THE FREIBURG CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE URBANISM

learning from place

THE ACADEMY OF URBANISM
FREIBURG

Have a look at Freiburg in many different ways;
High up in a cable car shifting slightly in the air
Walking through the old town with a hungry tourist’s gaze
Wandering through a gallery, with time to stand and stare
Or sitting in a café with a glass of local wine.
From every different angle Freiburg is a city
That takes the time to sparkle, takes the time to shine
In a way that’s somehow more profound than pretty.
There’s nothing wrong with pretty but that’s not the whole story
Of a place as multilayered, multifaceted as this
With history, culture, architecture and a dash of scenic glory
As expansive as a group hug or intimate as a kiss:
So much is hidden from your gaze; it’s a mystery, it’s an iceberg
With hidden depths and striking beauty from all angles: Freiburg!

Ian McMillan
Poet-in-Residence
The Academy of Urbanism

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Renowned for decades as one of Europe’s greenest cities, Freiburg has an important story to tell about post-war reconstruction, challenging conventions, innovating new directions in transport and energy, and maintaining its momentum to become an extremely liveable environment that combines tradition and modernity.

Freiburg was awarded the title of European City of the Year 2010 at The Academy of Urbanism’s Awards Ceremony in London in November 2009. This prestigious award was voted by the Academicians following a short-listing process, detailed study visit and a documented assessment report.

In celebration of this recognition, the City of Freiburg hosted a study tour and discourse with the Academy, producing a Charter that advocates good practice in sustainable urbanism. This is the product.

The Freiburg Charter does not purport to be a definitive approach for all cultures, climates or urban planning regimes. Nor does it seek to catalogue every lesson learned in Freiburg over the last 20-30 years. Rather it seeks to draw out and illuminate some of the bigger issues and themes experienced by the city, and to present these as a set of principles that other cities, towns, neighbourhoods and practitioners can consider:

The Freiburg Charter consists of a series of high-level principles, distilled from experience, for reflection and adaptation to suit different circumstances. These are certainly not intended as fixed commandments to be copied slavishly by uncritical recipients.

We commend this Charter as a tool for progressive dialogue, and will use it to help raise aspirations and improve practice among our growing networks of places and practitioners.

The Academy’s thanks are due to all those who have contributed to and supported this initiative, but in particular to Professor Wulf Daseking, Freiburg’s Head of Urban Planning for the last 20 years, for his vision and leadership; to Andreas von Zadow of JTP Cities (Berlin) for helping to navigate the project from its inception through to publication; and to Land Securities, our sponsor, for their support and encouragement throughout.

Kevin Murray
Chairman
The Academy of Urbanism
Urban design and planning has always been of special importance to Freiburg. Industry never played a very significant part in the city’s growth, due to its geographical location in the south west of Germany. As a result, it was architecture that became a valuable economic driver during the 20th century.

As over 80% of the historic city centre was destroyed during World War II, the foundation for Freiburg’s development was established during the post-war years. In contrast to many other German cities, the majority of the elements that made up the historic city centre were reconstructed in Freiburg. This adherence to a previously established urban layout provided a framework for different architectural styles and a variety of uses. By supporting the centuries-old European building tradition, Freiburg has grown to be a colourful, vibrant city full of architectural diversity.

In the 1960s, a crucial decision was made to retain and expand the tram network, making this the backbone for new urban development in Freiburg. In addition, the concept of ‘five fingers’ was created in order to clearly separate green open spaces from building zones.

Freiburg expanded during the 1970s with new settlements being built to accommodate the growing population. The oil crash of 1973 brought with it the realisation that urban planning needed to be more environmentally friendly. In addition, the Green movement in the Freiburg region gained impetus after plans to build a nuclear power plant close to the city were defeated by peaceful protests from the local residents.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Freiburg began to explore new ways of developing inner areas of the city. Tramlines were extended and the quality of residential areas improved through the architectural re-design of streets and squares. Following the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986, Freiburg made the saving of natural resources the most important element of all future planning. Greenfield developments were limited to an absolute minimum and there was a clear prioritisation of public transport over individual traffic.

The city’s environmental policy contained goals for saving water, as well as for reducing the energy consumption of buildings. In addition, new ideas were brought forward which led to areas being created through the provision of self-funding mechanisms and serviced plots, to be developed by individuals, co-operatives and investors, supported by an enabling masterplan and development guidelines. The new districts of Rieselfeld and Vauban were developed following these principles. Now, both projects are recognised worldwide as examples of best practice.

