Submission

Fisherman's Bend Urban Renewal

Detailed Concerns and Opportunities

David Rayson

22/11/2013

This submission is being made in conjunction with observations I have made of a number successful of international cities and precincts. New York, Paris, Berlin, Istanbul, Tokyo, Copenhagen, Malmo (Sweden), Stockholm and Vabaun (Freiburg, Germany)

The major elements that have become evident are:

- In all instances in the successful high density precincts the streets are flanked by residential and mixed use buildings 5-8 storeys.
- There is a fine grain detail to both the street layout and buildings, building footprints are generally small.
- In all instances car parking is severely limited and generally not available on site.
- The public realm, in particular the streets, are highly developed and not solely used as transport infrastructure.
- Mixed use is an essential component of the precinct.
- Each city and precinct has a well-developed system of public transport.

Building Heights, Density and the Docklands Model

A clear case must be made to justify adopting 'high rise apartment tower on podiums' as the principle building form. It is the form of development reflected in Southbank and Docklands and is seen as the most unpopular part of the Fisherman's Bend proposal. It is not the model adopted in any of the cities or precincts assessed.

This form of development has many disadvantages and it is feared that by adopting this model the mistakes of Docklands and Southbank will be replicated.

Medium rise buildings provide a much more comfortable urban environment to the Docklands model. There is feeling of a more human scale when the streets are not overwhelmed by massive towers, offsetting towers behind podiums does little to alleviate the impact. The lower buildings enable greater solar access at ground level and less wind, adding to the amenity of the surrounding public spaces.

Towers tend to focus on a narrow demographic, which is not a good catalyst for the evolution of a sustainable community. Medium rise buildings enable smaller projects and thus a more diverse group of participants in the process, leading to greater architectural diversity and a greater variety of accommodation.

The relative yield efficiency of tower blocks on podiums by comparison to traditional 6-8 storey apartment buildings must be carefully evaluated. An investigation by Melbourne University Architecture Design Studio Research found no advantage. Building and development costs may be greater for tower blocks. The combined effect is of concern when affordable housing is such an important issue. These are fundamental issues that the community is entitled to understand,

without the spin or slant of developers or other interested parties, especially as they have such a profound impact on the urban outcome.

A reasonable compromise would be to adopt a consistent height limit across the entire precinct, being the most desirable and efficient way of shaping the future environment and balancing the competing needs of achieving a high population and a good urban outcome.

- This would provide a level playing field for the development of all sites.
- It restricts the substantial benefits that some sites can gain from planning manipulation.
- The public realm becomes a more important consideration than the views apartment may provide. The public space being an important consideration in community development.
- It also means that roof tops are not compromised by the proximity of taller buildings, roof top gardens and solar equipment will operate efficiently.
- Residents know the scale of development that will surround them, providing more certainty for both existing residents and developers
- In addition, lower yield precincts such as the four storey areas, can be increased to provide for significantly increased densities and a more efficient use of all the land.

There is no justification for the difference.

The question has to be asked, why is the government so enthusiastic to facilitate so much development that is inefficient, expensive, lacks urban design compatibility and is so unpopular. What is the agenda?

Fine Grain Detail and the Participants

One of the most important observation made of the dense cities and precincts, was the importance of intimate detail at street the level of the architecture, street activity and the urban spaces.

Over the past 20 years planners, developers, builders and the marketers of residential apartments have established a quite rigid development template. The emphasis has been to achieve as much development as possible in each project, often at the expense of the adjoining sites and the surrounding public spaces. Sites are often aggregated to achieve efficient parking layouts to enable higher and bigger projects.

These templates sell units but have failed to deliver sustainable, high density communities or vibrant urban environments. They certainly do not delivered fine grain detail either in the street or buildings. This is particularly the case in Docklands and the City Road precinct.

A different framework is needed which has regard for fine grain-size, high permeability, a respect for the local contextual roots and which taps into the creative, entrepreneurial and financial strengths of the local community. A new development paradigm is needed which encourages, a much greater number and wide range of developers, designers, builders, suppliers, finance providers and encourages alternative equity arrangements.

High quality dense medium rise small scale, mixed use apartment development does not need international capital, whereas poor quality large scale high rise towers do need a large capital base. The developers, especially the large corporate players, who cannot see beyond their traditional template and adapt to the new challenges will need to seek markets elsewhere. It is expected that the current group of early applicants falls into this category.

There is a need for mechanisms which produces small lots, (under 1000m2), and plans which produces narrow streets and lanes which are closely spaced. Engineered speculative subdivision may produce this outcome. Aggregation of sites must not be allowed to occur unless for community purposes.

Traffic, Car Parking and Amenity

The most significant environmental and social challenge facing our community is the unsustainably high level of car dependency. It is affecting the productivity of the economy and eventually will lead to a completely dysfunctional city.

Fisherman's Bend provides the opportunity to creatively address this issue. This is a precinct where a car should generally not be essential. Significant employment opportunities exist close by, so are most of the important recreational and sporting venues. It is also expected that essential services and facilities such as schools, retail and public transport will be within walking distance.

Removing all car parking from all new development and eliminating long term street parking would have a profound impact. It would completely change the general expectation that a car is needed for every trip. Instead parking would be located on the edge of the precinct close to the freeway entrances or arterial roads. Vauban (Freiburg) demonstrates the value of such an initiative at a small scale, the big cities of New York, Paris, Istanbul, Tokyo etc., demonstrate that parking in residential and mixed use area is not necessary.

People have to walk to retrieve their cars, passing local retailers and possibly neighbours. Such an initiative would have positive impact on the amenity of the local environment, enabling the streets and lanes to be more than transport infrastructure. Services would evolve to cater for a walking population and would be a valuable marketing tool for selling a unique living environment.

Such an approach would significantly reduce the cost of apartments. The cost of parking would be pay as you use and not part of housing costs. Supplying the car parking would provide another local enterprise.

Tower blocks on podiums create the opportunity for parking in the lower levels of a building as is the case in the Eureka Tower and a number of the buildings in City Road, Clarendon Street as well as in Docklands. These developer driven expediencies have produced terrible urban outcomes. This practice was not evident in any of the cities assessed.

Mixed Use

Mixed use is a vital component of any successful dense urban community. Incorporating various commercial and retail activities with the residential is essential to establish a vibrant and lively precinct. Mixed use is an extremely difficult concept to implement. However a large and dense population will generate its own economy for domestic goods and services. This should be a different market to the traditional suburbs because residents should walk and use the streets regularly. Restricting parking as described will contribute to foot traffic. It provides the opportunity for small scale operators spread across the entire precinct. This is the model in dense suburbs of Tokyo and villages of New York.

Aggregating retail into centres as proposed will undermine the proliferation of retail and other services throughout the precinct, especially if parking is provided. Having the whole precinct rich in commercial activity would add vibrancy and convenience.

Residential only is not desirable and does not lead to good quality, vibrant streets. Large scale retailers in centres as proposed will suck away the demand and reduce the viability of smaller more dispersed operators. (research is needed to establish the minimum population that is required to sustain local retail and other services so they do not need to attract customers, who would otherwise have to come by car)

Small lots and distant parking will discourage large scale retailers and big box stores, both important contributors to poor quality urban environments.

The Public Realm , Walkability and Mixed Use

In today's world these are seen as idealistic concepts, but our community is facing significant challenges from growing population, environmental and ecological degradation, resource depletion and congestion. The functioning of the city is under threat. Many of current urban development practices are simply obsolete and unable to cope with these challenges. In many instances some of the urban values of the past can assist in providing better solutions. Observing traditional cities is worthwhile.

Experimentation and creativity need to be the hallmark of Fisherman's Bend. It's not about architecture or comprehensive planning but more about providing the basic framework and understanding the drivers for the most appropriate development and allowing the place to evolve.

