5.0

International Case Studies

The following are best practice examples of Tower Neighbourhood Renewal in the European Union (EU). Research was undertaken in a series of site visits by the research team between 2005 and 2009.

5.1 – The Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
5.2 – The Framtiden Company, Göteborg, Sweden
5.3 – The Kvarterloeft Initiative, Copenhagen, Denmark
History
A massive experiment in post war public housing, the Bijlmermeer consisted of 31 eleven storey high-rise blocks set in a honeycomb pattern in a large park landscape. The neighbourhood was constructed between 1967 and 1975 as a response to the enormous middle class housing shortage in Amsterdam. The middle class didn’t arrive as planned, and instead, the Bijlmermeer attracted those with no other options. Over time, the Bijlmermeer became “a single-class, low-income and unemployed, ethnically diverse and increasingly non-white urban enclave” (B&H, 1993). The neighbourhood continues to serve as an entry point for newcomers, and is home to a mosaic of residents from over 30 different countries (B&H, 1993). The physical design of the neighbourhood has contributed to the crime, poverty and tenant dissatisfaction that the neighbourhood has experienced over its 40-year history (B&H, 1993). The original plans were not fully realized due to financial issues, which meant that stores and recreational facilities were not built, and the planned metro link to central Amsterdam did not occur until the 1980’s (H&W, 2003). Oscar Newman visited in 1972 and blamed the neighbourhood’s degradation, vandalism, and lack of safety on the many ‘indefensible’ spaces that he observed (H&W, 2003).

Integrated Renewal
By the early 1990s, aging buildings, corporate financial problems, crime, poverty, and tenant dissatisfaction were major issues in the neighbourhood (B&H, 1993). Since then, the Bijlmermeer has become a laboratory for testing out innovative renewal strategies to address these issues. Importantly, the renewal program has focused on addressing the roots of social problems in combination with physical restructuring, and has been driven by community engagement.

Physical Restructuring
The Bijlmermeer’s renewal has meant converting what had been a homogenous neighbourhood of high-rise
blocks into a mixed neighbourhood that offers a diversity of residential, business, recreation and shopping functions. To address the issue of concentrated poverty, renewal has included the demolition of half of the existing high rise flats, and the introduction of low-rise rental apartments and owner occupied single family dwellings (H&W, 2003). A mix of housing is intended to attract new, more affluent groups, and to provide existing residents with the opportunity to move around within the neighbourhood as their needs and desires change over time (H&W, 2003). Additionally, infill housing has been successful at breaking up and humanizing the scale of the original towers, and creating a range of safer and more active public, semi-public, and private outdoor spaces.

**Building Renewal**
The Apartment Towers that have been retained have been renovated to introduce mixed uses on the ground floors, improve waste management systems, energy use sub metering systems, district heating connections, renewable energy measures, as well as improved architectural finishes.

**Social investment**
Socio-economic measures have focused on job creation and celebrating multicultural diversity through social programming (H&W, 2003). Among the newly introduced social services are a new police station, improvements to public transit, new educational facilities, a women’s empowerment centre, and a centre to care for drug addicts (H&W, 2003). To develop the local economy, an employment advice bureau has been created, as have facilities for entrepreneurs starting out in business (H&W, 2003). Adjacent to the neighbourhood, a regionally significant employment centre called the ArenA and the AMC will offer 50,000 new jobs to the regional economy.

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**References**


Images
01) Play environments and new housing at tower base
02) Renovations to tower entrances
03) Model of integrated bicycle networks and new development with the Bijlmermeer
04) Gathering places and new family housing
05) Infill housing attached to existing tower
06) Main street framed my mixed-use infill
07) Pedestrian environment
08) Tower refurbishment
09) Photo Voltaics on tower roof
10-11) Improved open spaces
11) Overview of portion of Bijlmermeer, showing existing towers integrated into new infill
Framtiden
Forvaltnings AB Framtiden is a consortia of public companies responsible for the provision of market based affordable housing in the City of Göteborg (Göteborg) Sweden. Framtiden owns and operates over 70,000 units of housing.

Framtiden operates as a private company, and maintains its housing stock and programs through self generated revenue streams. Through subsidiary companies such as the parking authority, the development of new high end market housing for sale, and the general rental income generated through its existing housing stock, Framtiden generates financing to invest in the modernization of its older housing stock, most of which dates from the 1960s and 1970s during Sweden’s ‘Million Homes Program’. A considerable portion of it’s rental stock is kept at the affordability threshold, a rate negotiated with Sweden’s Tenant Organization. Housing for those in need is provided by Framtiden, with a rent subsidy provided by the Swedish Government. Recent reinvestment projects are consistent with the aims of Tower Neighbourhood Renewal, including green refurbishment, facilities upgrade, open space improvements and community programming, as well as the development of new units within older communities.

Case: Gardsten Solar House
Gardsten was built in the early 1970s as part of the national ‘Million Homes Program’, on the periphery of Göteborg. By 1997 many of the neighbourhood’s 2000 apartments were vacant. At this time, a subsidiary company of Framtiden called Gardstensbostader was formed to undertake the comprehensive social and environmental renewal of the neighbourhood. Among the many projects that have transformed the neighbourhood, the award winning ‘Solar House’ project is an example of high-quality building refurbishment undertaken in a northern climate that improves energy and social conditions.

