

**URBACT**



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**GreenPlace**



# INSPIRING PRACTICES on GOVERNANCE

September 2024



## INTRODUCTION

### The GreenPlace network

GreenPlace is an URBACT network consisting of ten partners who aim at developing a set of activities for "recycling" unused urban areas, using social participation tools. The project takes into account not only the regional specificities and conditions of each of the partners but also introduces greenery as a key factor in limiting climate change in urban areas. It is running from July 2023 to December 2025.

It is led by the City of Wroclaw (Poland) and is composed of 9 project partners:

- Boulogne-sur-mer Développement Côte d'Opale - France
- Bucharest Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association - Romania
- Cehegín - Spain
- Limerick - Ireland
- Löbau - Germany
- Nitra - Slovakia
- Onda - Spain
- Quarto d'Altino - Italy
- Vila Nova de Poiares - Portugal

More information and contacts : <https://urbact.eu/networks/greenplace>.

### Overview of the Inspiring practices on Governance

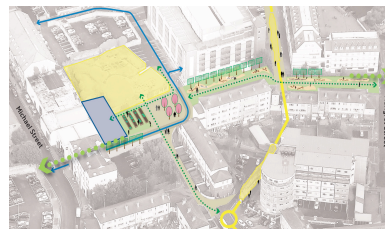
The practices presented here were exchanged during the Core Network Meeting of the GreenPlace Network which took place on 18-19 June 2024 in Bucharest, Romania.

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## PLACE MAKING AND PUBLIC REALM DEPARTMENT

### Identity

- Limerick City, Ireland
- 102, 287 inhabitants , 61.3km<sup>2</sup>
- <https://www.limerick.ie/council/services/planning-and-placemaking/placemaking-%26-public-realm>



### Initial challenge

Historically, the various departments in Limerick City & County Council had been broadly focussing on the key services for the public, road infrastructure, housing, water services, street cleaning, parks etc. This was largely dictated by funding available at Government level in Ireland, where the priorities in general were the upkeep and provision of new road infrastructure from an economic development perspective and the provision of social and affordable housing with the associated water services for same. The whole concept of public realm was not seen as a priority and was very much confined to materials being used in relevant road projects such as the provision of pavements for footpaths, lighting columns and street furniture in general. There was no particular focus on the placemaking aspect of the particular project and the corresponding public realm.

### Proposed solution

With the vision for the City outlined in [Limerick 2030 – An Economic and Spatial Plan for the city](#), a number of key strategic projects were recommended to revitalise the city centre. It became apparent in the delivery of these projects, that changes in the operating model in the Council were required in order to put a focus on the placemaking aspect that would be required to make the city and indeed the towns and villages in Limerick, more liveable and attractive places to work and visit. This led to the introduction of a new department, Public Realm & Place Making which was also coupled with the Planning and Environment & Recreation departments and a Director in charge of these departments. This structure was set up in 2018.

### Changes it brought

The change has made a significant difference for Limerick, where there now is a particular focus on placemaking for the many projects in the city. It has led to the establishment of a Public Realm Strategy where there is a vision for the city, with key areas being identified for significant improvements and also connectivity to other key strategic projects. The public realm strategy also gives guidance on materials to be used in the various areas to ensure consistency in materials and a coherent approach to the redesign for the city. It has also led to the integration of other projects and departments where placemaking is integral. There has also been increased funding provided by the Council for public realm and place making projects due to the visible benefits for the city and associated economic development.

### Transfer potential

The introduction of a new Public Realm & Place Making department can also provide the same benefits to other cities, where there are challenges and competition for delivery of projects across the municipality. The GreenPlace project for Limerick very much aligns with the objectives of the Public Realm Strategy and has been included in the Strategy as shown in the images.

### Main takeaways

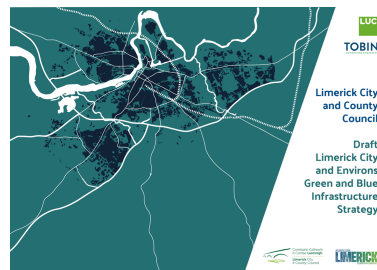
- Place making is a key component of public realm projects
- It is important that your project is included in a strategic document
- Integration of projects and cross cutting themes.