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SUBMISSSION

Fisherman's Bend Urban Renewal

Examples of successful high density cities and precincts

22/11/2013

David Rayson

The Vision Statement for Fisherman's Bend calls for examples of high quality urban renewal projects.

The following are examples of successful high density cities and precinct.

The following descriptions and assessments have come from personal observations made during various visits to the cities. The major elements that have become evident are as follows:

- In all instances the successful high density precincts the streets are flanked by residential and mixed use buildings 5-8 storeys
- There is a fine grain detail to both the street layout and buildings, building footprints are generally small.
- In all instances car parking is severely limited and generally not available on site.
- The public realm, in particular the streets, are highly developed and not solely used as transport infrastructure.
- Mixed use is an essential component of the precinct.
- There is a well developed system of public transport.

Note: If the authority wishes to use the photos or would like to peruse additional or clearer copies please contact the author.

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The Vision Statement for Fisherman's Bend calls for examples

New York

This city is the world's most important centre for business and commerce, it also has an intense creative and cultural energy and there is an abundance sporting and recreational activity. It is a wonderful place to live and it is a great tourist destination.

New York is a high rise city except for the predominantly residential villages of Soho, Greenwich, Tribeca, East Village, Harlem and much of Brooklyn. Buildings in the villages vary but seldom exceed 8 storeys. It is the villages where there is real street life and vitality. They are vastly different to, but dependent on the high rise commercial parts of the city.

The villages should provide the inspiration for Fisherman's Bend. It is the relationship between the urban form and the very dense, yet diverse and functional communities that Jane Jacobs wrote about in the 1960's. Complex places where there was and is a local economy, commerce and retail is interwoven with the residential to benefit all. Her mission was to understand and protect these communities from the wrecking balls of the freeway addict Charles Moses, and the 'modernist' high rise developers.

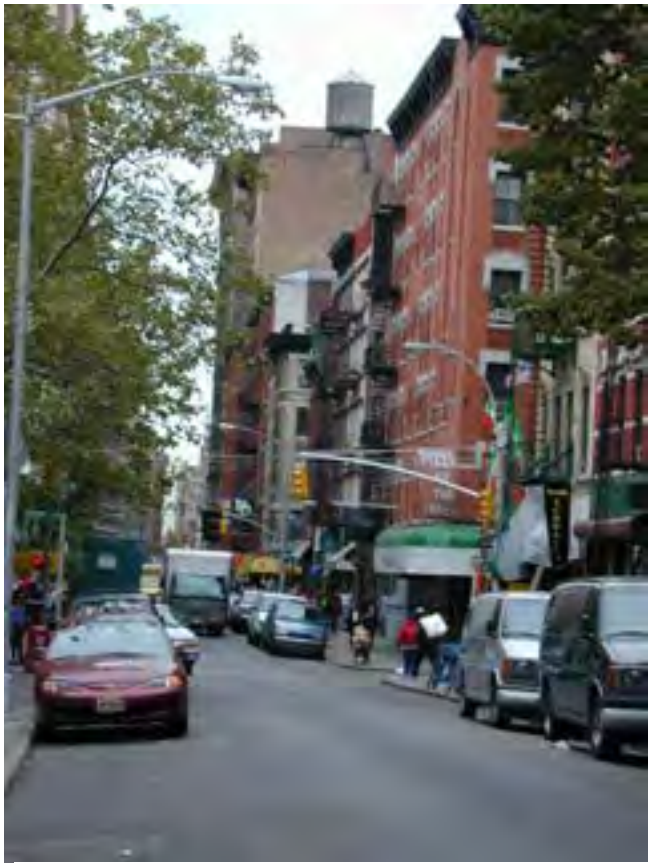


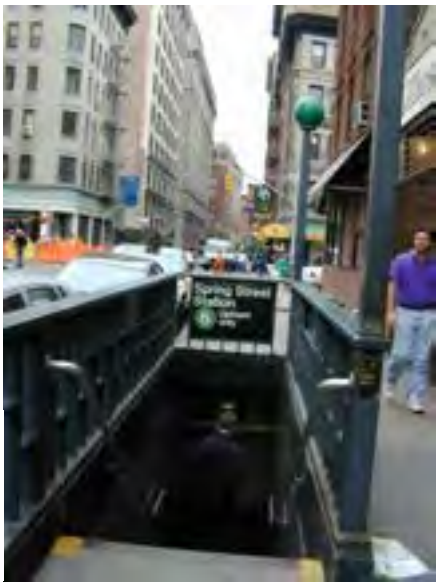
Figure 1 Greenwich Village New York

People who live in New York's villages generally don't own or use a car and those who do mostly need to find a place to store it some distance from their apartment. The whole city is inter-connected with an extensive and efficient Metro system. There are lots of cars everywhere, but the villages are not dissected with arterials carrying massive volumes of traffic. The pavements are used by people for all sorts of individual and community activities.

Of great significance, because of the urban form, density and public transport, New Yorkers use less energy per capita than any other US city.

Building form contributes to character and the amenity of the surrounding public spaces, building heights and architectural detail vary but the facades of neighbouring building join so there is no space between. The frontages of individual buildings again vary but are relatively small (around 15-30m)

The challenge at Fisherman's Bend is to create dense, sustainable and vibrant urban communities as Jane Jacob's describes and currently exist in the villages. Her writing could very easily be Fisherman's Bend's development code and the basis for the design of the streets and parks.



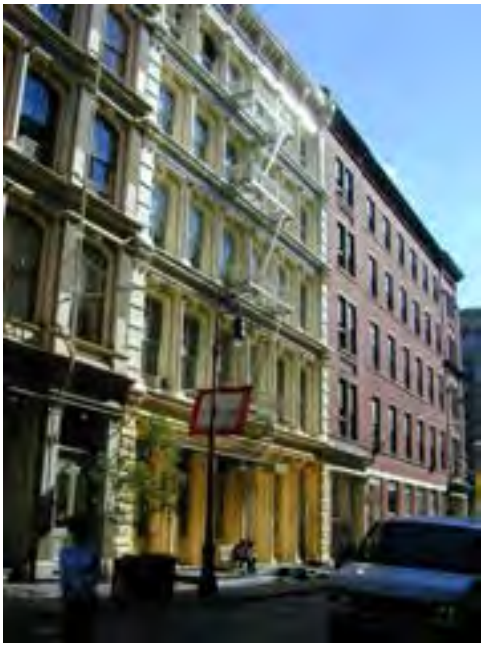
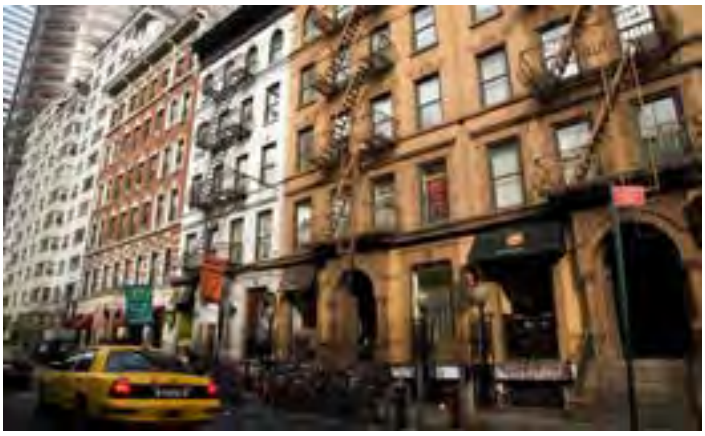


Figure 3. Many streets in New York have the proportions that should be considered for Fisherman's Bend



One shouldn't generalise when it comes to NY, except that diversity is the essence of the city. There are many new very tall apartment blocks across the whole city. Peter Cooper Village at E23dSt is a high rise welfare housing. Its surrounding public spaces are beautifully landscaped but are often unsafe and are associated with anti-social behaviour. Most new apartment towers are expensive and the surrounding public spaces are not conducive to community interaction as is the case of the villages. In both cases the community is socially stratified, neither are not good exemplars.