Environmental Sustainability
On the west side of Gardsten, the solar house project has transformed a series of three and six storey apartment blocks that are organized around shared courtyards. The refurbished buildings feature a new highly insulated building envelope, are connected to a district heating system, have solar panels on the roof that heat domestic...
hot water, feature enclosed balconies that reduce heat loss and increase the livable space of each unit, and feature new energy efficient appliances. Prior to renewal, utility costs were incorporated into tenant’s rent, and consequently there was little incentive to conserve. Following the renovations, space heating, water, and electricity use is now metered separately for each unit, and tenants who conserve receive a rebate on their monthly rent. Between building upgrades and improved tenant conservation, building operating costs have been reduced by 45 per cent. As both an environmental and social strategy, ground floor spaces were turned into community amenities that include laundry facilities and greenhouses with composting equipment that transforms household organic waste into rich soil for gardening.

**Social Initiatives**

Eighty three per cent of Gardsten residents are of non-Swedish origin, and prior to renewal efforts, the area suffered from high unemployment rates and stigmatization within the city of Göteborg. During the neighbourhood’s renewal, Gardstensbostader was able to create 870 new jobs for Gardsten residents, many of them related to the building and landscape renovation work undertaken. Youth programs focussed on the renovation of neighbourhood green spaces, and new recreational programs were created. In 2005, ‘The New Face of the Million Programme’ exhibition brought a lot of positive attention to Gardsten from the rest of the city of Göteborg. This exhibit led to the feeling that Gardsten was now recognized as a living and vital part of the city and was an important symbolic moment to Gardsten residents.

**References**
The Enhanced Social Structure of Gardsten and Solar buildings in Gardsten (published by Gardstensbostader).
**History**

Between 1997 and 2007, the Kvarterløft Initiative, which translates to ‘integrated urban regeneration’, has had a great deal of success in positively transforming a number of 1960s era public housing estates in Denmark. A federal program led by the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, Kvarterløft projects were undertaken in neighbourhoods that tended to have large new immigrant populations, and that were growing increasingly socially, culturally and economically segregated from mainstream Danish society. A total of 12 neighbourhoods housing approximately 110,000 residents took part in the program, which conceptualized each neighbourhood as a distinct ‘urban regeneration laboratory’, where a set of coordinated projects were designed and implemented through a cooperative process. While each neighbourhood had a different set of specific issues and goals, at its core, the program’s central objective was to address the roots of social and economic decline in troubled areas, and to build a more equitable and integrated society.

**Renewal Process**

The Kvarterløft model stresses citizen involvement, integrated solutions, and public private partnerships. In order to reach the most isolated and exposed groups of residents, including ethnic minority groups, the process is approached in three-steps: participation, interaction and then integration.

**Institutional Structure**

The Kvarterløft projects required that various agencies at different levels of government work together effectively. In each Kvarterløft neighbourhood, a local secretariat was established and tasked with finding and coordinating solutions that would work locally.

**Branding**

The Kvarterløft model recognizes that combating stigmatization is a difficult and long term process. In order to
Where earlier urban restructuring projects in Denmark were met with conflict and criticism, the Kvarterløft initiative has largely been evaluated positively, and has garnered a great deal of international interest. The initiative has been the subject of numerous academic publications and conferences, and individual projects have won prestigious design and planning awards. As a model, what started out as a series of pilot projects has grown to influence mainstream Danish urban renewal and social housing legislation.

gradually change a neighbourhood’s negative image, a long term branding strategy needs to be developed that celebrates and communicates positive changes to a local and regional audience. Through websites, newsletters and neighbourhood magazines, many of the Kvarterløft projects engage locals in creating their own media in order to celebrate local success stories, encourage neighbourhood social organization, and to build local identity and pride. Some Kvarterløft neighbourhoods have stressed the use of signage and advertisements, issuing press releases to attract mainstream media coverage, and some have organized large cultural events to communicate positive stories about their neighbourhood. Physical renovation work that renews housing, courtyard environments and the neighbourhood landscape also has had a large impact on neighbourhood rebranding.

**Lesson**
The experience from the Kvarterløft initiative suggests that for Apartment Tower Neighbourhood Renewal to address the roots of socio-economic segregation, and to bring long term positive change in the lives of local residents:

- the renewal program must be of a significant scope to have an impact;
- renewal measures must be comprehensive, including physical and social investments; and
- renewal must be understood as a long term process.

**Project Highlights**
Kvarterløft projects in the tower districts of Norrebro Park, Avedore and Brondby Strand in and around Copenhagen offer inspiration and lessons to Tower Neighbourhood Renewal efforts in the GGH.

**References**

**Images**
01) New path and improved natural open space
02) Renewed towers and courtyards in Norrebro Park, Copenhagen
03) New shops and markets at base of towers
04) Overview image of neighbourhood
05) Well used Norrebro Park has been updated with new bicycle paths and improved open spaces and has become the heart of the renewed neighbourhood
06) Program book of 10 year anniversary of initiative
07) Youth sports programs in Brondby Strand, Copenhagen
08 - 09) New lighting and amenities along Prags Blvd in Holmbladsgade, Copenhagen