# BLUE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

**Identity**

- Limerick, Ireland
- 102, 287 inhabitants , 61.3km2
- <https://www.limerick.ie/council/services/environment/climate-change/limerick-city-and-environs-green-and-blue>



**Initial challenge**

There was no strategic document in place for the management of blue or green infrastructure in Limerick, no document to inform and guide the planning and management of Limerick’s network of multi-functional green and blue spaces. There was no real information on the Council assets or the opportunities they presented. There was also no strategic assessment of the green spaces and where there was a deficiency in green spaces or any direction for the management of biodiversity and ecology.

**Proposed solution**

The proposed solution was to engage a Consultant to prepare a blue and green infrastructure strategy for the metropolitan area of Limerick, that would assess the existing blue and green infrastructure, map all of the green and blue areas in the metropolitan district and provide a detailed action plan of key priority actions/objectives as part of the strategy.

**Changes it brought**

The BGI strategy strengthened the importance of green and blue spaces in Limerick. It allowed for the integration of the document across other departments in the Council and provided strategic direction in the development of existing and future green spaces for recreation and biodiversity. It identified ten priority actions for enhancing green spaces and ensured that green spaces and recreation were considered at the planning stage in particular for major housing developments and other relevant projects in the Council. One of the outputs of the strategy was the development of a toolkit for developers. The 10 priority actions are shown below and are comprehensive for the future direction in how we manage our green spaces.

**Transfer potential**

The format of the strategy is relevant for all cities. It provides an action plan that is relevant and from which further projects can be developed.

**Main takeaways**

- The importance of having a strategic document for green spaces and driving the message regarding biodiversity.
- The importance of highlighting the benefits of green spaces for recreation, health and well-being.
- The strategy provides a basis from which to build and deliver on actions identified.

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| GBI Priority Action #1  | Embed GBI in the implementation of Public and Private Projects                                |
| GBI Priority Action #2  | Enhance existing open space provision within the Strategy Area                                |
| GBI Priority Action #3  | Create new formal parks and natural & semi-natural parks to address green space deficiencies  |
| GBI Priority Action #4  | Protect, value and enhance amenity green space by applying an appropriate management approach |
| GBI Priority Action #5  | Enhance, protect and develop the network of blueways  |
| GBI Priority Action #6  | Integrate GBI in the delivery of the network of active travel routes                          |
| GBI Priority Action #7  | Enhance recreational access to the River Shannon and tributaries                              |
| GBI Priority Action #8  | Develop Tree and Biodiversity Strategies for the Strategy Area                                |
| GBI Priority Action #9  | Promote community engagement and raise public awareness in the development of GBI             |
| GBI Priority Action #10 | Incorporate smart mechanisms of connecting GBI initiatives with the public                    |

## GREEN LEAF AWARD

### Identity

- Limerick , Ireland
- 102, 287 inhabitants , 61.3km<sup>2</sup>
- <https://www.limerick.ie/european-green-leaf-city>



### Initial challenge

Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) is committed to ensuring that Limerick's economic success is not achieved at the expense of either its environment or the quality of life of its citizens and that the city grows and thrives in a sustainable way.

Some of the challenges that face LCCC in this regard are: achieving compact development and facilitating more people to live and work in the city centre; ensuring that a growing population does not result in traffic congestion by offering realistic alternatives to the private car; dealing with the causes and impacts of climate change (including more extreme weather events and flooding); moving the emphasis in waste management further up the hierarchy more towards reduction and reuse; ensuring a clean, health and enjoyable environment for its citizens. LCCC is responsible for a range of functions which enable it to respond effectively to these challenges. In all areas, a fundamental principle which underpins the council approach is the need to empower the people of Limerick to participate in the development of their community, both rural and urban.