Figure 5 Peter Cooper Village

Figure 4 Victory Apartments 10th Ave

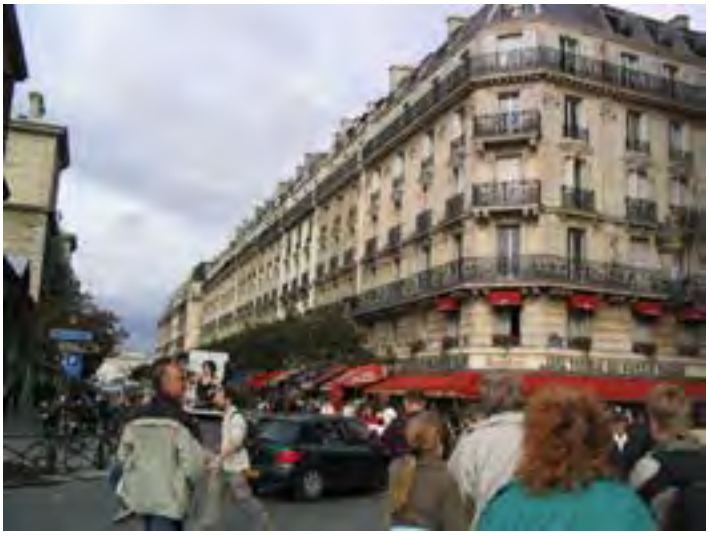
Paris

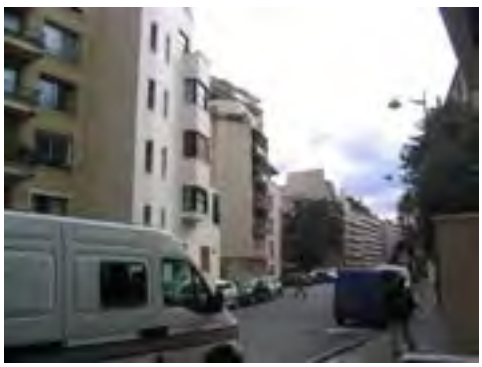
The inner 20 arrondissements of Paris are around 88 square kilometre (8,800ha) and have a population of just over 2.2 million. After deducting the Siene, La Louvre and La Bois de Boulogne etc., that is approximately 250 persons per hectare, the density being proposed in the middle sections of Fisherman's Bend. It works!

Central Paris gains much of its charm and fascination from its heritage and old buildings. There are, however many places within the city that consist of simple 'modern' buildings. These areas retain much of the feeling of the older areas. The common link is the uniform building height, continuous facades and street level commercial activity.

Most buildings in Central Paris are between 6 and 8 storeys. There are, however, notable (and in many people's eyes regrettable) exceptions, such as the tall towers at Montparnasse. The low and relatively consistent building height across most of the city is the principle contributor to its character.

Everywhere in Central Paris there is small scale commercial activity, retail, restaurants, personal services, etc. The streets are pleasant places, they are not overwhelmed, rather well framed by the surrounding buildings. There is a tight (often chaotic) permeable street grid and there is interest at ground level.

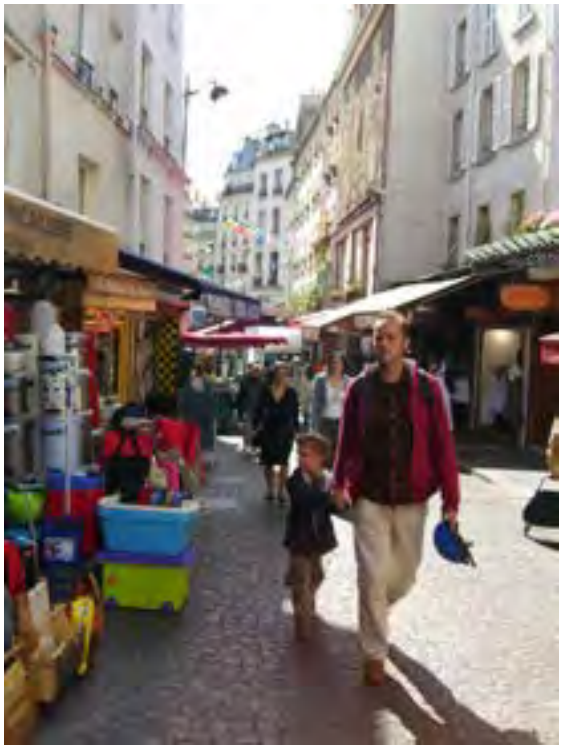




The spacing of the street grid should be carefully assessed and should form the basis for the street layout at Fisherman's Bend.

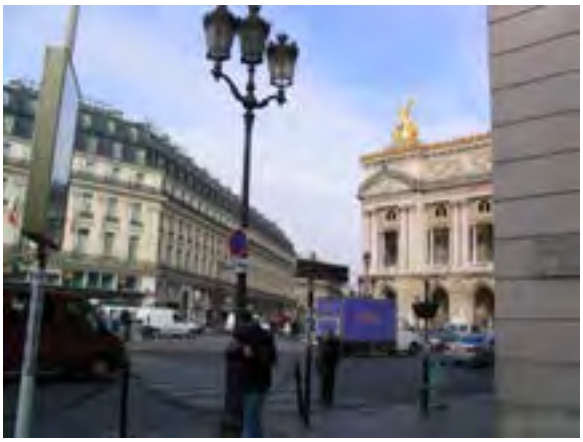
Even though the streets are full of cars, the volume of traffic is not overwhelming. There is street activity, people walk and talk.

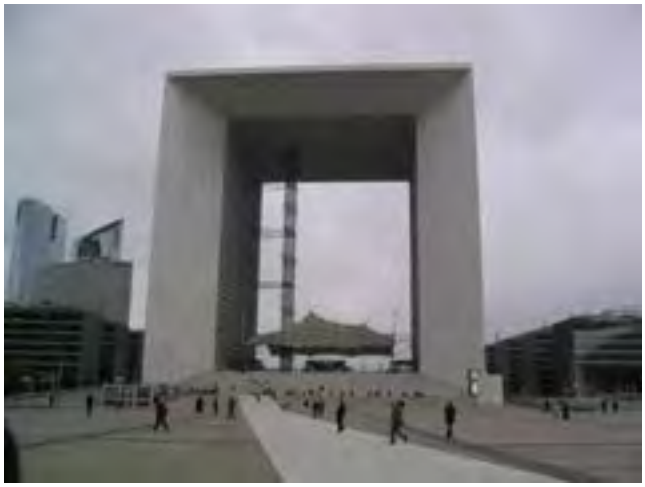
The whole city, including the suburbs and La Defense is inter-connected with an extensive and effective Metro system. Most people who live in central Paris do not own a car and for those who do, it is generally stored some distance from their home. This has many advantages adding to the amenity of the city and reality of it being a walkable place.



More subtly there is a significant difference between the 'original' Paris and the areas re-developed by Haussmann in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century. The original part is much more organic and appears to have more interest, whereas the redeveloped section is grander, more precise and more efficient. It has the hallmarks of a large scale developer but in Paris the decoration, proportions and heritage, compensate. In a contemporary context such as Fisherman's Bend, this architectural discipline is impossible and undesirable to replicate and the disadvantages of large scale can easily occur. A framework which enables more organic development would be far more desirable.

