL MENTION RIO DE JANEIRO



The Jury's Citation

Rio de Janeiro is recognised for taking bold moves to redefine its central area and waterfront, moving away from decades of a mono-functional downtown and suburban sprawl – a legacy from its historical development since the 1980s.

Through strategic implementation of innovative land transfer policies, financing mechanisms and learning from other vibrant city centres around the world, the city is poised to shift public mindsets and set in motion a transformation towards a more attractive, liveable and vibrant downtown.

Redefining urban development paradigms

Rio demonstrated political will in shifting its urban development paradigm, as exemplified by the 2013 removal of the coastal Perimetral Elevated Highway – a pivotal moment in its urban evolution, leading to a 3.4-kilometre pedestrianised boulevard along the waterfront. Lined with cultural institutions and event venues, this new urban corridor continues to draw visitors back to the city centre. At the same time, eight kilometres of surface roads rerouted into a tunnel 46 metres below sea level increased traffic capacity by 50 percent. Today, the waterfront area thrives as a lively district, featuring urban plazas, pedestrian zones, sustainable tram transportation, and cultural landmarks like the MAR Museum of Art and Museum of Tomorrow.

Adopting a multi-prong approach to revitalise the centre

Rio is commendable for its focused approach to rejuvenate its dormant downtown following the pandemic. Formulated from a comprehensive benchmarking exercise, Reviver Centro is an initiative that positions the city's existing cultural assets as catalysts for transformation. To revive its economy, the Porto Maravalle project leverages technology and innovation to attract and develop tech talents and startups in a former warehouse district. Furthermore, Rio has successfully staged several global events such as 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympics to draw visitors to the city.

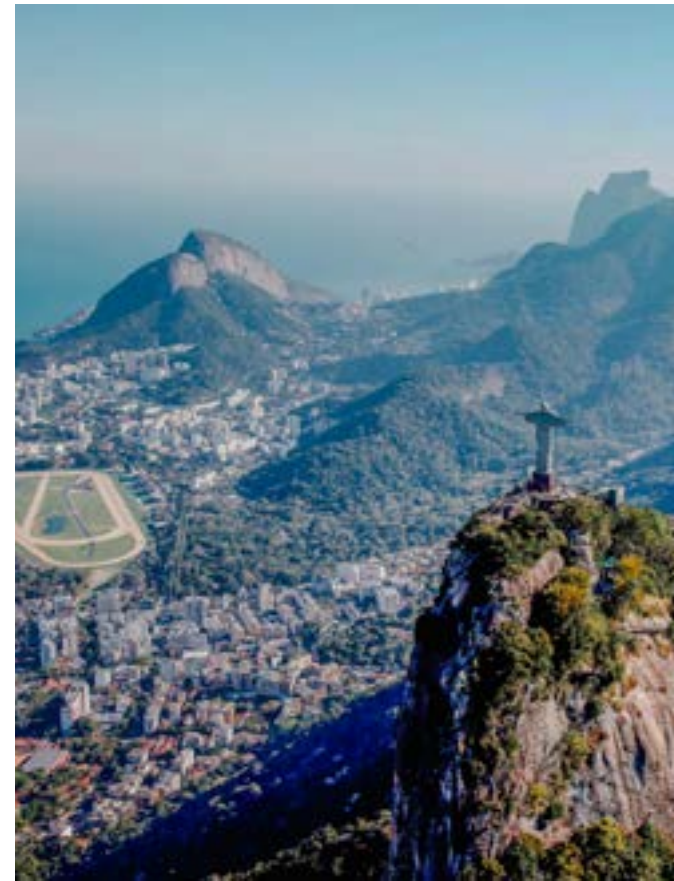
Left:
Praça Mauá and the
Museum of Tomorrow
© Damien Woon

Meanwhile, the city gains momentum in converting disused sites into cultural uses and facilitated the licensing of new residential units through subsidies and strategic land transfers for private building owners. Within its downtown Low Emissions District, the promotion of active mobility and greenways, as opposed to cars, addresses emissions-related concerns while fostering a safer urban environment. Furthermore, Rio's dedication to honour its African heritage, notably through the restoration of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Valongo Wharf, emphasises its commitment to inclusivity.

Financing and sustaining urban development innovatively

Rio's innovation in financing and sustaining urban development is manifested in the sustained development of Porto Maravilha, overseen by public company CCPAR (Urban Development Company of the Rio de Janeiro Port Region). Leveraging a new law that enables developers and landowners to acquire bonus floor area in the district, the city sold these development rights to a federal bank which take on the role to negotiate and assign the bonus floor areas to the appropriate sites. This initiative helped the city raise funding for critical infrastructure and other public investment for the district, and also channel physical development to realise the planned transformation of Porto Maravilha.

While Rio's current plans show promise in bringing more people back to its downtown area, many of its initiatives are at the initial phase of implementation. Continued efforts and leadership support can help to ensure that the city's urban transformation is enduring and sustainable.



Right:
 1 Landscape of Rio de Janeiro
 © City of Rio de Janeiro
 2 Low Emissions District
 © Damien Woon
 3 Rio waterfront
 © Damien Woon
 4 Historic lane
 © Damien Woon
 5 Art gallery in downtown
 © Damien Woon
 6 Valongo Wharf
 © Damien Woon

INTERVIEW WITH THE MAYOR



Eduardo Paes, former head of Barra da Tijuca and Jacarepaguá, city councilman, congressman, and secretary for environment and sports, became Mayor of Rio de Janeiro in 2008. His mission is to ensure a positive legacy for all citizens through urban renewal, social programmes, and infrastructure development.

What inspired you to apply for the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize?

As Mayor of Rio de Janeiro, I applied for the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize driven by my conviction that politics should catalyse transformation. Rio de Janeiro, with its captivating natural beauty juxtaposed with complex urban challenges, possesses a compelling potential to emerge as a global leader in sustainable urban finance. By showcasing our innovative approaches to sustainability, green finance, and urban development, we aim to contribute to the global dialogue on creating more resilient and sustainable cities.

Therefore, the Prize represents an opportunity to highlight Rio's efforts and achievements on an international stage. It validates the hard work of our citizens, businesses, and government in striving toward a more sustainable and equitable future for our city and beyond. By participating in this prestigious award, we want to expand our collaboration and knowledge exchange with other cities facing similar challenges.

Rio wants to show that more than just immense potential, we have a strong will to change and improve the lives of our citizens by celebrating novelty whilst honouring our heritage.

What aspects of the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize resonate with your aspirations for the city?

The Prize resonates with my aspirations for Rio in multiple ways. Firstly, it serves as a vital tool for encouraging the development of more livable cities that are strategically planned to meet the needs of their citizens. Secondly, it reinforces the importance of preserving and celebrating the cultural heritage embedded within our city's territories, thus fostering a lasting legacy for our community.

Since my first term as Mayor from 2009 to 2013, I have understood that this legacy entails not only caring for our people but also imbuing their lives with purpose. Now in my third term as Mayor (2021-2025), as I witness the fruition of our public policies and the emergence of new initiatives, I see how these efforts are permeating various corners of our city, contributing to its growth and development.

Tell us more about some upcoming new projects for your city.

Surrounding the Port Zone of Rio we have now several projects being implemented.

On the intellectual and cultural side, Rio City Hall has joined the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV) to launch the Chair of 'Pequena África' Studies (Small Africa, in literary translation) at Casa Escrevivência, in the Saúde neighbourhood. The initiative aims to bring visibility and deepen the study of theoretical productions by Black male and female thinkers, valuing the plurality of knowledge originating in that area of the city. The 'Pequena África' Chair is the first one entirely dedicated to Black intellectuals in Brazil, aiming to stimulate interdisciplinary debates on social, cultural, and academic topics proposed by Black scholars with recognised contributions to the creation of thought, as well as influence in public policies and programmes.

Throughout the first year, the Chair will offer open courses, lectures, and seminars that will take place at FGV units spread across Rio and the country. For the development of these activities, an Advisory Committee of the Chair was established, composed of eight intellectuals who stand out for their knowledge production and have a place of expression in their fields of expertise, particularly in education, culture, and public policy. In that regard, Rio City Hall is proud to provide support for their activities, recognising that the majority of enslaved Africans who came to Brazil arrived here, at the Valongo Wharf, one of the landmarks of Afro-Brazilian culture in the city's port area.

On the infrastructure side, we are experiencing the consolidation of the Porto Maravilha project which started in 2009. We have witnessed the launch of real estate developments, with over six thousand units of residential apartments already sold and under construction. And we have managed to put a revitalisation process in progress. For example, the 'A Noite' building – which was constructed in the 1920s and is located at Mauá Square – is now made available to the market under favourable conditions, giving continuity to the revitalisation of Porto Maravilha.