The current land-use plan for the city of Freiburg concentrates development within the existing city framework. With a few exceptions, this means that the city will be developed further only within its present boundaries. In this way, the existing infrastructure is optimised and the additional costs usually involved with new developments are avoided.

Although the focus is principally on development within the city, it is important to recognise that Freiburg’s population figures are still climbing and that the number of jobs (e.g. in universities and high-ranking scientific facilities) is also constantly increasing.

Freiburg is well prepared for the future. The city will continue to be a model for sustainable urban design and planning due to its clear understanding of the importance of continuity, location and quality - in buildings as well as in the design of public space. Architectural design competitions will continue to be an indispensable aid in securing the city’s sustainable, future-orientated development.

The City of the Future is a decentralised city, a city of education and culture, with a balanced social mix. The safeguarding of jobs is a vital component, as well as the creation of new and innovative businesses and facilities. Ecological urban renewal is another key factor. Qualities such as persistence, co-operation, participation, partnership and reliability underpin the successful future of a city. Freiburg has been following these principles for decades and they have led to the excellence of urban quality we enjoy today.

Prof. Wulf Daseking
Head of Urban Planning
The City of Freiburg
Cities tend to resist easy definition. Some follow a clear development pattern, others grow through seemingly random events. They are the product of a combination of culture, politics, business expertise, financial investment and citizen action. As populations increase, cities continue to be created.

In the past, cities were places that provided protection, encouraged trade, created employment and fostered culture. The exchange of goods went hand-in-hand with interpersonal exchange: cities were a place for meeting other people - for business or for pleasure. Today’s cities are composed of complex systems with interconnected networks and a breathtaking diversity of spaces and places. Cities are never static. They are constantly changing, sometimes slowly, sometimes fast, depending on social pressures and innovations in technology.

THE ROUTE TO A SUSTAINABLE CITY

In 19th century Europe it was the Industrial Revolution that made the greatest change to the typical city structure. The move from a mostly agrarian society to an industrial one had a dramatic impact on the pattern of governance, as well as on the way people lived and worked. In the 20th century the shape of the city was further transformed by the invention - and later the invasion - of the motor car. Some argue that the digital revolution is bringing about a third wave of change, albeit one that may in fact aid the recovery of traditional values and functions in the city.

To date, cities have grown organically as the physical manifestation of a multi-structured society. In the future, they may need some kind of architectural ‘guiding principle’ to help those in charge deal responsibly with limited resources and an environment that is universally under pressure.

Limits to Growth, the 1972 report prepared by the Club of Rome, is a compelling account of the finite nature of the world’s natural reserves. The report called for the careful management of such resources. Ever since the oil crash of 1973 and the explosion of the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl in 1986, it has become apparent to most people that we cannot continue ‘as usual’. Countries, regions, cities and communities have to face this reality and work towards finding a solution.

KEY OBJECTIVES

The Freiburg Charter strives to achieve the following objectives, which should be at the forefront of every responsible urban development project:

- The conservation of identity, the strengthening of neighbourhood and the encouragement of cultural diversity and distinctiveness.
- The expansion of the public transport system and its interconnection with existing and new developments.
- The wise use of resources, the minimisation of additional land-take and the encouragement of moderate degrees of urban density.
- The safeguarding and interconnection of green spaces and networks working towards quality standards and the conservation of public spaces.
- The assurance of social harmony and the advancement of social and functional interaction.
- The safeguarding of existing jobs and the creation of new and innovative ones.
- The advancement of a culture of discourse.
- The creation of long-term partnerships between the community and the public and private sectors.
- The participation in life-long learning processes - seeing urban life in its wider context.

We believe that urban planning should play a pioneering role in addressing these challenges. Economics, ecology, education, culture and the fundamental structure of society are all elements that need to be re-examined carefully. The early participation of the citizen and the integration of regional networks are essential to ensure that the city of the future is in the forefront of positive, sustainable change.
**QUO VADIS CIVITAS?**

The future model for new settlements should be the *Compact City*. This is a city concept consisting of independently functioning units, in which the aspects of everyday life can be laid out and accessed within walking distance by all members of society. The *City of the Future* is a city of social and functional integration, cultural diversity, accessible education, resource conservation and regional dialogue. When outward growth is unavoidable or imperative for economic or cultural reasons, that growth should follow the principle of the *Compact City*. The following 12 principles are intended to provide the point of departure for the *Compact City* and as such serve as the foundation for the *Sustainable City*. They should be applied to all new development.