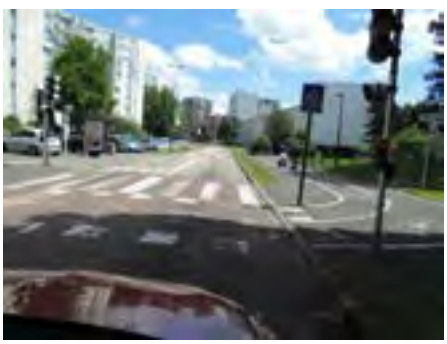
The city's principle commercial section of at La Defense, (560ha) is located outside the historical centre and comprises many very high rise contemporary



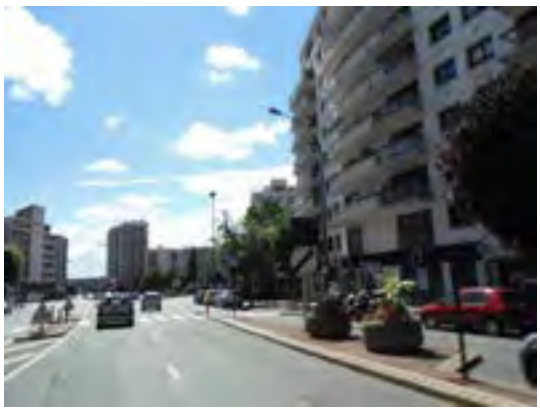


towers. It is the headquarters for national and international corporations and government instrumentalities. Unlike Manhattan the village is the vast majority of the city and the commercial sector an adjunct.

The city centre is ringed with suburbs comprising a great mixture of building forms, some quite tall and many low rise (around 4 storeys). There appears to have been considerable concession for car parking in suburban development. The suburbs are segregated as ours, so residential exists independently and many districts have become a mecca for disadvantage and isolation. Despite the open spaces and landscaping these are just suburbs. Many lessons can be learnt from this typical contemporary, European suburban development. It is not an example to replicate.



The suburbs of Paris don't have the same charm as the inner city because of their treatment of cars, streetscape facades, building heights and size.



Berlin

Even though this is an ancient city it has been almost completely restored and rebuilt over the past 60 years. More recently since Unification, the Eastern section has also been transformed by developers and sold. It has an amazing history which has been retained and celebrated. There is a great deal of infill housing of the same scale.

Generally the city has had a blanket 21m height limit, but since Unification there has been significant development of 'No man's land' (along The Wall) A small number of large scale, spectacular buildings have concentrated into this precinct which is used for major commercial and government purposes. There has been little if any housing included.

It is, however, the retained residential and mixed use areas that provide inspiration for Fisherman's Bend

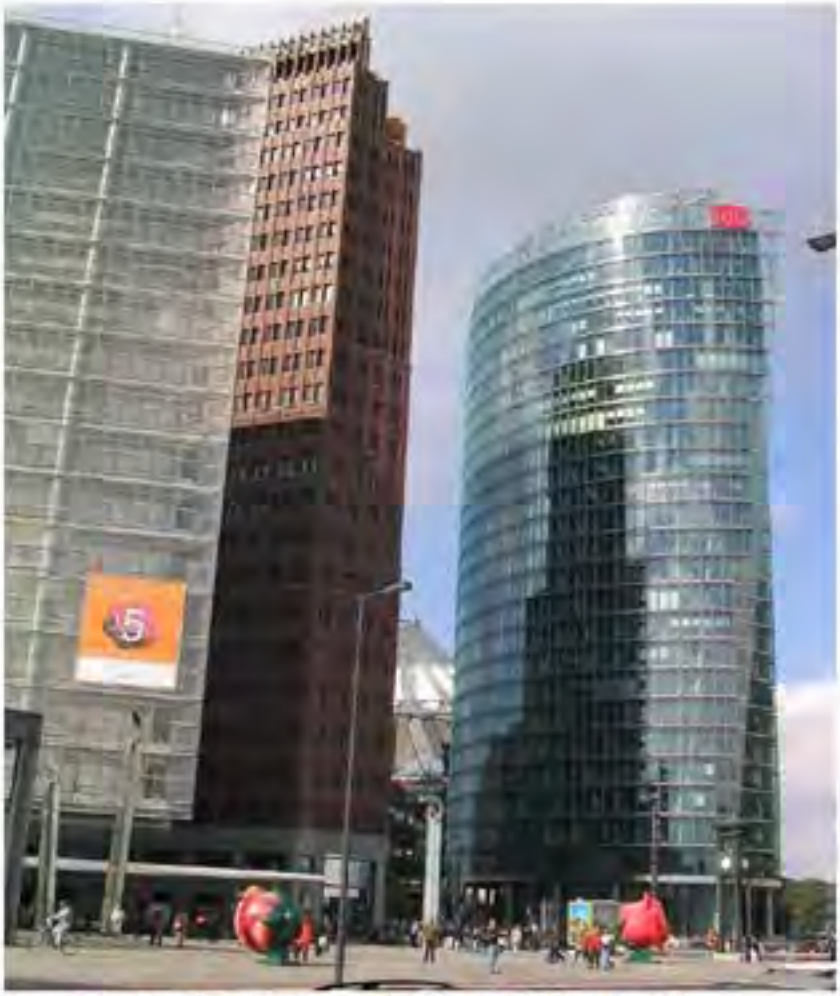
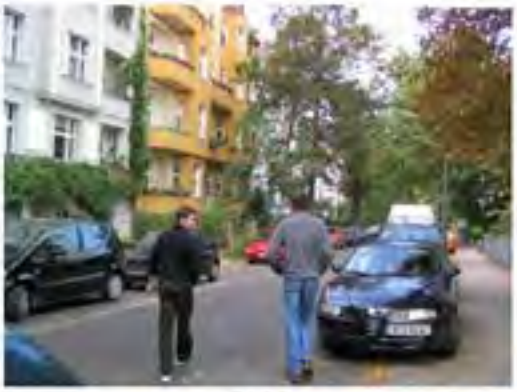
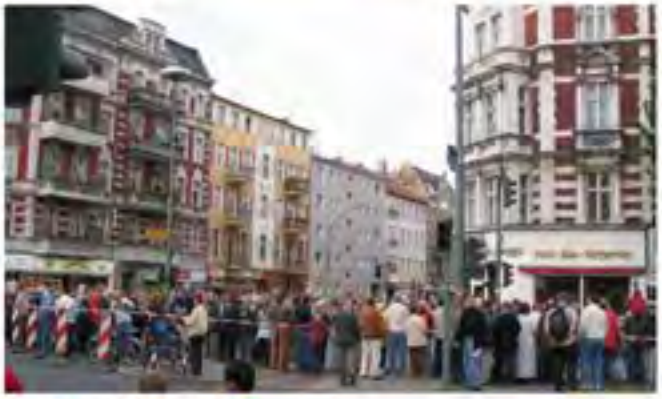
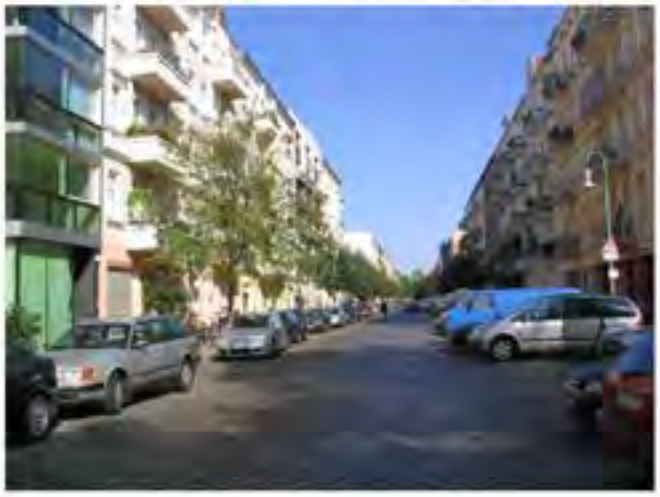