In the same place, we have created the Museum of Tomorrow, and the Rio Art Museum, transforming this into a liveable highly frequented area. Together, these two museums attract over 100 thousand people every month. In the past, this was a dark place, unsafe, where nobody wanted to live. Thanks to Rio City Hall's commitment, we were able to structure a project to give this area a purpose and a better integration with the rest of the city. As a City Hall, our role is to consolidate a safe and well-equipped urban occupation of this region. We understand that the stimulus we are providing to the downtown area will be rewarding to our citizens and also foster better businesses. Thus, we are also assuring that people who will live in this part of the city will have access to adequate infrastructure.

In early 2024, we have inaugurated the Gentileza Intermodal Terminal (TIG), the largest public transportation hub in Rio. TIG allows passengers from Rio to access, within the terminal, the new Transbrasil BRT, two lines of the Light Rail Transit (VLT) connecting the terminal to Santos Dumont Airport and the ferries at Praça 15, as well as 14 regular municipal bus lines serving various neighbourhoods in the city.

More than 150,000 people go through the terminal every day. Travel time has been reduced by more than 50 percent. With funding from both the city government and the federal government, sole investments in this project reached BRL \$2 billion (approximately USD \$380 million). This terminal is at the heart of Rio's transportation system, improving citizens' quality of life in the region and beyond.

What are the ongoing key challenges faced by your city?

Since the beginning of the revitalisation project of the port region, we have steadfastly pursued the preservation of our heritage and history. The Valongo Wharf was rediscovered during Rio City Hall's revitalisation works in the area in 2011, as part of the city's preparation for the 2016 Olympic Games. At that time, the municipality invested over BRL \$8 billion (approximately USD \$1.52 billion) in the Port Region, with more than BRL \$30 million (approximately USD \$5.7 million) allocated to the Valongo Wharf. Since 2012, when it was opened to the public as an archaeological site for visitation, a ritual has been repeated yearly on the wharf's stones in July. Priestesses from African-derived religions, known as 'mothers of saints', lead a ritual of cleansing, purification, and homage to the spirits of the ancestors who came through the site as slaves.

This legacy must be preserved, and now is the time to tell this story, showing Rio's essence that shaped our country. Rio wants to be an inclusive city, and I am sure that our efforts act as a beacon to other cities in Brazil and across the world. However, as we strive to preserve our past, we must also confront the pressing challenges of the present, foremost among them being climate change. Rio is not immune to its impacts, and as we witness the increasing frequency of natural disasters, the need for proactive measures becomes ever more urgent.

Our investment in the Rio Operations Centre, created in 2010, exemplifies our dedication to resilience, with its state-of-the-art technology and round-the-clock monitoring ensuring swift responses to emergencies. Yet, to truly fortify our city against future climate risks, we require sustained financial support and recognition of the crucial role cities play in climate adaptation. Most of these interventions were only possible due to the attraction of private investments on the occasion of the 2016 Olympic Games.

Today, the Rio Operations Centre is a pioneer reference centre in Latin America, with five hundred professionals working in twenty-four-hour shifts, monitoring more than fifteen hundred incidents per month through three thousand five hundred cameras monitoring the city. To invest in the right technology and equip the city to respond to these kinds of threats adequately, we need to secure an investment that is rarely at our disposal. World leaders and economic authorities need to understand that cities have much more capacity to carry out the necessary interventions to address climate change than national governments do. The Rio of tomorrow cannot rely solely on the legacy of past events; it must be forged through proactive governance and strategic investments.

How has your city continued to invest in your people and urban communities?

The Pequena África neighbourhood was a pivotal hub in the development of Brazilian cultural identity throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. This territory witnessed the birth and consolidation of modern forms of popular culture, including urban songs, circus, carnival, and performing arts. The history of this territory represents a significant aspect of the social dynamics that enabled Brazilians to recognise themselves culturally and feel part of a community, despite the country's vast cultural and population diversity.

From this perspective, we launched the 'Inventive Territory' project in March 2023, an initiative to create a technology and memory platform that maps and dimensions the region's vibrant cultural, social, and historical richness. The project features augmented reality projections of historical and contemporary figures from this territory, allowing tourists and residents to unlock a captivating journey through time and encounter influential personalities who shaped the region's cultural landscape.

In addition, residents in the region can now benefit from the nearby 'IMPA Tech' university, built by Rio City Hall and offering top-level higher education degrees funded by the Federal Government. IMPA Tech solidifies its position as a higher education institution of excellence, offering a Bachelor of Mathematics in Technology and Innovation to equip students to enter the technology and innovation market effectively.

Furthermore, the 'Cores da Brasil' project celebrates creativity and community, transforming urban spaces into vibrant canvases that reflect the spirit of Rio. This ambitious endeavour brings together over 130 artists to infuse life and colour into the cityscape, spreading messages of kindness and compassion. These initiatives demonstrate our unwavering commitment to investing in our people and urban communities, ensuring that Rio remains a beacon of culture, innovation, and inclusivity for generations to come.

How can your city inspire others?

One of our most significant achievements lies in the revitalisation of Rio's port area, a testament to the transformative power of strategic planning and investment.

By participating in this prestigious award, we want to expand our collaboration and knowledge exchange with other cities facing similar challenges. Rio de Janeiro wants to show that more than just immense potential, we have a strong will to change and improve the lives of our citizens by celebrating novelty whilst honouring our heritage.

By converting neglected urban spaces into vibrant, liveable areas, we have demonstrated how cities can breathe new life into their communities.

Furthermore, Rio's dedication to preserving its cultural heritage while promoting sustainable growth showcases our commitment to creating a more equitable society. Whether it is through fostering creativity, promoting sustainability, or embracing inclusivity, Rio offers a roadmap for cities worldwide to create more vibrant, resilient, and equitable communities. Together, we can build a brighter future for all.

Bringing Life Back to the Downtown

Rio de Janeiro's revitalisation and transformation of its city centre and downtown area showcases innovative strategies, enhancing quality of life and creating a vibrant hub through land transfer policies, financing mechanisms, and creative approaches, offering a model for sustainable urban development.

Activating and creating meaningful public spaces

A significant milestone in Rio's urban transformation of its city centre is its Porto Maravilha project (2016-2019) that not only revitalised the former port area, a five-million-square metre area in its downtown, but also shifted its urban development emphasis to focus more on active mobility.

From highway to pedestrianised boulevard – Its largest urban redevelopment effort in decades, the Porto Maravilha project included the bold removal of its elevated highway in 2013 to create a 3.4-kilometre pedestrianised boulevard that reconnected the city to its waterfront. Eight kilometres of surface roads were also rerouted into a tunnel 46 metres below sea level, increasing traffic capacity by 50 per cent. Today, this waterfront area thrives with lively urban plazas, pedestrian zones, sustainable transportation and cultural landmarks like the MAR Museum of Art and Museum of Tomorrow.

Pioneering financial mechanism to support urban development efforts – To support its urban development efforts, Rio set up the CCPAR (Rio de Janeiro Company for Partnerships and Investments), a publicly-owned entity to help safeguard continuous efforts especially for its extensive Porto Maravilha project.

It devised a pioneering financing mechanism for development air rights negotiations. On land, a groundbreaking law was enacted in 2009, permitting the increase in floor area within Porto Maravilha, where developers and landowners could purchase CEPACs (Certificates of Additional Construction Potential) titles for increased floor space.

The city, in a strategic move, sold all these rights to the Brazilian Federal Bank, Caixa Econômica Federal, thereby securing a capital infusion that could be directed to other critical areas of development. In turn, the bank assumed the role of negotiating these rights with developers and landowners, offering them flexibility in setting preferred rates. This innovative approach created a mutually beneficial scenario, aligning the interests of all parties involved in a win-win arrangement.

Changing downtown's urban fabric with revitalisation efforts

In response to the challenges that many cities faced with the emptying of their downtown areas during the COVID-19 pandemic and with more remote working options, Rio stepped up its revitalisation efforts (Reviver Centro) of its downtown in 2021 to address this.

Rio de Janeiro Key City Narratives

A significant milestone in Rio's urban transformation of its city centre is its Porto Maravilha project that not only revitalised the former port area, a five-million-square metre area in its downtown, but also shifted its urban development emphasis to focus more on active mobility.

Bringing back vibrancy in downtown with unique strategies

– One of Rio's unique revitalisation initiatives is a mechanism of land-value capture through the transfer of development rights. For every 100 square metres of residential units built and/or retrofitted, developers can earn the right to buy 40 square metres in prime areas of Rio. This has helped to raise funds to finance the city's critical infrastructure and provide more affordable housing. In addition, commercial buildings were encouraged to be adapted for residential uses to increase housing options in the city. Subsidies and other support were also given to convert disused sites into cultural uses and help refurbish cultural buildings such as art galleries, design studios and theatres to strengthen the arts and cultural focus in the city.

Creating first low emission district in downtown – As part of its efforts to create a more sustainable city, Rio designated its first 2.3 square kilometre low emission district in its downtown in 2019 to proactively combat greenhouse gas emissions. Its efforts include expanding its cycling network and vegetation cover, enhancing its air quality monitoring, encouraging the use of electric vehicles, and focusing on retrofitting existing buildings instead of constructing new ones. It is envisioned that this initial effort in the downtown area can inspire potential future implementation of similar efforts in other regions of the city.