**THE 12 GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**SPATIAL**

I  DIVERSITY, SAFETY AND TOLERANCE
II  CITY OF NEIGHBOURHOODS
III  CITY OF SHORT DISTANCES
IV  PUBLIC TRANSPORT & DENSITY

**CONTENT**

V  EDUCATION, SCIENCE & CULTURE
VI  INDUSTRY & JOBS
VII  NATURE & ENVIRONMENT
VIII  DESIGN QUALITY

**PROCESS**

IX  LONG-TERM VISION
X  COMMUNICATION & PARTICIPATION
XI  RELIABILITY, OBLIGATION & FAIRNESS
XII  CO-OPERATION & PARTNERSHIP
“The safest places are usually those which attract a broad variety and age-range of people, that mix working, walking and relaxing and are active throughout the day and late into the evening.” Simon Ogden

Freiburg’s historic city, extensively destroyed during World War II and carefully rebuilt in fine grain afterwards, became an important commercial magnet for the region with thousands of people using the car-free spaces to see, enjoy, shop, live and work.

Being a student city, Freiburg has always been a young city and profited from a wide mix of people.

Spatial principles
Diversity, Safety & Tolerance

• Encouragement of a balanced age and social profile within functioning neighbourhoods, with the provision of appropriate workplaces for all sectors of the population and the encouragement of innovative residential models.

• The provision of facilities in public and private infrastructure for all generations with the provision of well-managed places balanced with free spaces.

• The provision of a full range of facilities, especially for very young and very old citizens.

• The integration of all strands of society irrespective of ethnicity, gender or age.
“Great neighbourhoods emerge when individuals have a sense of pride and their neighbours have a collective responsibility for the quality of the places where they live, work and visit.” Kevin McGeough

Spatial Principles

City of Neighbourhoods

• Decentralised governance, with a defined degree of empowerment and personal responsibility, is indispensable for cities and should be actively encouraged.

• Decentralised governance is of particular importance in: residential living and working, social infrastructure, education and culture, recreation and management of green spaces and networks.

• The protection of a city’s identity is a precondition for sustainable urban planning and development.

Rieselfeld is one of several newly developed neighbourhoods on brownfield land where the City of Freiburg has revealed its forward-thinking policies over the last three decades. Schools, churches, sports facilities, shops, recreation areas and public transport hubs give shape to the new heart of Rieselfeld’s community; a demonstration of the principles of The Freiburg Charter.

Local markets are open for business in the newly developed neighbourhoods as well as in the historic centre. Freiburg’s specific supermarket policy helped to strengthen the existing local centres by restricting the development of shopping centres on the fringe of the city.
The aerial view of the completed RIESELFELD development clearly illustrates that one aspect of the masterplan design was to shorten the distances travelled in daily life. With more than 4,200 apartments providing accommodation for 12,000 people, this 70-hectare new settlement is the largest neighbourhood project in the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg.

The reduction of vehicles on the streets reflects the will and leadership of city politics, which in turn has resulted in a great variety of liveable public spaces everywhere in the city.

All users of public space must respect the activities of others.
Spatial principles
Public transport & Density

• Public transport needs to be closely integrated with the urban design vision and, as a general principle, must always be given priority over car traffic. Increased urban density along public transport routes should be brought about in a sensitive and sustainable manner.

• Land uses with civic function and high frequency of use should be located in close proximity to public transportation nodes in order to increase urban intensity.

“Freiburg shows how the car can be tamed, through quality public transport, safer cycling, and neighbourhoods where you can hear the birds sing.” Dr. Nicholas Falk

Freiburg central station is located in the city centre. Designed as an integrated transport hub, it combines high-speed, local and regional train services with access to local buses, taxis, a multi-storey bicycle facility including storage, repair workshop and ‘Cafe Velo’, along with the provision of shops, hotels, cinemas and 24 hour bars - a place which never sleeps.

Freiburg and its region has an extremely tight grid and an integrated tariff system, which has been built together over time to improve the appeal and ease of public transport connections.
“Schools and universities play a vital role in the continuous process of rejuvenation - so places like Freiburg can maintain their economic and cultural vitality.” Stephen Neal

Freiburg’s architect Rolf Disch built the Heliotrope in 1994, a rotating solar tree-house which follows the sun.