Figure 1 Potsdam Plaza redevelopment on the site of the Berlin Wall



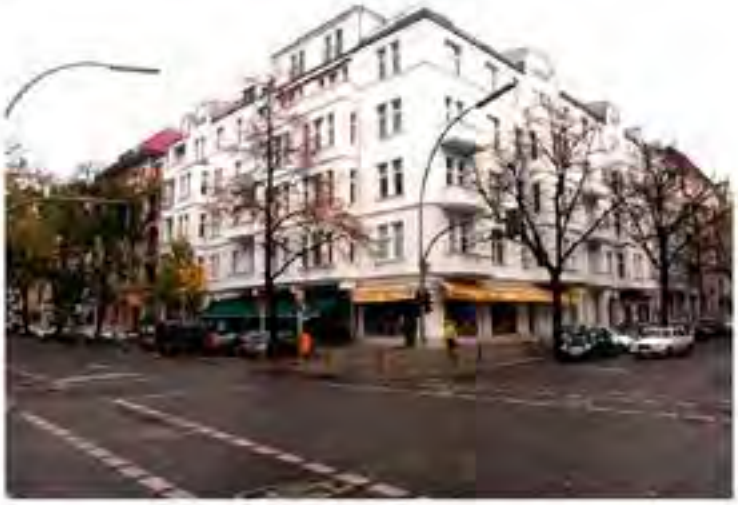


In the suburbs people use the streets



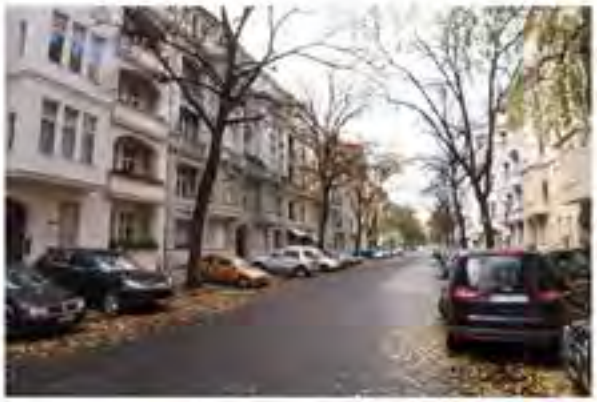
Berlin Cont..

Residential building conform to a model that produces a high quality living environment. There is an internal shared courtyard behind 5/6 level street front buildings. This provides a delightful private space for all apartment dwellers, it also has visual oversight from units so it is a safe a children's play area. It is suggested that this building typology be investigated as a workable model for FB.



A residential block in W Berlin
Commercial at ground level.

A residential street in W Berlin, the pavement is shared by cars and pedestrians. It is interesting that where a dwelling is at street level it is set in yet upper levels can jut out i.e. title boundary is not a constraint to articulating form and individual entities within an overall building mass. A few simple trees segment a long streetscape and provide impact



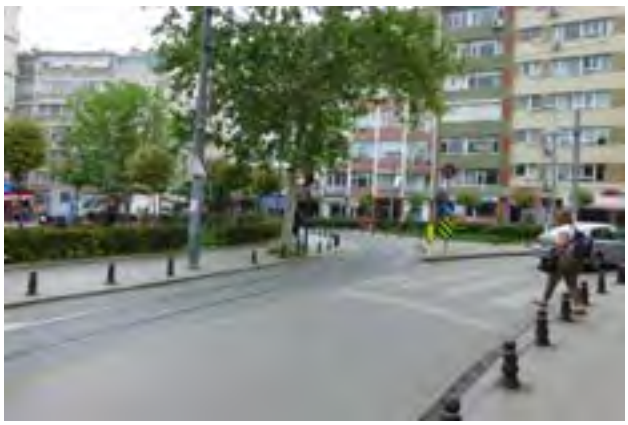
An internal courtyard behind peripheral residential blocks with children's' play pit but in this instance commercial outlets also face the internal courtyards. A most unusual arrangement that attracts many people from the outside main roads into the space. It is not known how the locals see this intrusion and loss of privacy. It may be that that a certain sector of society would love it, being in the heart of lively action and buzz.

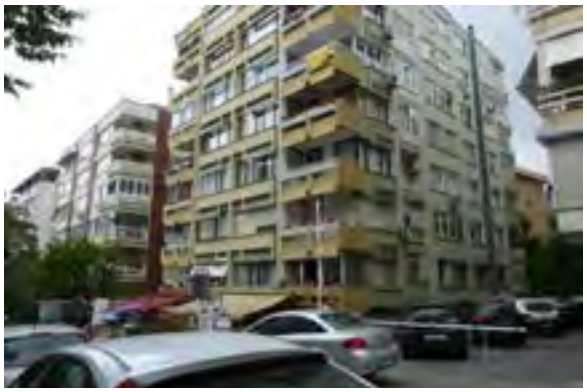
Istanbul

This city has a population of around 17 million, it is dense but sprawls out along both sides of the Bosphorus almost to the Black Sea and along the Aegean coast, south on the Asian and west on the European side. The inner party of the city is a dense labyrinth, buildings are generally 5-8 storeys built to the street and other boundaries, generally on small lots. The streets and lanes are full of activity, children playing, mommas sitting and gossiping and teenagers hanging around or practicing soccer.

The city has a wonderful history and strong Muslim traditions. Mosques dominate the skyline and are spectacular internally as well from the outside. The city is transitioning into an advanced economy yet retains many of the simple aspects of earlier times. The centre of the city is well serviced by a modern yet sparse rail network and a very effective tram system, which moves lots of people. There is also an extensive bus system. It would appear as though car ownership is not ubiquitous but because streets are small traffic is chaotic.

There is extensive and very successful typical 'European city' mixed use 5-8 storey development across the whole city. In the more affluent district of Kadikoy this form of development has created some wonderful urban spaces which reflect the sort of outcome that would work successfully in Fisherman's Bend





This is where it gets more technical. In the earlier shots there was a continuous facade of buildings which I believe is very appropriate for urban redevelopment in western cities. But most importantly there is a consistent height of around 25m or 6 storeys. This is typical of most European cities. There is a strong push by many to separate buildings, especially those who are strongly concerned about energy efficiency. I think horses for courses, but where there is mixed use (which should predominate) a continuous facade is preferable certainly at ground level. It creates better public spaces. The narrow dark chasms between buildings does not contribute positively to the street scape.

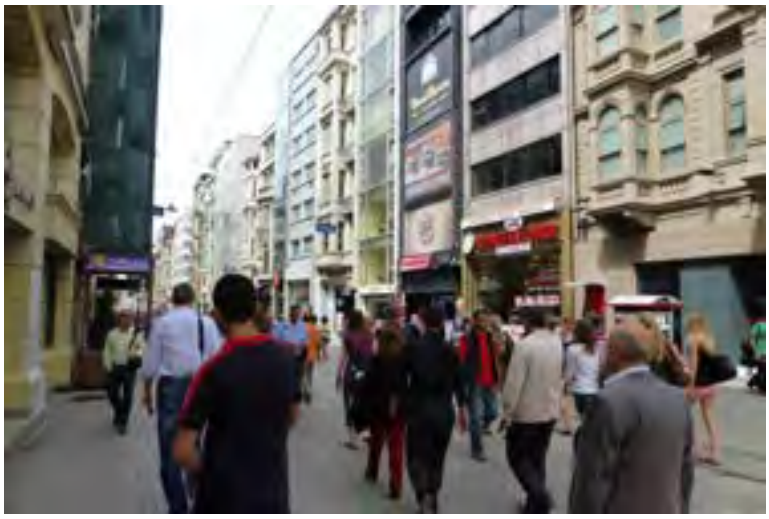
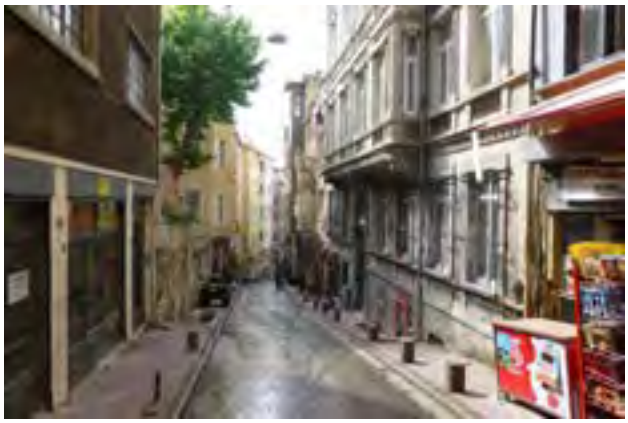


Figure 1 Simple domestic construction provides density and economy

It is also very interesting to note the environment is not dependent on the architecture, when comparisons are made with Paris it is the distinctive architecture which people say is the essence and cannot be replicated. Contemporary buildings work just as well, even 1960's shockers as this place demonstrates. It is the scale and diversity that is important. Keep the lots small, avoiding aggregation and large scale projects



There are some enormous apartment towers on the outskirts and many under construction. These are ominous signs that traditional life styles and communities will be undermined by commercial interests.