Recognising African heritage with memorial site in downtown – In recognising its African heritage, Rio carefully and sensitively turned the Valongo Wharf archaeological area into a memorial site. The Valongo Wharf (Cais do Valongo), a pier dating to 1811, was uncovered during a road construction in 2011.

The wharf represents the city's original coastline and symbolises the arrival of one million enslaved Africans in Rio, making it the largest port for enslaved people in the Americas. Through comprehensive archaeological research, the discovery sheds light on the African diaspora and its role in shaping the Brazilian society. This memorial site was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2017 with plans for a future museum.

About the case study



Above: Rio's central district © Damien Woon

The Reviver Centro project aims to revitalise the central district by incentivising the conversion of underused commercial buildings into residential apartments, promoting sustainable urban development and community growth.

Year implemented	Ongoing
Type	Urban rejuvenation
Location	Central district

Key issues

Rio de Janeiro's central district faced several key issues. Historically, the area had transformed into a highly concentrated business district as industries and businesses evolved, leading to a shift from mixed-use development to single-use commercial spaces. This resulted in a loss of residential activities and a lack of affordable housing options. The COVID-19 pandemic then caused a significant economic setback, leading to a decrease in economic activity and investment. Many commercial buildings were abandoned or underused, further undermining the district's prospects.

Objectives

The project aims to revitalise Rio's central district by addressing its pressing challenges and outlining a vision for its future. The project seeks to reverse the loss of population by attracting residents back to the area, creating a vibrant and diverse community. It fosters a sense of local community and belonging, promoting social cohesion and a shared vision for the future. The project provides incentives for social and affordable housing, repurposes underused buildings into residential units, and establishes the central district as a livable option, reducing daily commutes and urban sprawl. By achieving this vision, the project creates a sustainable and livable central district that serves as a model for urban revitalisation.

Key strategies

Firstly, the project offers urban and legal incentives for the conversion of underused commercial buildings into residential apartments. These incentives encourage property owners and developers to convert commercial spaces into residential units, increasing the availability of housing options in the central district. This approach not only provides more housing options but also breathes new life into previously underutilised buildings, enhancing the district's aesthetic appeal.

Secondly, the project has introduced a crossed urban bonus system to incentivise the construction or retrofitting of residential units in the central district. This system enables individuals or organisations to earn bonuses for building or renovating residential properties, which can be used to exceed legal restrictions in other high-value areas of the city. This strategy promotes balanced urban growth and encourages investment in the central district, creating a more vibrant and liveable community.

Thirdly, the project has simplified building codes and processes, streamlining procedures and expediting approval processes. This aims to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and enable the rapid development of housing options, facilitating the transformation of the central district into a vibrant and liveable area. By implementing these strategies, the project seeks to create a more attractive and sustainable community for residents, enhancing their quality of life and promoting a sense of belonging.

Impacts

The project has made a significant positive impact on the urban environment and the local community. In less than two years, the programme has licensed 2,300 new residential units in the central region. Additionally, 700 units are currently in the process of being licensed, which will increase the local population by approximately 15 percent once built.

The project's success has also led to a change in national Civil Law, making it easier to transform commercial suites into residential units. The introduction of a new law has reduced the approval rate threshold among condominium owners, streamlining the process and removing a potential barrier.

The federal government has also pledged its support to the programme, committing to allocate its empty lots in the central district for the construction of social housing. By leveraging the benefits provided by the programme, these empty lots will be utilised to meet the demand for affordable housing options.

The combination of increased licensed residential units, legal changes, and government commitment highlights the tangible results achieved by the project. It has addressed the pressing need for housing in the central district, stimulated economic growth, fostered community development, and improved the overall liveability of the area.

Piloting a Low Emissions District

Rio de Janeiro Case Study 02

About the case study



Above: Low Emissions District © Damien Woon

The Low Emissions District is a pilot project aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create sustainable urban spaces through clean transport, active mobility, and green infrastructure.

Year implemented	Ongoing
Type	Environmental project
Location	Central district

Key issues

As a major job generation centre, Rio de Janeiro's central region experiences high traffic and transportation demands, leading to congestion and inefficiencies. The district struggled with a reliance on shared transportation modes, resulting in congestion and inefficiencies. Although the area's boundaries encompass non-polluting transport modes like tram and Metro, these are not fully utilised to address the transportation challenges. Despite previous improvements, the district still faces challenges like problematic vehicle circulation, blurred pedestrian and vehicle areas, and safety concerns. The city has identified key areas for improvement, including enhancing green spaces, accessibility, and infrastructure quality, as well as addressing pressing issues like security, economic crisis, and pandemic impacts.

Objectives

The pilot project aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create high-quality public spaces by prioritising clean transportation, active mobility, and sustainable urban revitalisation. This approach will transform urban living, promote eco-friendly practices, and improve citizens' quality of life. By encouraging walking, cycling, non-motorised transportation, and investing in electric vehicles and efficient public transportation, the project will reduce emissions, improve air quality, and create a more sustainable future for all.

Key strategies

The Low Emissions District prioritises sustainability by promoting green infrastructure, active transport, and accessibility. This is achieved through the following key areas:

- Urban Requalification involves implementing nature-based solutions and green infrastructure to enhance urban spaces and improve accessibility.
- Active Mobility encourages walkability, cyclist-friendly infrastructure, and clean vehicles to reduce emissions.
- Clean Technology promotes electric vehicles, hybrid technologies, and sustainable transportation practices.
- Air Quality monitoring and improvement is achieved through stricter emission standards and afforestation.
- Waste management practices are implemented through recycling and waste reduction initiatives.
- Buildings are made energy efficient through green construction materials, efficient insulation, and smart energy management systems.
- Communication and Participation involve educating the public on sustainable practices and encouraging community involvement in decision-making processes.
- A comprehensive monitoring system tracks air quality, emissions, and pedestrian and vehicle flow.

Impacts

The Low Emissions District has made a significant impact on the urban environment and local community by implementing innovative strategies that prioritise sustainable mobility and a greener urban landscape. By expanding the bicycle path network, promoting pedestrian-friendly urban requalification, encouraging the use of clean vehicles, and increasing tree planting, the project has reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improved air quality, increased tree planting and green areas, promoted active and clean transport, contributed to a healthier urban environment, and supported the clean energy market.

The project has brought numerous benefits to the community, including a healthier urban environment, reduced health problems, increased occupation of the central area, and a stimulated clean energy market. By 2024, the project aims to implement the Low Emissions District in the central region, covering 35,000 square metres of public spaces. By 2030, the goal is to expand the District to the entire perimeter of 2.34 square kilometres and eliminate GHG emissions from mobile sources. These targets demonstrate the Low Emissions District's commitment to reducing climate change and transitioning to a sustainable future.

2024 SPECIAL MENTION WELLINGTON



A Human-
Nature
Harmony

*Zealandia in the
foreground with the
Wellington City in
the background
© Rob Suisted*

2024 SPECIAL MENTION WELLINGTON



The Jury's Citation

Wellington is recognised for its exemplary commitment towards living with nature. The city stands out for its steadfast dedication to conserving and restoring natural habitat in both urban and natural areas through innovative programmes.

Wellington's success stems from extensive citizen engagement and involvement in rewilding efforts, promoting environmental conservation, social cohesion, and community spirit – an exemplary model for harmonious urban-nature coexistence.

Biophilic city at the forefront of ecological restoration

As a founding member of the Biophilic Cities Network, Wellington exemplified the vision of people living in harmony with nature through initiatives like Zealandia Ecosanctuary. Just two kilometres from the Central Business District, it features the world's first predator exclusion zone, contributing to the increase in bird numbers and resurgence of the once-presumed-extinct Takahē bird over the past decade.

Beyond nature areas, the Predator Free Wellington project aims to be the world's first predator-free capital, achieving notable success in urban areas like Miramar, a suburb in Wellington, with the eradication of Norway rats and weasels and a 550 percent increase in fantail birds. These initiatives demonstrate the success of Wellington's long-term strategy 'Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital' inception in 2011.

Integral community partnership

Wellington's achievements are deeply rooted in strong and extensive community support, aligning with the city's vision. The Predator Free Wellington initiative mobilises 58 community trapping groups with thousands of volunteers, raising awareness of the issues, fostering a sense of belonging, especially among marginalised individuals.

*Left:
Kent Cambridge Cycleway
in Wellington
© Wellington City Council*

Similarly, the Makara Peak Bike Park, a blend of recreation and conservation, thrives with community support, involving volunteers in building 40 kilometres of trails, planting 60,000 native plants, and securing funds and 2,500 volunteer hours to build a suspension bridge. Embracing the country's bicultural identity, the city collaborates closely with local Māori groups in many of the works that they do, as exemplified by projects like public art for the Paneke Pōneke Bike Network Plan.