### Proposed solution

Limerick is committed to sustainability and to environmental protection and improvement. Entering the European Green Leaf Award allowed us to benchmark ourselves against other European Cities and see where we can do more to protect our natural capital.

LCCC are constantly looking for new and better ways with which to engage with our citizens.

### Changes it brought

As a Green leaf city, LCCC believe we can lead and inspire other cities with our examples of best practice such as becoming Ireland's first Lighthouse City; providing online platforms to engage with citizens and our flagship engagement events such as Team Limerick Clean-up.

We believe that being an effective Green Leaf Ambassador is all about communication and this is something we in Limerick are very good at. We have developed "[Limerick.ie](https://www.limerick.ie)" which is the most advanced digital platform of any local authority in Ireland and has won numerous awards to this effect.

LCCC ran a [programme](#) of information events and demonstration projects to inspire and inform our citizens on environmental issues.

### Transfer potential

Easily transferable. LCCC created a [YouTube channel](#) to share learnings and takeaways from our Green leaf Year.

### Main takeaways

- Limerick as a smart green liveable city.
- A city that welcomes nature and makes space for it, that is no longer wedded to outdated concepts of what public spaces should be.
- Ability to communicate with, engage and mobilize citizens and stakeholder organisations around environmental issues.



## REGULATION FOR INCLUSIVE GREEN SPACES

### Identity

- Nitra, Slovakia
- 77 000 inhabitants, 100.48 km<sup>2</sup>  
<https://nitra.sk/manual-tvorby-verejnych-priestranstiev-pre-mesto-nitra/>



### Initial challenge

Nitra is a city whose public spaces are built on the basis of the average person, so their use is limited by various barriers. The city of Nitra decided to move towards building spaces based on the principle of inclusion, i.e. on the principle of creation for the weakest.

### Proposed solution

INCLUSIVE LIVING is the way to build a society that does not create barriers, either physical or mental, and does not support the persistence of deep-rooted stereotypes. The possible exclusion does not only concern the experienced image of minorities, but also groups of people that may not be a minority, for example women, who are often afraid of using spaces due to their inappropriate design.

The City of Nitra strongly supports the inclusivity of its green areas with the development of two major tools. Its public procurement rules necessitate to fulfil 5 criteria of sustainability, inclusivity, aesthetic, resilience and safety.

In addition, since 2019, the City of Nitra has been working with experts on the preparation of a Design Manual of Public Spaces of Nitra. The manual set three main principles of an inclusive use:

- DESTROY STEREOTYPES! Spaces, by their very nature, should be open to the widest possible range of user groups.
- DO NOT BUILD BARRIERS! Barriers as a means of separating a certain group of residents from another group do not belong in the environment of an inclusive city.
- DESIGN INCLUSIVELY! Inclusive design must be rewritten in the individual compositional elements forming the space. Without a concrete transcription, the concept of inclusivity will remain only a vague concept.

### Changes it brought

All project-controlled processes at the office, whether soft or hard - investment, during the initiation phase of the project will be now checked for the possibility of applying inclusiveness. So far, the groundwork is not very visible, many hard investments are still at the stage of project proposals.

### Transfer potential

You need high-quality process management and employee expertise. For the development of manuals, it is necessary to contact external experts.

### Main takeaways

Incorporate the results into the management processes of the office, and, also ensure concrete regulations and models of solutions.



## INSTITUTIONALISING THE BOTTOM-UP TRANSFORMATION OF THE FORMER FORTE MARGHERA

### Identity

- Quarto d'Altino, Italy
- 8 129 inhabitants, 28.33 km<sup>2</sup>
- <https://fondazionefortemarghera.it>
- Contact: Cooperativa Controvento  
venezia.controvento@gmail.com



### Initial challenge

The site of Forte Marghera is located on the Venetian mainland, a few kilometres from the centre of Quarto d'Altino. Its construction dates back to the early 19th century, carried out by the Austrians, who decided to build a fortress to defend Venice at the closest point on the mainland, where the 15th-century village of Marghera (formerly "Margerà," meaning "the sea was there") once stood. At the outbreak of the First World War, in 1915, the defensive system of Forte Marghera was fully efficient. However, the disaster of the Italian army in the Northern regions led, at the end of the war, in 1918, to abandoning Venice and the Fort in favor of more secure military bases. The military function also disappeared: the structures were progressively transformed into barracks, powder magazines and warehouses, until their definitive abandonment in the 1980s. The initial challenge involved the recovery of the area, which was completely compromised and overtaken by dense vegetation. Managing the fort and its restoration was complicated for the municipalities.