Tokyo

There are many lessons that can be learnt from Japanese cities. Tokyo city has a population of around 13 million in an area approximately the same as Melbourne. An additional 20 million live in the surrounding districts. The city has been re-built over the past 60 years. Despite having some wonderful traditional buildings and precincts, the unique character of city is created by contemporary development which has evolved over the original street pattern and remanent buildings.

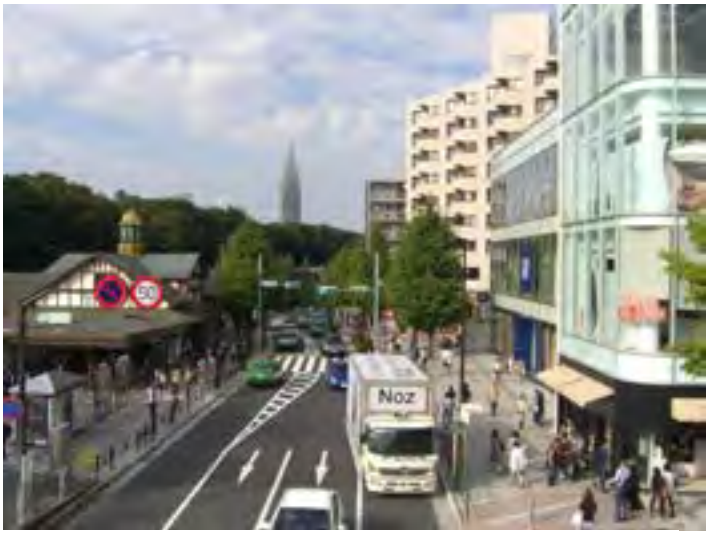


Figure 2 Harajuku train station midway between Shibuya and Shinjuku (principle commercial centres). In the distance the tower over the Shinjuku station

It is a city that has a reputation with young Australians as a vibrant and fun place to visit, having a unique urban sophistication.

Figure 4 Shibuya a major retail centre

Tokyo is generally a low rise city with some high rise towers. High densities have been achieved in a low rise context by utilising the land extremely efficiently. Buildings occupy most of the individual, very small lots, there are extremely limited setbacks and very little land is devoted to landscape or for the roads.

Figure 3 Sinjuku a major commercial and entertainment centre, at night

Apart from quite busy arterials which provide legibility and some car accessibility, the urban areas are a maze of narrow streets and pedestrian lanes. It is very easy to get lost. There is a large and diverse range of low rise buildings. It appears to a free- for-all with no planning or control which is quite confronting for a westerner used to order, consistency and car access.

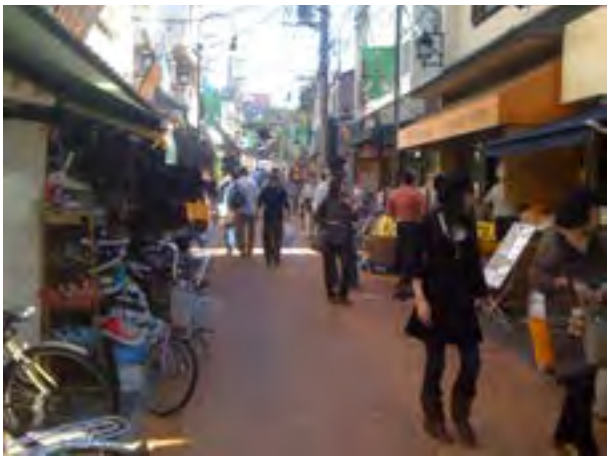
As a result of this urban intensity and narrow streets most dwelling are inaccessible by car. To own a car

Figure 5 Commercial and residential buildings along an arterial. Small plots ensure architectural diversity, and a variety of usage.

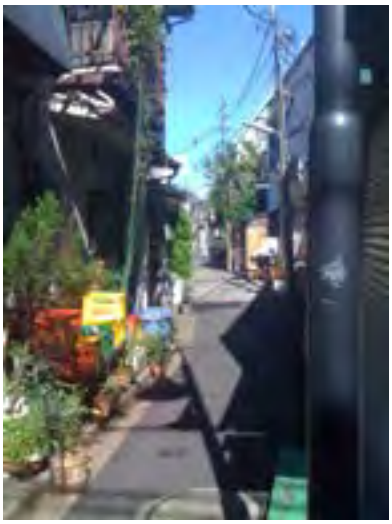
a person must have a designated place to store the vehicle. People, therefore, walk and cycle which provides a captured market for small scale local traders. Small shops exist throughout the suburbs providing all manner of produce and services. Often the produce spills onto the street providing interest and character to the street. In this environment people congregate and interact. This local enterprise provides employment and further entrepreneurial opportunities.

Figure 6 Small residential streets, retail and other services is an integral component.

Some highly creative residential and commercial architecture has resulted from the challenge of the small sites adding enormously to the character of the neighbourhood.



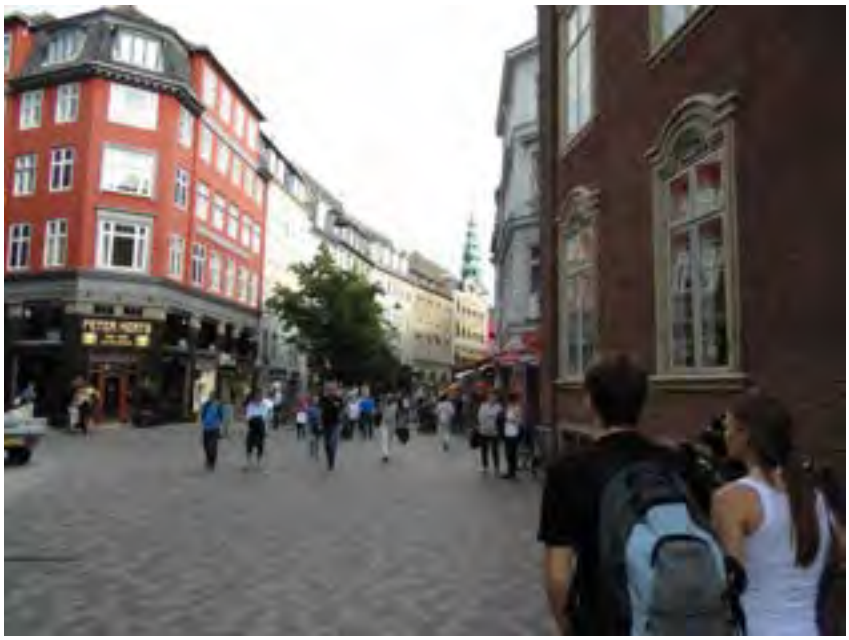
Neighbourhoods are spotlessly clean and residents take great pride in their surroundings. We carelessly washed our bicycles in the street and to our embarrassment on our return found an elderly lady scrubbing our dirt from the pavement. These are also very safe places, under constantly surveillance from neighbours and passers bye; at no stage did we feel it necessary to lock our bicycles.