Novel approaches designed to fulfil strategic aims

Wellington's ecological projects, notably Zealandia, have produced a wealth of research and knowledge, prompting the city to share its expertise globally as the patent on its fence design expires. Meanwhile, Predator Free Wellington prioritises public education, disseminating information through instructional guidebooks to enhance awareness within the community. This concerted effort not only empowers residents with the tools to participate actively in predator control but also strengthen community bonds, enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of conservation efforts.

Wellington's success story in ecological restoration will serve as an inspiration for communities and cities worldwide, demonstrating that urban development and nature conservation can co-exist, is enriching and sustainable. Its other ongoing and upcoming projects, such as waterfront rejuvenation and street enhancement work, will help the city further enhance its liveability and vibrancy.



Right:
 1 Wellington waterfront activity © Yap Lay Bee
 2 Zealandia © Zealandia
 3 Mākara Peak Mountain Bike Park © Wellington City Council
 4 Predator exclusion fence © Yap Lay Bee
 5 Visitors in Zealandia © Leon Berard
 6 Predator Free Wellington © Ian Robertson

INTERVIEW WITH THE MAYOR



Tory Awatere Whanau, the first Māori Mayor of Wellington, was elected in 2022. A former Green Party chief of staff, she ran on a platform of affordable housing, better transport, and inclusivity, aiming to strengthen relationships with mana whenua and prioritise climate action.

What inspired you to apply for the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize?

Wellington City Council has a vision statement that acknowledges one of our key objectives: restoring our city as well as protecting and increasing nature as a part of Wellingtonians' every day lives. We are working closely with our mana whenua partners to increase the health of our harbour and re-indigenise our city through planting and public space upgrades.

By entering the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, we want to acknowledge the good work by individuals and communities that supports our topographical advantage and nature in the city, showcasing different perspectives on how this work can and is being undertaken.

Tell us more about some upcoming new projects for your city.

Wellington's population is expected to grow by 30 percent in the next 30 years. The city has adopted an ambitious District Plan to encourage densification in the central city and around suburban centres. To support this, our natural areas such as our Town Belt, which includes Zealandia and Mākara Peak, are key. In 2022, we adopted a Green Network Plan for the central city which sets four targets over the next 10 years to support this growth with green infrastructure.

In 2023, the city council approved a regeneration of the Golden Mile, which includes a new critical green corridor connecting two sides of the inner Town Belt and runs as a vital public transit through the city centre. This connects Wellington's premier entertainment district (Courtenay Place) and the premier shopping and business district (Lambton Quay).

In 2023, Capital Kiwi released 52 kiwi birds into the hills of Wellington, who are thriving and reproducing. A further 200 will be released within the next five years, along with continued predator trapping efforts. We are also in the early stages of developing a new masterplan for our civic centre, which I am incredibly excited about as much of our civic heart, Te Ngākau, damaged in the 2016 earthquake. We look forward to getting it up and humming again.

Finally, the city council is leading a cutting-edge initiative to create a digital map of buried infrastructure such as water assets, telecommunications cables and gas pipes. Moving away from legacy records and paper processes, a centralised and updateable digital map aims to increase safety for crews, improve certainty for planning, and reduce disruption related to installation, maintenance and repairs. The Wellington Underground Asset Map (WUAM) programme is the start towards a digital twin of the infrastructure under the city's streets. The goal is to build a system and supporting compliance policies that can be scaled up for the whole of New Zealand.

What are the ongoing key challenges faced by your city?

Wellington has its challenges, from decades of underinvestment in water infrastructure to insufficient affordable housing. We are addressing these through the city council's work. We are also a city with seismic challenges. The 2016 Kaikōura Earthquake damaged several private and public buildings, and underground pipes. The increased costs of building and insurance pose additional development challenges.

Our changing climate is one of the biggest challenges this century. We have declared a State of Climate and Ecological Emergency, recognising the climate crisis is already damaging fragile ecosystems with severe economic, social, and environmental consequences: more intense storms, sea level rise, biodiversity loss, and negative health impacts. We are working towards an equitable transition to a zero-carbon future.

How has your city continued to invest in your people and urban communities?

We have spent hundreds of millions on upgrades and procurement to our social housing (run by Te Toi Mahana Trust) over the past two decades to keep lower-income people in high-quality accommodation. The Te Kāinga initiative converts office buildings into apartments to keep the central city affordable.

We are taking climate action by building cycle lanes that are proving to be hugely popular, with thousands of people choosing to cycle to and from work every day. Additionally, we are pushing sustainability through how we plan to grow, dispose of waste and adapt our urban form and streets.

By entering the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, we want to acknowledge the good work by individuals and communities that supports our topographical advantage and nature in the city.

We are revitalising the Golden Mile, starting with Courtenay Place, prioritising people through wider footpaths, more green space and new street furniture.

What are the ongoing key challenges faced by your city?

Wellington is held up internationally for our world class mixed-mode transport use, such as cycling with the Kent/Cambridge Terrace route being especially successful. The approach the city has taken in the regeneration of our flora and fauna is notable. Joint efforts from the public, private and community sector have seen native bird numbers increase by 50 percent (from 2011 – 2020) with benefits in community participation, re-indigenisation, amenity and urban ecology.

We are lucky to live in such a compact, urban city with bustling arts and hospitality where nature thrives – a testament to the fact that we can have both.

Restoring Ecosystems with the People

Wellington Key City Narratives

Wellington is a leader in ecological restoration, balancing urban and natural environments while preserving biodiversity. Strong leadership and citizen volunteers drive success, building stronger communities through nature restoration and predator-free initiatives.

Transforming the way people live with nature

Wellington's Zealandia Ecosanctuary is a flagship nature restoration project, showcasing the city's commitment to preserving its natural heritage. Just a ten-minute drive from its Central Business District, this 225-hectare valley has been painstakingly restored to its pre-human state over the past 30 years. The sanctuary has successfully reintroduced 23 rare and endangered native animal species, including kiwis, tuataras, and kaka, and has become a thriving ecosystem, demonstrating Wellington's dedication to protecting its unique biodiversity.

Pioneering fence enable biodiversity to thrive – Zealandia's success is largely attributed to its innovative, world's first patented predator-exclusion fence, encircling the sanctuary. Built in 1999, this high fence effectively keeps invasive predators like ferrets and possums out, featuring a wire mesh wall to exclude even the smallest pests like mice and an underground skirt to prevent burrowing. This cutting-edge barrier has created a safe haven for native species to thrive, allowing Zealandia to achieve its conservation goals and serve as a model for effective predator control in ecological restoration projects worldwide. Zealandia goes beyond its

sanctuary project by sharing its expertise through research papers and guidebooks. It also offers learning programmes for young people and engages over 500 active volunteers in park maintenance. Its ultimate goal is to revolutionise how people coexist with nature in urban areas, promoting a harmonious relationship between humans and the environment. By sharing knowledge and involving the community, Zealandia aims to create a sustainable future for all.

Building active communities

Wellington's nature restoration achievements are a testament to the power of community engagement. The city's success would not have been possible without the active participation and dedication of its citizens. The mobilization of thousands of volunteers and community groups has been instrumental in driving restoration efforts, demonstrating the impact that can be made when people come together towards a common goal of preserving and protecting the environment.

Extensive community participation in Predator Free initiative – Wellington's Predator Free initiative is a prime example of citizen participation. Launched in 2019, the project

relies on 58 community groups and thousands of volunteers to eradicate introduced predators like rats, possums, and weasels. Volunteers set traps and monitor progress, leading to a significant reduction in predator numbers and an increase in native species. This community-driven project has also strengthened community ties and recognized local contributors. By working together, citizens are achieving a common goal of creating a predator-free Wellington.

Volunteer partnership sustains key cycling destination

– The 250-hectare Makara Peak Bike Park is an example of effective citizen participation. Since 1998, the city council and park supporters have worked together to build and maintain the park's 40+ kilometres of trails and restore its natural habitat. Hundreds of volunteers, including bikers, walkers, and residents, have contributed to the park's development.

They have planted 60,000 native plants, set up pest trapping networks, and helped fund infrastructure projects like a 72-meter swing bridge. This partnership has resulted in a popular bike park and a thriving natural environment. The park's success shows what can be achieved when local government and citizens work together towards a common goal.

Key to Wellington's success is its strong leadership and the passion of thousands of its citizens serving as volunteers in many of its nature restoration and predator-free initiatives, building stronger communities over time.

About the case study



Above: Zealandia Ecosanctuary © Wellington City Council

Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne Ecosanctuary is a 500-year restoration project in Wellington, aiming to restore biodiversity and ecosystem health, and inspire urban conservation, through a predator-free sanctuary, education, research, and community engagement.

Year implemented	2000
Type	Environmental project
Location	Adjacent to the Wellington suburb of Karori

Key issues

Twenty years ago, the native bird population in the city was on the brink of extinction, with the majority of species found only on offshore islands. The introduction of predators during European colonisation period had a devastating impact on the mainland population. Despite this, there were still efforts to restore the ecosystem, leading to the establishment of Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne, an eco-sanctuary that has become a haven for native birds. However, the surrounding city environment remained a challenge, with urbanisation and human activities posing a threat to the long-term survival of the restored ecosystem.