### Proposed solution

The restoration of the area was entrusted to the Forte Marghera Foundation, responsible for studying and promoting the cultural and natural heritage of local fortifications and, in general, military historical heritage. The land use plan aimed to make Forte Marghera a "citadel of cultural production," explicitly excluding the entrance of various real estate speculators (a risk feared in the past when there was speculation about a chain of hotels among the investors). After the restoration, the area was entrusted to the social cooperative "Controvento," which manages some of the spaces within the fort. The cooperative originally started as a cultural association before evolving into a cooperative with 150 employees, managing projects related to food services based strictly on short supply chains and organic products, as well as cultural and musical events – almost always free – that revitalize an otherwise ghostly place throughout the year, and social integration activities through employment. Controvento successfully redefined the meaning of an old space, repositioning it as a pleasant place for meetings, relationships, and collaborations. Since 2018, Forte Marghera has hosted Special Projects organized as part of the Architecture Biennale and Art Biennale. It is a historical complex currently used to host events, with large green spaces available

### Changes it brought

Through a multi-governance public-private collaboration system, the structures have been maintained and preserved.

### Transfer potential

High Transferability Potential:  
However, there must be a clear vision from the Municipality to maintain the site's function, without completely handing over governance to private entities.

### Main takeaways

Even peripheral locations can become drivers for the cultural economy and create shared value for the community.



## GREEN CITY ACCORD

### Identity

- Vila Nova de Poaires, Coimbra, Portugal
- 7000 inhabitants, 84.5km<sup>2</sup>
- <https://cm-vilanovadepoiares.pt/1703/green-city-accord>



### Initial challenge

Vila Nova de Poaires had faced increasing concerns over air quality, water quality, and urban green spaces, directly impacting the health and well-being of citizens. The Municipality recognized the urgency to act by implementing integrated policies and programs that promote circular economy practices, reduce waste and noise pollution, and conserve urban biodiversity.

### Proposed solution

The action was triggered by Vila Nova de Poaires' commitment to meet environmental standards set by joining the Green City Accord in 2021. This commitment aimed to transform the city into a cleaner, healthier, and more resource-efficient environment.

Stakeholders involved included local government officials, environmental experts, community representatives, and citizens. Steps included assessing current environmental conditions, developing action plans, implementing projects to improve air and water quality, enhance green spaces, and promote sustainability. The process spans several years with funding sourced from municipal budgets, government grants, and international funds dedicated to sustainability and urban development.

### Changes it brought

Currently, Vila Nova de Poaires has made significant strides in achieving its environmental objectives outlined in the Green City Accord. This includes implementing initiatives to enhance air and water quality, expand green spaces, and promote sustainable practices. These efforts have resulted in tangible benefits for residents, including improved air quality, increased access to green areas, and enhanced community engagement in sustainability. The added value of these initiatives is evident through measurable improvements in environmental indicators and positive feedback from stakeholders, underscoring the municipality's commitment to addressing initial environmental challenges effectively.

### Transfer potential

- Commitment to global standards through the Green City Accord.
- Integrated strategies involving government, experts, and the community.
- Engaging residents through education and participation.
- Monitoring progress rigorously for accountability and improvement.

### Main takeaways

- **Community Engagement:** Involving residents for strong support and sustainability.
- **Integrated Planning:** Collaborating across sectors for holistic strategies.
- **Monitoring and Adaptation:** Implementing rigorous monitoring for effective long-term goals.