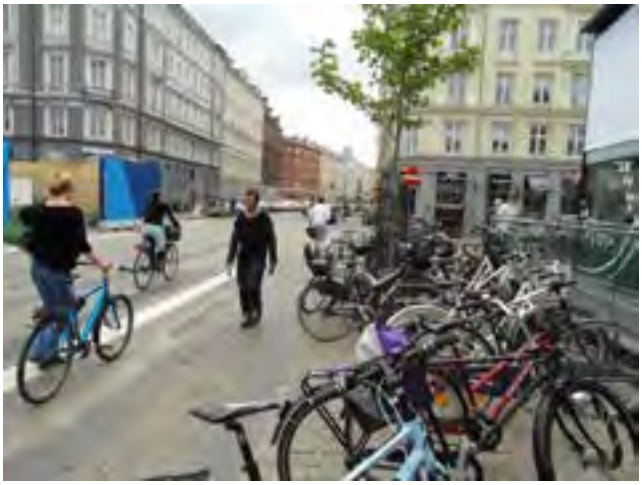
Over some of the train stations are very large developments often tower blocks containing large traditional western style shopping malls and a wide range of commercial activities. It is understood that ownership of these facilities have been coupled with the construction and operation of the train system. There is a sort of cross subsidisation. This appears to be a very worthwhile concept as it has produced an extremely diverse and efficient public transit system.

The downside to this arrangement is that the towers are a significant intrusion into the low rise environment and if this was applied to Fisherman's Bend where the overall market was much less intense it would impact on the crucial local street enterprise.

Copenhagen



Copenhagen is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. It is a medium rise city buildings generally range between 5-7 storeys. Much of the inner city is car free pedestrian malls. There is a fabulous fine grain detail of narrower streets and lanes. As in other European cities the heritage architecture is a major contributor to the character, however there are many areas where contemporary infill building predominate. These places also have great character and interest.



It is also a city which has great respect for the bicycle as a mode of transport. The environment is not overwhelmed by cars, it is safe and convenient to cycle

Copenhagen

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Like most European cities Copenhagen does not do urban redevelopment well. Most of the architecture is spectacular, all new precincts are well serviced by fixed rail and other public transport, however it seems to discard the proven and well established urban design principles of the tradition city. Commercial activity is excluded from the precincts, there is significant provision for parking and buildings are set in enormous open spaces. Crossing these vast spaces from the train station on a cold night would be a nightmare.

These photographs are of new developments in Amager Vest in Ørestad

Above is the Bella Centre a hotel , exhibition and conference centre designed by Erik Møller. Admittedly in an incomplete setting the hotel is surrounded by car parking

An apartment block in the vicinity designed by Bjarke Ingels, a creative architectural solution but does not contribute to an urban setting an essential component of any high density housing.

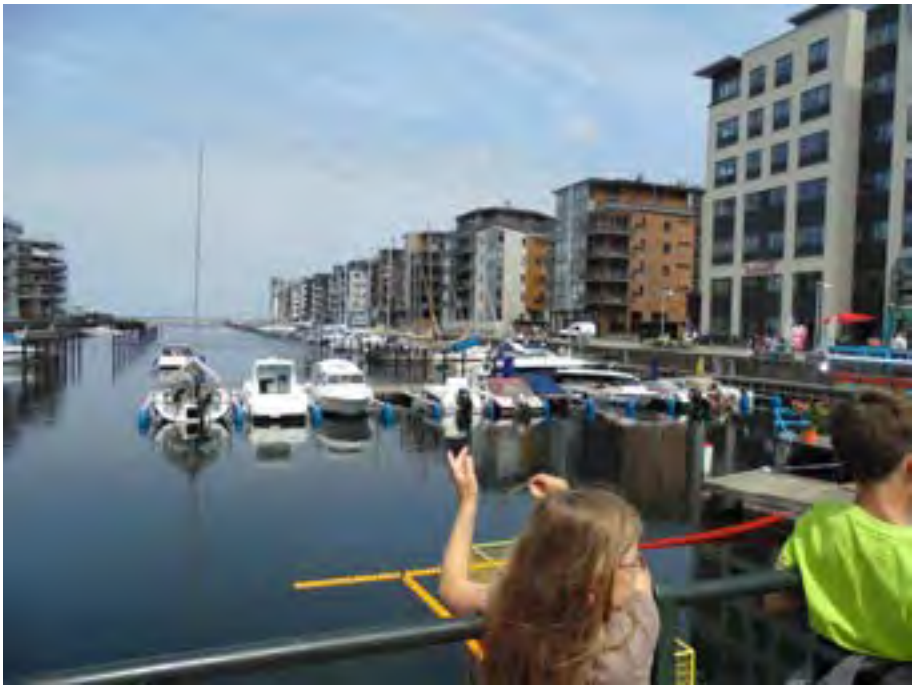
Interesting , but misguided, car park disguise.

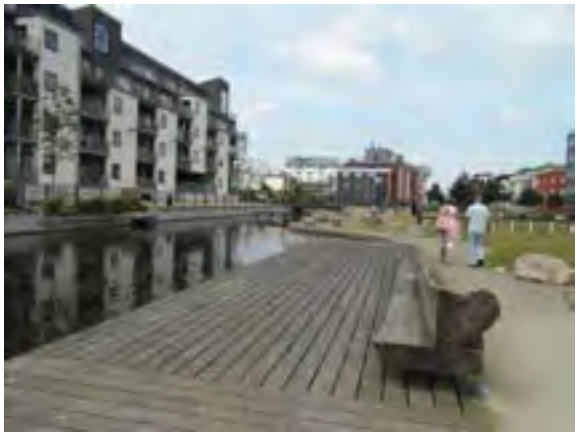
Below apartment blocks serviced by a metro

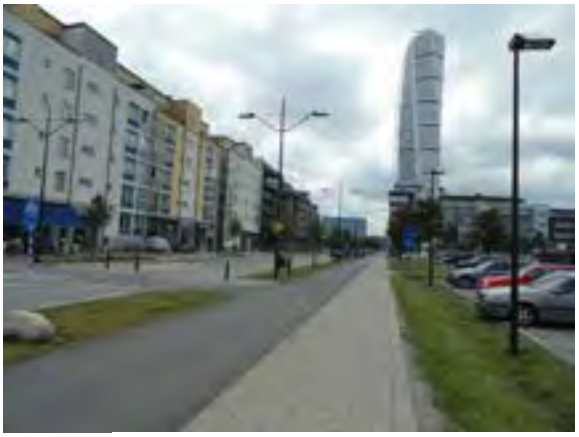
Malmo

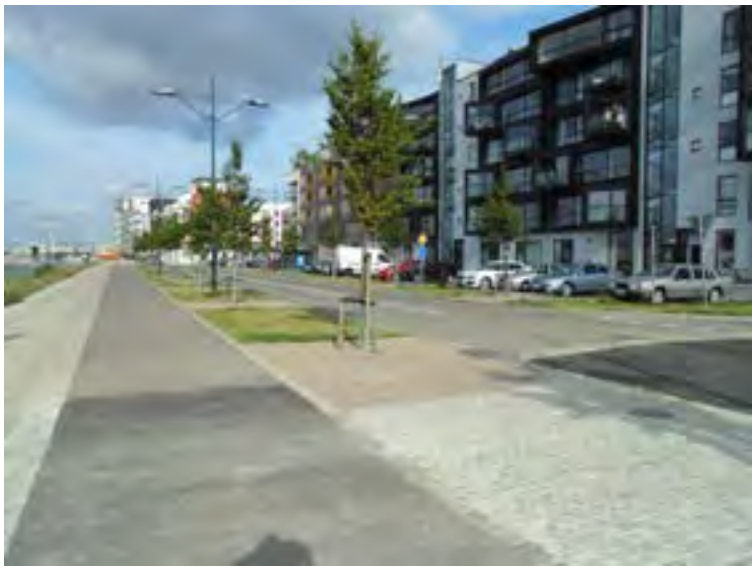
(Southern Sweden)

Malmo is the southern most city of Sweden, across the 7km long Oresund bridge from Denmark. It is a former industrial city which has undergone a significant post-industrial change. The redevelopment of Västra hamnen (or Western Harbour) illustrates some good quality mixed use development.