Objectives

The project aims to achieve a 500-year vision of restoration, with the goal of restoring the biodiversity of the 225-hectare valley to its pre-colonial state. The project's objectives go beyond the sanctuary's fences, seeking to transform how people live with nature in towns, cities, and beyond. The project aims to create a sustainable and resilient ecosystem, where native birds and other species can thrive, and where people can connect with nature and appreciate its beauty and importance. By achieving this vision, the project hopes to set a new standard for urban conservation and restoration and inspire similar initiatives nationwide.

Key strategies

In 2000, the city set aside 225 hectares of land, just 2 kilometres from the city centre, to create a sanctuary for native species and improve stormwater management. This innovative project, Zealandia, features a world-first predator exclusion fence, which has enabled the reintroduction of 23 rare and endangered species, including kiwi and other animals. Today, many of these species have thrived and extended beyond the fence, with some even nesting in residents' backyards.

Zealandia also focuses on restoring the freshwater ecosystem, reintroducing native fish species like the toitoi/ common bully and kākahi (freshwater mussels). This holistic approach aims to revive the entire ecosystem.

As a true community partnership, Zealandia works closely with mana whenua (the local Māori iwi) to develop projects and incorporate mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) into their activities. Thousands of volunteers have contributed to planting, weeding, and caring for the sanctuary, establishing a flourishing forest ecosystem. Currently, over 500 active volunteers work in various areas of the organisation.

Zealandia's impact extends beyond the fence, with initiatives like youth learning programmes, the urban catchment restoration project 'Sanctuary to Sea Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara', and research on how to support people living in harmony with nature. By working together, Zealandia is setting a new standard for urban conservation and restoration.

Impacts

Zealandia's innovative approach has made a significant impact on the environment and community. By excluding 15 introduced predators and browsers, the sanctuary has created a safe space for native forests and animals to thrive. This success has had a ripple effect across the city, making Wellington one of the only cities in the world where native bird biodiversity is increasing. Zealandia's programmes have inspired a new generation to live in harmony with nature:

- Education and engagement programmes for young people, particularly in disadvantaged communities, to inspire a love for nature and empower communities to take action.
- The Sanctuary to Sea Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara project, a community partnership to address urban waterway issues and promote sustainable management.
- A vibrant research programme, in partnership with Victoria University of Wellington, to discover how to create nature-rich cities of the future.
- Regenerative tourism, which funds the mission and impact work, inspiring visitors to take action and connect with conservation efforts.

Zealandia is recognized as a nationally significant biodiversity hotspot and haven for wildlife. The sanctuary's success has inspired the national Predator Free New Zealand initiative, aiming to eradicate possums, stoats, and rats from the mainland. Citizen science data shows a transformational change in species such as kākā, now nesting in Wellington's backyards.

About the case study



Above: Tui bird © Brendan Doran

The Predator Free Wellington project aims to eradicate predators from Wellington, starting with Miramar Peninsula, using innovative methods and community-led approaches to restore native biodiversity and create a predator-free urban environment.

Year implemented	Ongoing
Type	Environmental project
Location	Citywide

Key issues

In New Zealand, an estimated 68,000 native birds are being eaten every single night by rats, stoats, possums, and weasels. The arrival of these mammalian predators in a country that evolved for millions of years without them has had immense impacts on native species. With over 4,000 separate species currently under threat, a decision needed to be made: accept the continual loss of treasured plants and animals or take action to address the issue.

Objectives

The project aims to empower the community of Wellington City to embrace and sustain a zero-predator state in the long term. Its goal is to inspire other urban centres to address their ecological challenges at a landscape scale. The project seeks to create a natural capital city that flourishes with native wildlife, allowing for additional translocations of locally extinct fauna in the project area. The project's objectives also include delivering a broad range of social, economic, and cultural outcomes, including equity and community resilience through participation in collective action. Additionally, the project aims to establish a community of collaboration, learning, and technical expertise to be shared.

Key strategies

The project encompasses 30,000 hectares and 70,000 households, stretching from Miramar Peninsula to the south-west corner of Mākara and up to the boundary with Porirua City. The area has been divided into five phases, moving from east to west and then north.

Fifty-eight community trapping groups, one for every suburb in Wellington and most reserves in between, have been established. These volunteer groups have been active for years, distributing backyard traps to neighbours and contributing to a reduction in rat populations. The spillover from the Zealandia Ecosanctuary has also had a positive impact, leading to a rewilding of the area.

The strategy follows a remove-and-protect model, seeking permissions from households, businesses, and landowners to install an intensive eradication network. Thousands of permissions have been secured, and a team of 26 field staff is working to undertake the eradication operation. The latest technology and innovation are being utilised to ensure success, and monitoring will continue post-operation to prevent reinvasion.

Significant progress has been made, with 58 community trapping groups covering 8,000 hectares. The goal of creating a predator-free Wellington is within reach, thanks to the collaborative efforts of the community and project team. A thriving natural environment for native species is the ultimate objective.

Impacts

Miramar Peninsula is declared predator-free in November 2023, a milestone marking the completion of Phase 1. This achievement will be followed by Phase 2, while the Peninsula enters an ongoing biosecurity phase, ensuring the area remains predator-free. A suite of measuring and monitoring tools, including a dense camera network and predator detection dog, will be used to declare a phase predator-free.

The project has developed new methodologies for eradicating stoats, weasels, Norway rats, and ship rats in urban environments, a global first. Community-based approaches to biosecurity have been proven effective, relying on near-universal support, leadership, and participation from all sectors of society. New technologies for detecting predators have been delivered, and research projects have provided valuable insights into habitat, behavior, and target species architectures.

The project's impacts are significant. Biodiversity is increasing, bucking the global trend, and ensuring future generations can experience native species in their natural habitats. Native birds have increased by 71 percent in abundance, with indicator species like fantails and grey warblers increasing by 550 percent and 340 percent, respectively. Invertebrates like native tree wētā have also increased by 200 percent. The project has achieved equity in outcomes across the project area, regardless of socio-economic and cultural background, by working at the same density everywhere.

2020 PRIZE LAUREATE VIENNA



The Jury's Citation

Vienna is recognised for reinventing itself for success in the 21st century without losing its distinctive identity as a capital of culture, music & history.

Vienna excels as a global leader in tackling climate change, achieving significant success through steadfast commitment to ongoing and strategic enhancements, securing a superior quality of life for current and future generations.

Meeting environmental goals

Vienna's Urban Development Plan, STEP 2025, takes a holistic approach to environmental goals. The 21-kilometre flood protection channel, completed in 1989, safeguards the city, doubles as a recreational water body and public park, enhancing the urban landscape. This environmental stewardship extends beyond city limits, fostering stronger regional ties and bolstering international competitiveness.

Committing to affordable housing

Vienna's commitment to social housing, begun in the 19th century, remains strong. The city continues to develop diverse and affordable housing options, such as Aspern Seestadt and Nordbahnhof. A proactive transportation approach, featuring a 365 Euros annual ticket, has led to a significant shift, with more residents choosing public transit over private cars.

Advancing high quality of life

Vienna's dedication to a high quality of life is outlined in the Smart City Wien Framework Strategy, launched in 2011. This strategy integrates new technologies to achieve long-term social and environmental goals. The city prioritises social integration, actively involving citizens and stakeholders in development. Initiatives like Grätzloase (Neighbourhood Oasis) enable citizens to transform public spaces, promoting community cooperation.

Vienna continues to build on its strengths, attracting businesses and young professionals. With clear short, medium, and long-term plans, Vienna sets an example for cities seeking sustainable urban ecosystems. Its forward thinking and commitment ensure continued success, making Vienna a model for other cities to follow and strive to match its accomplishments.

*Top-left:
New Danube and
Danube Island
© cristicroitoru/123RF*

*Bottom-left:
Vienna historic
city centre
© radub85/123RF*

2020 SPECIAL MENTIONS

Antwerp

Antwerp is recognised for strategic urban rejuvenation through the Renovatio Urbis strategy since the 2006 Strategic Spatial Plan. Transforming neglected areas along the Scheldt River, efforts include revitalising River Scheldt quays, promoting affordable housing via the Urban Renewal Housing Programme, and addressing congestion with the 'Smart Ways to Antwerp' programme. The Over the Ring project integrates city parts, enhancing green space. Antwerp's 'Slow Urbanism' emphasises adaptability, with extensive citizen participation fostering collaboration. Achievements, along with initiatives in migrant integration, offer valuable insights for cities harmonising historical infrastructure with modern planning.

Boston

Boston is recognised for its comprehensive approach to climate resilience, affordable housing, mobility, and civic engagement. Successful transformative projects address flooding vulnerabilities along 75 kilometers of coastline. The Imagine Boston 2030 plan, launched in 2017, stands out for forward-looking goals in housing, transport, and resilience. Ongoing efforts include providing innovative and affordable housing, promoting active mobility, and mitigating climate change through initiatives like Climate Ready Boston and Resilient Boston Harbor. Boston's commitment to community engagement, evident in initiatives like the Rose Kennedy Greenway, reflects a collaborative ethos, yielding win-win outcomes. The city's foresight in resilience positions it as a role model for waterfront cities addressing climate change.