The Solar Factory has been established as a place to produce solar panels as well as a local showroom for the latest solar technology.

**Content Principles**

**Education, Science & Culture**

- Schools and universities, research facilities and cultural institutions make a significant impact on the attractiveness and the quality of a city. They have a strong influence on public life and can have a decisive influence on the planning culture of a city.

- A city has to create opportunities for personal development and life-long learning.
In terms of both economy and ecology, Freiburg has been most successful in the fields of renewable energy research and marketing these achievements. Pioneering action has been reinforced by countless awards and high visitor numbers to unique projects.

**CONTENT PRINCIPLES**

**INDUSTRY & JOBS**

- The most important task for the future is the conservation of existing employment and the development of groundbreaking and innovative businesses. In order to achieve this, we must fully tap into every opportunity that enables the city to maintain existing jobs on the one hand, and to develop new ones on the other.
- The trend to greenfield development and ‘edge city’ has to be counteracted with a concentration on the regeneration of existing urban fabric. The proper application of these principles is indispensable.

The ‘Sun Ship’ forms one of the main axes in VAUBAN and is a mixed-use building with bicycle and car parking, a supermarket, local shopping facilities, business and enterprise units, apartments and solar-plus houses that generate surplus energy to be sold back to the grid at a profit for the householder.

Solar panels can be found on the roofs of City Hall, on schools, churches and private houses, on facades and towers. The Badenova Football Stadium is the first stadium worldwide to have its own solar power plant.

“Vauban and Rieselfeld show how good urban design principles can be applied to create sustainable and prosperous communities.” Eleonora Cervellera
CONTENT PRINCIPLES
NATURE & ENVIRONMENT

• The conservation of biological diversity, the wise use of resources for the benefit of future generations and the protection of a healthy and liveable environment are key objectives for urban development.

• All areas of planning have to be evaluated for their impact on the environment prior to implementation, in order to safeguard the habitats of animals and plants as well as historically-important cultural landscapes.

“Freiburg integrates water and landscape within both its historic centre and new settlements, simultaneously improving quality of life and reducing energy demands.” Prof. Brian Evans

Main street in VAUBAN: sustainable transport integrated with soft landscape and rainwater collection, creating cold air movement along ventilation corridors and combining to create the foundation for an energy-efficient development with independent local heating systems. This attractive, family-friendly eco-neighbourhood was built for 5,000 people on a former military site of some 38 hectares. The area is traffic-calmed, with the majority of households not owning a car.
CONTENT PRINCIPLES
DESIGN QUALITY

• Most planning decisions shape the appearance of the city for generations. These decisions must therefore support and enhance the character of a city by promoting the highest qualities of design.

• Public spaces play a key role: together with their neighbouring buildings they form the public face of a city.

• Public property rights and the authority for disposal of public space must remain with the body politic in order to mediate between different interests and to counteract undesirable development.

• The development of key building projects has to be led by the planning authority from initial concept through to realisation on the ground.

• Tools such as architectural design competitions, multiple commissioning and expert panels should be employed as a general principle, in order to find solutions for important buildings and public spaces.

• The structure of the plot plan - as a starting point for diversity - plays a very important role.

• Processes of urban redevelopment will be of special importance in the future.

“The urban grain in Freiburg, both in the historic centre and its new settlements, is the secret of its success - small scale, responsive and full of character.” Richard Rees

VAUBAN. Low-energy buildings are obligatory, either zero-energy or energy-plus and the application of solar technology is standard for most dwellings. VAUBAN was one of the first settlement projects to promote collective building and co-operative housing projects. Instead of one big investor, hundreds of small investors made the large-scale development possible.
Wolf Daseking, Head of Urban Planning in the City of Freiburg, explains the signs in VAUBAN:

No parking concept: No cars in blue areas except for deliveries and emergency access.

Energy concept: Low energy standard shown green; energy plus standard shown yellow.

**Behaviour Code for Traffic-calmed Zone**
- Drive at walking speed
- People can use the full width of the street
- Children can play everywhere
- Parking is only possible on marked spaces
- All traffic users have to pay particular attention to each other

**Process Principles**

**Long-Term Vision**

- Consistent urban planning and development needs to follow a unifying vision that refers back to the city’s past and projects forward several decades.
- The face of the city must not be submitted to short-lived fashions or political whim. Additions to cities that have evolved over historical timeframes must anticipate the needs of future generations (conserve the old and celebrate the new). Only in this way can the uniqueness and the character of a city be developed, maintained and enhanced.
- Continuity, quality and awareness of the intricacies of a location are important attributes for a sustainable, future-oriented city.