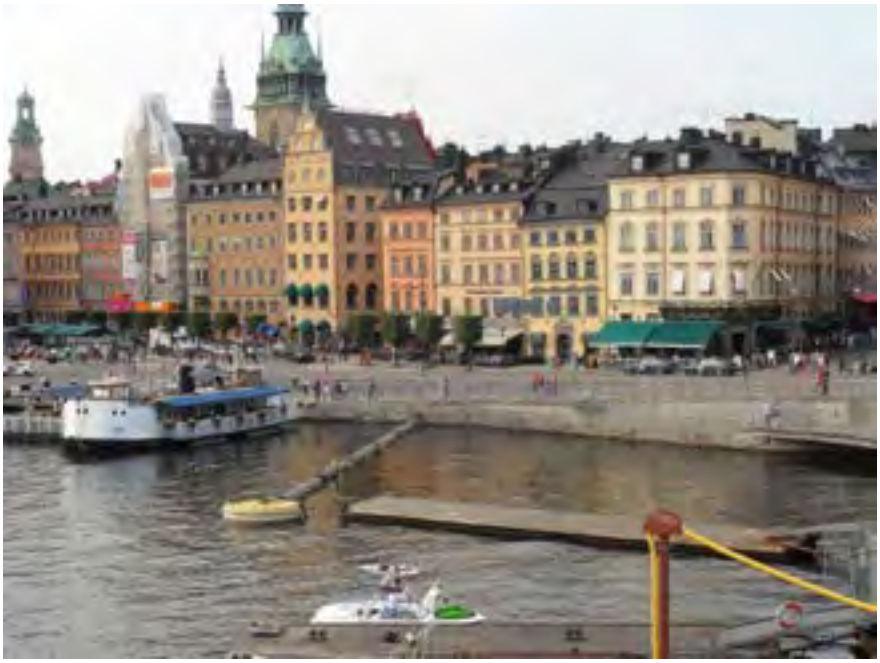


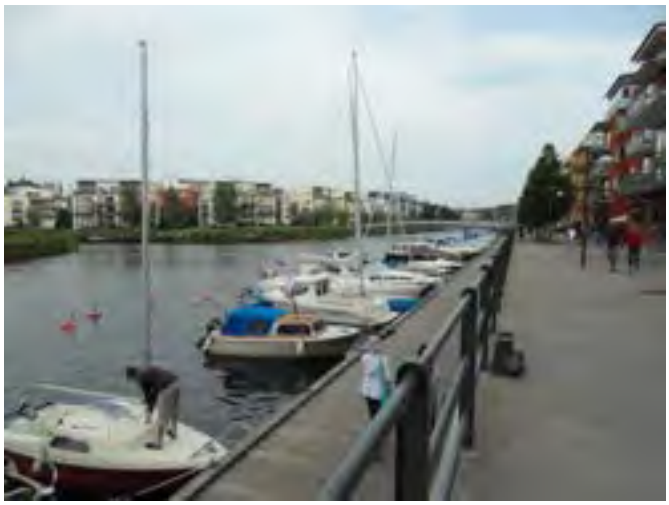


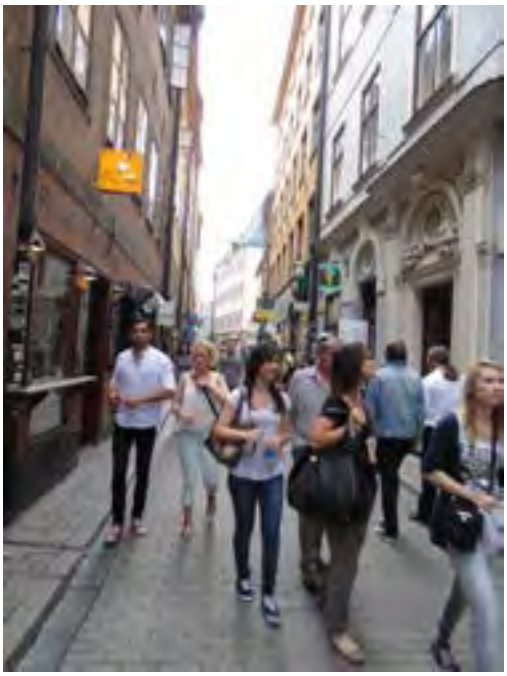
The development is new and the landscape has not established. Even on a week day people were on the streets. The public spaces are surrounded by 5-7 storey building, they are comfortable, well designed spaces. In the background is the 54 storey Twisting Torso by architect Santiago Calatrava. This is a mixed use building containing 147 apartments and can be seen from the surrounding countryside. There is a significantly large multi-storey car park to one side and the surrounding area is relatively barren. The architecture is like a sculpture adding an identifying element to the precinct, however its contribution to the urban environment is questionable.

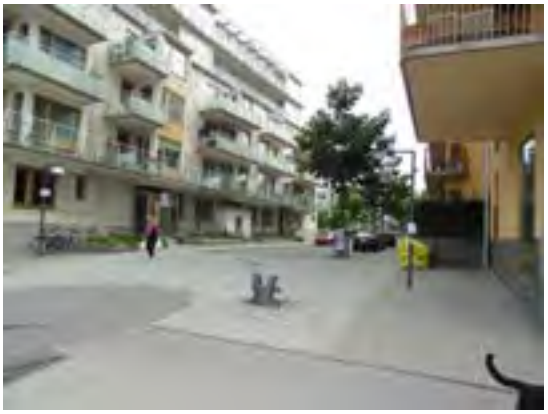
Stockholm (Sweeden)

Stockholm is also a beautiful waterfront city with many wonderful heritage buildings. As with most European cities as much can be learned from the traditional urban design as the new. A very large section of the waterfront has recently been transformed from obsolete industrial to very desirable housing. The Hammarby Sjostad precinct is steeply sloping land just 2 train stops from the centre of the city. New apartment buildings have been constructed along the foreshore and along lanes and narrow streets creating a permeable patchwork behind.









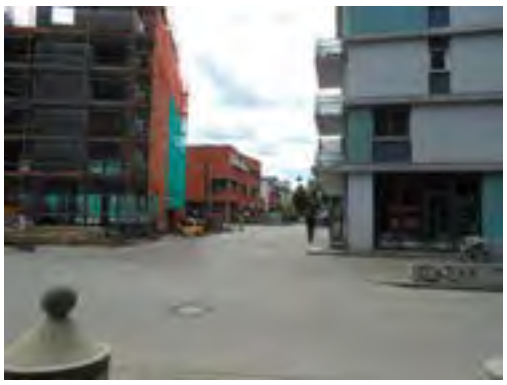
Vauban Freiberg (Southern Germany)

This is probably the most iconic of all contemporary urban renewal projects. It was built on a former French military site adjacent to the beautiful city of Freiburg. The site adjoins countryside and the city. Local residents had a significant say in the concept. Sustainability was to be one of the prime drivers. It is now 11 years old and it is maturing into a delightful low energy, water efficient, medium density precinct.

Initially the site was subdivided and services installed a light rail was extended from the city. Streets were kept narrow and car parking made difficult, parking was relegated to a centralised park close to the commercial and retail precinct. Lot sizes were kept small to allow small scale development. There is significant commercial activity including offices and local small scale retail.

Initially half of the lots were sold to builders who would have undertaken design and construction in the traditional method, then sold the individual units. The other half were sold to syndicates of mainly locals, often under the direction of an architect or other consultant who organised the project. Residents were therefore able to get some of their specific needs incorporated, all embraced the concepts of environmentally sustainable design. This ethic still permeates the precinct.

Vauban Freiburg



Car parking is centralised in multi-storey parks located close to the supermarket and other shops

Bicycles are used extensively to commute.