Lisbon

Lisbon is recognised for its impressive resurgence in the past decade, overcoming two decades of financial turmoil. Leveraging the crisis for improved governance, the city attracted new investments, residents, and visitors. Innovative schemes, such as the Affordable Rent Programme and floor area bonuses, showcase Lisbon's collaboration with the private sector. Strategic urban interventions, including riverfront development and creating attractive recreational areas, have transformed the city physically. Lisbon's commitment to sustainability, evident in its 2050 carbon neutrality goal and participatory initiatives like the Budget initiative, exemplifies a resilient response to adversity, inspiring other cities facing similar challenges. Lisbon's resilience positions it as a role model for waterfront cities addressing climate change.



Right:
1 Antwerp city centre
© sergeybe/123RF
2 Antwerp Porthouse
© rh2010/123RF
3 Boston Harbour and Financial District
© mjbs/123RF
4 Boston skyline
© mjbs/123RF
5 Praça do Comércio in Lisbon
© sopotniccy/123RF
6 Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology
© dimol/123RF

2018 PRIZE LAUREATE SEOUL



The Jury's Citation

Seoul is recognised as a role model for megacities, transforming from a bureaucratic city to an inclusive and innovative hub through bold leadership, citizen engagement, data-driven decisions, and creative design.

Seoul faced urban challenges from rapid growth, like many cities. After democratisation in the 1990s, the government faced resistance from previously excluded citizens, threatening progress. Seoul also struggled with a car-dependent population, causing environmental and other issues.

Strong political will to overcome challenges

Seoul realised its rapid economic growth came at the cost of quality of life. Visionary leaders in the 2000s implemented projects like Dongdaemun Area Regeneration to shift focus from manufacturing to design. Effective communication and conflict management strategies were developed through engagement and negotiation, leading to impactful results and citizen buy-in.

Seoul Plan 2030

The Seoul Plan 2030 marks a significant shift in urban planning, prioritising citizen participation and bottom-up processes. Residents have a say in local issues through the Community Governance Project and can allocate five percent of the city budget through the Public Participatory Budget System. Transparency is ensured through regular monitoring and data-driven decision-making.

Car to people spaces

Seoul boldly shifts from car-centric to people-centric spaces, a challenge many cities face. It tackles this through comprehensive measures and big data, making public transport seamless and convenient. Notably, Seoul reclaims public spaces like Cheonggyecheon, Yonsei-ro, and Seoulo 7017, prioritising people over cars and signaling a people-first future.

Seoul innovatively rejuvenates its urban infrastructure through 'development without demolition' projects like Makercity Sewoon and Mapo Culture Depot, repurposing old structures while preserving collective memories. By empowering citizens to shape the city's development, Seoul achieves social sustainability, avoiding potential decline and showcasing a truly bottom-up approach to urban planning.



Top-left:
Seoulo 7017
© yooranpark/123RF

Bottom-left:
Cheonggyecheon
© keitma/123RF

2018 SPECIAL MENTIONS

Hamburg

Hamburg is recognised for its impressive transformation from a conventional urban expansion approach to a successful inner city densification strategy, catering to increased demand for housing and urban mobility. The new HafenCity is a prime example, transforming a former underused harbour into a dynamic mix-use district. The city prioritises affordable housing, citizen participation, and sustainable development, making it an exemplary model for other cities.

Kazan

Kazan has undergone a remarkable transformation from a troubled city to a thriving hub of sports, social harmony, and innovation. The city has invested in sports, health, and family life, leading to improved quality of life, increased lifespan, and decreased crime rates. Kazan's cultural diversity, with 115 nationalities and 50 percent Muslim and Christian populations, sets an exemplary model for harmony and coexistence.

Surabaya

Surabaya has successfully preserved and developed its kampung neighbourhoods while experiencing rapid economic growth. The city's Kampung Improvement Programme has transformed these areas into clean and productive environments, promoting home-based entrepreneurship and alleviating poverty. Surabaya's inclusive and people-centric approach has also prioritised green spaces, education, and citizen participation, making it an inspiration to other cities.

Tokyo

Tokyo is a well-managed megacity that has transformed into a highly efficient, liveable, and vibrant city through its urban blueprint and long-term investment in public transportation. Its exceptional public-private partnership model has produced successful urban development projects, such as the Otemachi-Marunouchi-Yurakucho District transformation. The city continues to work towards a planned vision for its future, focusing on safety, diversity, and smart city initiatives, making it a model for other cities.



Right:
1 Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg © galeja/123RF
2 Speicherstadt district in Hamburg © sergeyphoto7/123RF
3 Kazan aerial view © parilovv/123RF
4 Tokyo train © basiczto/123RF
5 Apsari Park in Surabaya © rekyflo/123RF
6 Tokyo Station in Marunouchi © kuremo/123RF

2016 PRIZE LAUREATE MEDELLÍN



The Jury's Citation

Medellín is recognised for its success in overcoming challenges of uncontrolled urban expansion and years of violence due to social inequalities.

Medellín transformed from a violent city to a model for urban innovation in just two decades. Once plagued by informal settlements and crime, the city now prioritises justice, humanity, and happiness. Successive leaders tackled deep-rooted problems like wealth division and lack of opportunities, providing continuity for neighbourhood rehabilitation and improved living conditions.

Creative solutions despite limited resources

Medellín has devised alternative funding sources, including its profitable utilities company EPM, which channels 30 percent of its profits to social projects. The city has implemented catalytic projects, such as the Circumvent Garden, which addresses ecological, social, and economic issues, and the Unidades de Vida Articulada (UVA) programme, which empowers citizens to build and manage community venues. These initiatives demonstrate Medellín's commitment to social equity, competitiveness, and sustainability, improving living conditions for its inhabitants, especially the most disadvantaged.

Social innovation

Medellín tackles social integration through innovative governance, empowering citizens and gaining public trust. The Good Start programme focuses on early childhood education, investing in the future. The city prioritises people's needs, fostering open dialogue and cooperation between government, private entities, and citizens, leveraging co-creation to create context-sensitive solutions.

Ongoing challenges

Medellín's transformation showcases the power of inclusive governance, inspiring cities worldwide. However, its success is fragile and requires continued efforts to address ongoing challenges. Urban solutions and job creation must keep pace with growth to prevent past problems from resurfacing.

Key challenges remain, including a shortage of social housing and the need for a cohesive urban plan. Sustained efforts to meet citizens' basic needs are crucial, as this has given people hope and galvanised them to work together towards a better future for Medellín.

Top-left:
The MetroCable
© mathess/123RF

Bottom-left:
Botero Square
in city centre
© markpittimages/123RF

2016 SPECIAL MENTIONS

Auckland

Auckland is recognised for overcoming planning challenges through a highly integrated governance model. The city transformed from a fractured system to a unified 'Super City' with one mayor, council, and plan. The Auckland Plan sets a vision for liveability and sustainability, addressing challenges like population growth, infrastructure, and social wellbeing. The city has made significant progress, including reducing unemployment and increasing social integration of Māori and other indigenous groups, making it an exemplary model for governance innovation and social transformation.

Sydney

Sydney is recognised for its strong leadership and partnership with citizens and stakeholders. Despite limited regional power, the city has successfully implemented a long-term vision, Sustainable Sydney 2030 Plan, guiding urban development along three principles: Green, Global, and Connected. Sydney's collaboration and transformation serve as an inspiration to other cities facing similar constraints.

Toronto

Toronto is a diverse city with a population of nearly 50 percent non-native Canadians. It has successfully implemented social integration strategies, embracing diversity through initiatives like the Toronto Public Library's newcomer settlement programmes. The city has also reversed sprawl and rejuvenated its core through urban design, transit investment, and waterfront development, increasing its central population by 95 percent since 1976.

Vienna

Vienna has successfully protected its rich heritage while becoming a highly liveable, innovative, and green city. Despite limitations from its UNESCO World Heritage Site status, the city has made focused developments, such as the new central train station, and prioritises environmental stewardship, aiming to be Europe's Environmental Model City. Vienna has achieved significant green spaces, waste reduction, and flood protection, raising the bar for liveability and sustainability.



Right:
1 Sydney skyline
© Augustin Vaillant/ Pexels
2 Auckland skyline
© rafaelbenari/123RF
3 Sydney skyline
© lkpro/123RF
4 Toronto streetcar
© ibrester/123RF
5 Toronto skyline
© diegograndi/123RF
6 Vienna main train station
© denisbelitsky/123RF

2014 PRIZE LAUREATE SUZHOU



The Jury's Citation

Suzhou is recognised for its success in meeting the multiple challenges of balancing economic growth with protection of cultural and built heritage.

Suzhou has successfully achieved economic growth, created jobs and a better standard of living, while balancing rapid urban growth with cultural heritage preservation and maintaining social stability amid a large influx of migrant workers.