“Freiburg is a sustainable city because it understood its past and how that fits with its future.” Kevin M Leyden
“Proactive engagement with the public, followed through over years, has created a humane, people-friendly city.”
Derek Latham

**PROCESS PRINCIPLES**

**COMMUNICATION & PARTICIPATION**

- Communities must work continuously on their collective vision for the city through public discourse that becomes manifest in public spaces and in city culture.
- Continuous communication must be supported among the protagonists and stakeholders inside and outside the city administration. The outputs should be fed directly into planning processes to help create transparency and to inform political decisions.
- All parts of a city’s population must be invited to participate, co-operate and engage through appropriate modes of communication - in all phases of development from initial visioning through to detailed planning, delivery and management.
- A culture of engagement should be established, employing a wide range of techniques available to central, regional and local authorities.

Freiburg’s publicity at World EXPO Shanghai 2010

**VAUBAN**
a new neighbourhood for 5,000 people, has been created collaboratively. An enabling masterplan established the standards to be met and the plot subdivision. This had to be interpreted and delivered piece by piece through a consensus building process, bringing together a wide range of private and co-operative investors and integrating early settlers with later incomers. The collaborative experiment produced unique results - a vibrant new community combining living, work and leisure with a strong sense of collective responsibility for public space and landscape. The solar garage and local school can be seen in the foreground with the tram/green corridor running through the car-free housing beyond.
Freiburg’s Land Use Plan 2020. Cities today must accommodate increased development with a decreasing land resource and be compatible with environmental and social responsibilities. Freiburg’s Land Use Plan 2020, which was adopted in 2006, is committed to reducing land-take as far as possible and the development land that was previously available has been reduced by approx. 30 hectares.

VAUBAN is a car-free settlement with communal car parking on the edge of the neighbourhood that incorporates solar powered recharging stations for a fleet of electric vehicles.

“Nothing beats real citizen involvement in the planning of sustainable cities!”
Frank McDonald

**PROCESS PRINCIPLES**

**RELIABILITY, OBLIGATION & FAIRNESS**

- A citywide concept, with principles of consensus, creates the proper environment within which all the participants in urban development can act with equal rights.

- In order for the city to become a reliable partner for all citizens and investors, urban policy needs to be founded on basic resolutions that have a binding effect on the city administration.

- Basic principles need to govern site development guidelines and standards of sustainable construction. Guidelines such as the City of Short Distances have to be enshrined in subject-specific policies - such as the retail concepts embodied in Freiburg’s marketplaces and sub-centres. These principles should be made legally binding through development masterplans.

- A level of trust should be created between the protagonists within the city’s administration and those outside, based on continuity and with sufficient freedom to enable innovation and creativity to flourish.
New high-quality developments can boost a city’s confidence and pride. However, 80% of the existing built fabric in cities is out of date and needs to be upgraded. A key trigger is investment in the public realm. In Freiburg planners discovered that for every 1,000 Euro of public money spent on improving public spaces, 7,000 Euro of private money followed through investment in the adjacent buildings. Shown here are the results in central Freiburg’s Klarastraße.

“The Freiburg example of genuine joined-up thinking - integrating transport, urban development and community needs - supported by long term co-operation and participation should be applied to neighbourhoods, towns and cities everywhere.” Amanda Reynolds

Co-operation and partnership with housing associations has led to the conversion of existing high-rise buildings into solar towers.

**Co-operation & Partnership**

- Co-operation and participation serve to distribute and share the burden of complexity of urban planning and development with many.
- Financial support for projects creates incentives for investors and can also serve to guide them.
- Exemplary action by the community with regard to urban design can stimulate private action and also help to initiate self-fulfilling processes.
- Agreements and contracts with stakeholders, the support of - as well as the demand for - citizen commitments, all make wide-ranging urban redevelopment processes possible.
- Scientific institutions, universities, industry and professional bodies are important players in innovative urban development.
For more information on The Academy of Urbanism and how to participate in our events and Learning from Place, UniverCities and City X-Ray programmes, please contact:

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