Innovative, high-value, service-oriented economy

Suzhou has transitioned from an agricultural to a service-oriented economy, investing in infrastructure like Suzhou Industrial Park and Jinji Lake Central Business District. Innovative incentives and marketing attracted global businesses. Ongoing investments, such as a new metro system, will link the city's core with key industrial zones and development areas, supporting expansion.

Cultural and environmental conservation

Suzhou prioritised cultural conservation, redirecting growth to a new Central Business District while preserving its historic core. The city invested in its heritage, making it accessible to residents, businesses, and tourists. UNESCO-designated areas like Pingjiang Historic District were preserved and remain attractive neighbourhoods. Suzhou's innovative social policies, like the '1-for-3' relocation housing policy in the Stone Lake Scenic District, enabled farmers to exchange their rural homes for urban housing, improving their living conditions while allowing the city to rehabilitate the formerly polluted lake.

An inclusive society

Suzhou's inclusionary policies have ensured migrant workers receive equal access to health and education benefits, promoting community integration and social stability. This approach has facilitated the integration of workers into the city, contributing to its growth and development.

Suzhou's leaders have demonstrated strong leadership and commitment to the city's development, guided by good governance and planning. The city's long-term vision and effective leadership have enabled it to tackle urban challenges successfully, providing valuable lessons for other rapidly urbanising cities.



Top-left:
Jinji Lake Central
Business District
© 4045qd/123RF

Bottom-left:
Suzhou Museum
© minghu/123RF

2014 SPECIAL MENTIONS

Medellín

Medellín is recognised for its outstanding urban transformation, significantly reducing homicide rates by 86.2 percent. This success is attributed to bold leadership, social innovation, and small-scale yet high-impact urban projects. The city has tackled critical issues like drug-related crimes, territorial gang conflicts, unemployment, and social inequity through non-conventional approaches.

The government has implemented catalytic projects like upgrading informal settlements, MetroCable, library parks, urban escalators in Comuna 13, and public realm development. Social innovation is also prioritised, with sociologists and urban planners working together to empower citizens. Strong public-private alliances, like the Medellínovation district, foster economic development. Medellín's achievements serve as an inspiration to other cities facing similar challenges, demonstrating the power of visionary leadership and social innovation.

Yokohama

Yokohama is recognised for overcoming its urban challenges through excellent partnership with citizens and stakeholders. As a satellite city, Yokohama has established its own identity as a liveable, affordable, and family-friendly city by leveraging internationalisation and transport networks. The city's leadership is commended for its long-term vision and project-oriented approach.

Yokohama's collaboration with stakeholders and citizens is an admirable model, achieving significant transformation despite privately-held land. The city negotiated with stakeholders to develop the waterfront business district, Minato Mirai 21. Yokohama also achieved a remarkable 43.2 percent waste reduction through collaborative efforts. The city partners with industry to develop smart technologies, experimenting with energy management systems and new mobility solutions. Yokohama's outstanding collaboration serves as an exemplary model for cities worldwide.



Right:
1 Escalators at Comuna 13, Medellín
© matthiasbachmaier/123RF
2 Medellín city centre
© ibrester/123RF
3 Green corridor in Medellín
© ACI Medellín
4 Red brick warehouse in Yokohama
© leungchopan/123RF
5 Minato Mirai in Yokohama
© worldwidestock/123RF
6 Yokohama Ferry Terminal
© seaonweb/123RF

2012 PRIZE LAUREATE NEW YORK CITY



The Jury's Citation

New York City is recognised for its successful reinvention and rejuvenation towards a greater and greener city.

New York City transformed remarkably in the 2000s. After the trauma of 2001, visionary leadership defined a bold future vision, driving recovery and growth. Embracing complexity, density, and diversity, the city improved quality of life, building on earlier initiatives, and renewing confidence and optimism among New Yorkers.

Blueprint for a greater and greener city

New York City's rebirth was fueled by a comprehensive plan integrating land use, transportation, environment, and public health. This forward-looking strategy charts the city's future to 2030, addressing growth, infrastructure renewal, and climate change. It sets short-term milestones and aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2030.

Strategic capital investment for public infrastructure

New York City invested heavily in strategic capital projects, generating catalytic benefits. Over 700 acres of parks and 450 kilometres of bike lanes have been added, including Brooklyn Bridge Park, Hudson River Park, Times Square Plaza, and the High Line, boosting business confidence and restoring citizens' faith in the city's future.

Dialogue between government and civic groups

New York City's transformation is a result of strong political will and collaboration between government and civic groups. Bottom-up initiatives like the High Line have renewed neighbourhoods, boosted the economy, and improved quality of life. Underutilised spaces have been turned into public plazas, maintained through partnerships with community and business groups, fostering a sense of ownership.

The city's transformation is a testament to the dynamic partnership between city leaders, government agencies, and stakeholders. It serves as a model for other mature, high-density global cities to reframe their future in terms of sustainability, offering innovative and replicable solutions for cities worldwide.



*Top-left:
Skyline of New York City
with Little Island Park
in the foreground
© sepavo/123RF*

*Bottom-left:
The High Line
© bepsphoto/123RF*

2012 SPECIAL MENTIONS

Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) is recognised for its comprehensive City Development Plan, aiming to transform the city into a liveable, equitable, and sustainable metropolis. AMC's early successes include the Bus Rapid Transit System and Kankaria Lake redevelopment, demonstrating the importance of a clear vision and strong political will in tackling urban problems.

AHT Group AG & Sun Development*

AHT Group AG & Sun Development are recognised for their exceptional work on the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) Programme in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. This initiative addresses personal safety through cost-effective urban design measures, community participation, and consultation with residents, making it a model for cities worldwide facing similar challenges.

Brisbane

Brisbane City Council's Urban Renewal Brisbane (URB) agency has transformed the city from an economically stagnant and decaying metropolis to a vibrant hub. Over 20 years, URB's initiatives have revitalised inner-city living, regenerated industrial sites, and revitalised the riverfront, creating a model for sustainable urban renewal and economic transition.

Copenhagen & Malmö

Copenhagen and Malmö are jointly recognised for their collaborative efforts, sharing a vision of sustainability and pooling resources to achieve economic, environmental, and social goals. They have successfully promoted cycling and aim to be carbon neutral and sustainable cities, demonstrating the effectiveness of cross-boundary collaboration.

Vancouver

Vancouver is recognised for its strong visioning, community values, and long-term planning. The city resisted urban trends, instead focusing on inner-city densification, innovative planning, and exceptional urban design that showcases its natural setting. Vancouver's willingness to challenge prevailing trends and institutionalise key processes has created a more liveable and vibrant city.

* The Prize was opened to individuals and organisations categories in the 2010 – 2012 cycles.



Right:
 1 Brisbane skyline
 © jacksonstockphotography/123RF
 2 Sabarmati River in Ahmedabad
 © saiko3p/123RF
 3 Harere Park in Khayelitsha
 © AHT Group AG & Sun Development
 4 City of Malmö
 © tonygers/123RF
 5 Cycling in Copenhagen
 © bloodua/123RF
 6 Vancouver skyline
 © edgarbullon/123RF

2010 PRIZE LAUREATE BILBAO



The Jury's Citation

Bilbao is recognised for its integrated and holistic approach in urban transformation.

Bilbao's urban regeneration has driven social and economic change, strengthening the urban fabric and improving citizens' quality of life. The city's transformation from an industrial hub to a knowledge-based economy is a testament to its integrated approach, emphasising environmental cleanup, culture, internationalisation, design, infrastructure improvements, and historic restoration.

Bilbao successfully connected infrastructure investment with social integration, turning a once-divisive river into a hub for social and cultural integration, innovation, and creativity. This holistic approach has rejuvenated the city, demonstrating the power of urban regeneration in catalysing positive change and improving the lives of citizens.

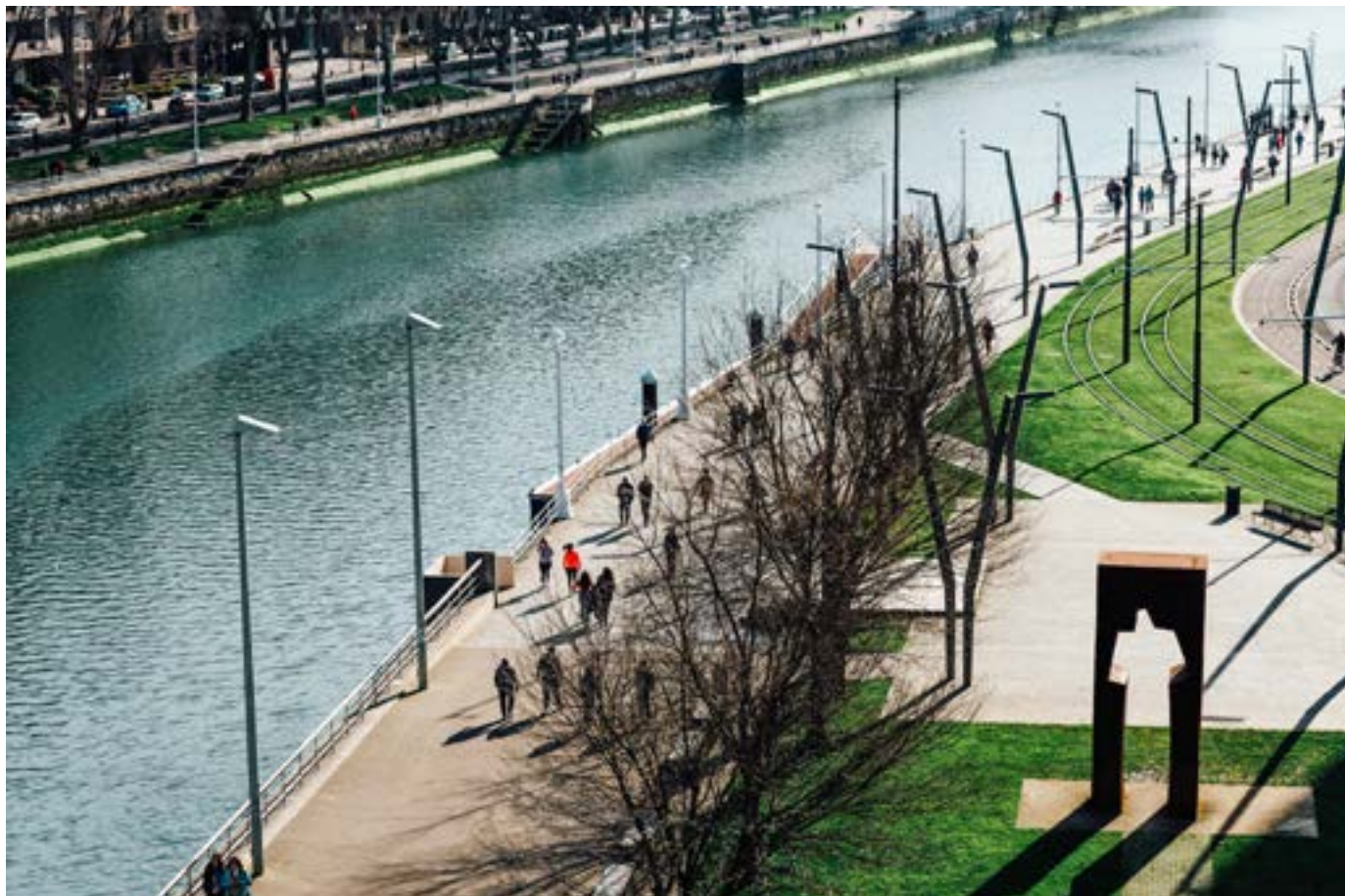
Bilbao Ria 2000

Bilbao Ria 2000 effectively aligns government, business, and community towards a shared vision. This framework showcases strong leadership and institutionalised decision-making, enabling successful implementation. Bilbao's success stems from aligning objectives and vision among stakeholders, demonstrating the power of public-private partnerships in driving urban transformation.

25 projects over 25 years

Bilbao is an inspiring city that has undergone profound transformation through a comprehensive 'city project' executed over 25 years. This incremental approach, comprising 25 urban projects, has significantly improved the environment, quality of life, social cohesiveness, cultural vibrancy, and economic competitiveness.

Bilbao's success goes beyond the 'Guggenheim Effect', demonstrating that strong leadership and a systematic, long-term plan are key to urban transformation. The city's 25 urban interventions showcase a visionary and well-integrated approach to planning, resulting in successful execution and a model for cities worldwide.



Top-left:
Abandoibarra waterfront
© bepsphoto/123RF

Bottom-left:
Promenade along
Nervión River
© jffarquitectos/123RF

2010 SPECIAL MENTIONS

Mrs Sheila Dikshit*

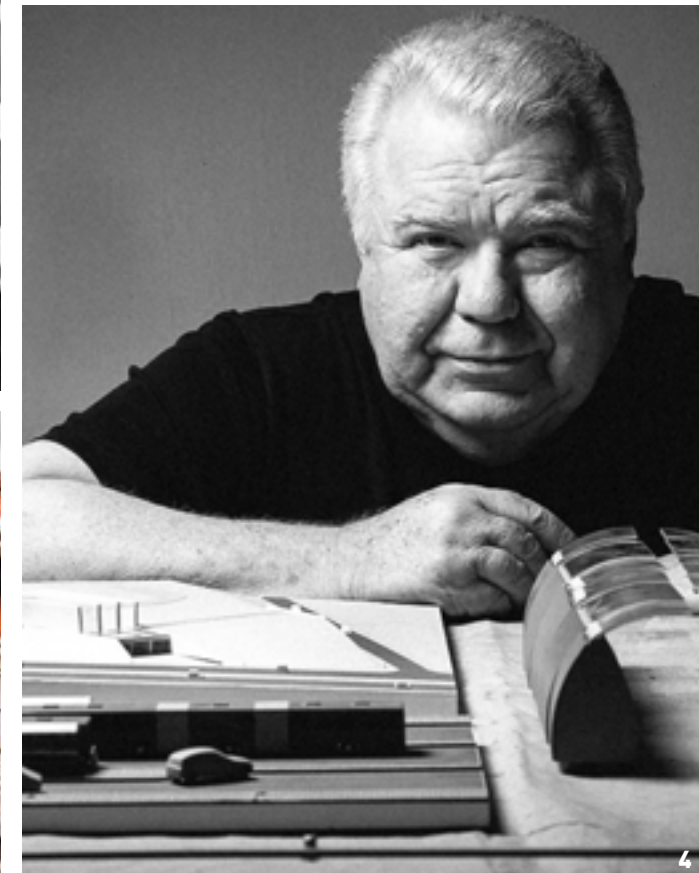
The late Mrs. Sheila Dikshit (1938 — 2019) is recognised for her notable contributions to improving the living environment of Delhi. Despite limited resources, she implemented project-based initiatives that enhanced quality of life, increased green cover from 26 to 300 square kilometres, and introduced CNG fuel for public transport, improving air quality. She also fostered citizen-government partnerships and successfully reformed the power sector, showcasing the impact of committed leadership.

Dr Jaime Lerner*

The late Dr. Jaime Lerner (1937 — 2021) is recognised for his innovative urban solutions during his terms as mayor of Curitiba and governor of Paraná. He pioneered the bus rapid transit system, flood-managing parks, and rural villages for low-income groups. His 'urban acupuncture' approach delivered tangible benefits to a wide population spectrum, providing valuable lessons for both developing and developed nations in addressing urban challenges with limited resources.

Melbourne

Melbourne is recognised for its integrated approach and commitment to strategic planning. Influential leaders and strong processes have institutionalised key principles into the government system. Melbourne is also noted for its inclusive planning process, involving the city council, businesses, and residents. This has transformed the city centre, increasing the resident population and creating vibrant public spaces, making it a liveable and attractive destination. Melbourne aims to maintain its ranking as one of the most liveable cities while increasing population density and extending benefits to the wider economic and social hinterland.



- Right:
- 1 Mrs Sheila Dikshit
© Wikipedia Commons
 - 2 CNG bus in Delhi
© artzzz/123RF
 - 3 Bus Rapid Transit in Curitiba
© mjbs/123RF
 - 4 Dr Jaime Lerner
© Instituto Jaimer Lerner
 - 5 Seafarers Bridge in Melbourne
© rixie/123RF
 - 6 Park along Yarra River in Melbourne
© ymgerman/123RF

* The Prize was opened to individuals and organisations categories in the 2010 – 2012 cycles.

Evaluation Process

Prize Council & Nominating Committee

Two-tier evaluation process

All submissions are evaluated through a rigorous two-tier process comprising the Prize Council and Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee reviews and examines submissions and recommends potential Laureates to the Prize Council. The Prize Council reviews and selects the Prize Laureate based on the recommendations by the Nominating Committee. Both panels consist of prominent practitioners, policy makers, academics and experts from a wide range of disciplines in the public and private sectors.

Evaluation Criteria

The Prize looks at the holistic transformation of the city over a period of at least ten years, and emphasises the creation of liveable, vibrant and sustainable urban communities within a quality built environment that incorporates the principles of sustainable development.

All submissions are evaluated based on the following criteria.

01 Leadership and Governance

Strong leadership and governance through vision, foresight and commitment to achieve the objectives of the urban transformation.

02 Creativity and Innovation

How the overall master plan/strategy and implementation approach established new models and benchmarks.

03 Replicability

Good replicable practices and ideas that can be adopted for the benefit of other cities.

04 Impacts of Urban Initiatives Implemented

How the urban initiatives implemented have effected positive changes to the urban environment, local communities, and the people in general.

05 Sustainability of the Transformation

Institutionalised processes to sustain the city's urban transformation that will be unaffected by changes in the city's leadership; buy-in from local communities to achieve the city's vision.

06 Integration of Plans

Successful integration or relation of plans to neighbouring cities and/or at the regional/metropolitan level.

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