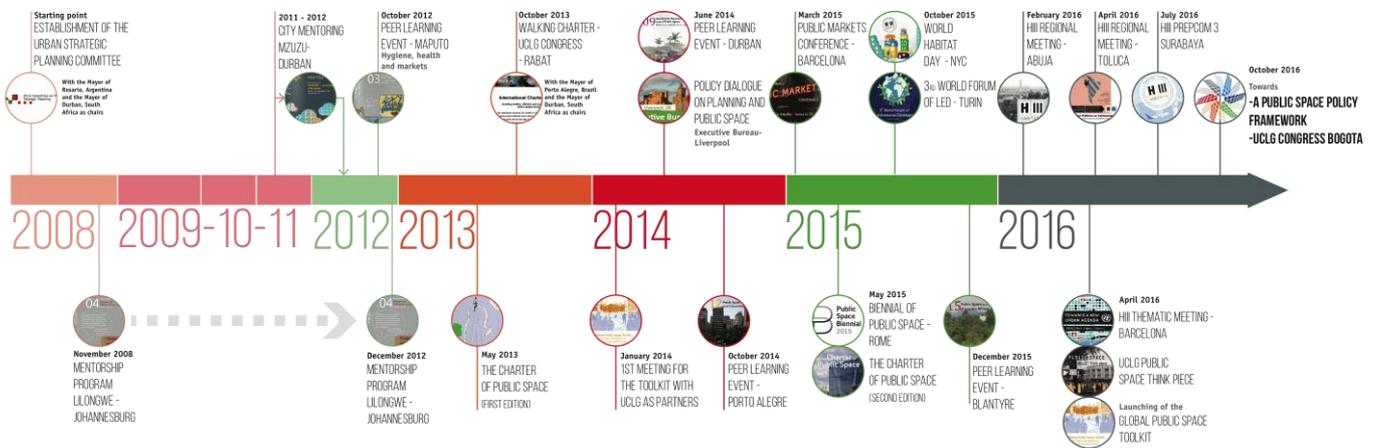


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**WHY DOES PUBLIC SPACE MATTER FOR THE UCLG COMMITTEE ON URBAN STRATEGIC PLANNING?**

We are at a time when local and regional governments across the world face severe challenges and crises. Nonetheless, we have a clear responsibility to look ahead and create the conditions for a better future for all. As we move ahead, it becomes apparent that the immediate environment influences the well-being of citizen, including vulnerable groups. Public spaces have a direct impact in the life of the people; therefore, urban policies should be developed in the territories, based on people’s needs.

**Why public spaces?**

Public space policies can be a means to reshape cities, create employment (e.g. public markets and street vending), a tool for inclusion (e.g. well-lit streets contribute to women’s sense of safety and freedom to move around the city), a space for organizing communities or for cultural expression and diversity.

They are strategic elements of urban policies and have direct impacts on the lives of citizens. The creation, maintenance and management of public spaces should be an essential dimension of planning and management policies for cities.

Public spaces are also where a city’s sociability is shaped, where citizens interact and where democracy is rooted. Public space is an essential dimension of the “right to the city” that has a strong participatory approach.

The city administration is the best public sphere to create and manage public spaces, which should be designed with people for people, because this contributes to good health, and has positive impacts on safety, productivity levels, community actions and the economy. It is important for each city to find its own strategy and unique solutions that are appropriate for the interests of different stakeholders.

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In 2015, the role of public spaces in sustainable development received unprecedented recognition by the international community through the **2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Target 7 of SDG 11** on sustainable cities and human settlements is to “**provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.**” Localizing and implementing the SDG 11 will depend on local governments across the world and the support offered to them.

### THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN PUBLIC SPACE

Unlike many other areas of urban policy, public spaces are the full responsibility of local governments (with the community), either officially or by default. Strong urban governance with accountable, transparent and effective institutions can ensure the quality and quantity of public spaces. Local authorities and governments are mandated to create and manage public spaces as part of the urban commons in the public interest:

- Local governments work with communities, the private sector and marginalized groups to balance competing interests in the pursuit of the common good.
- A stronger synchronization of international, national and local government’s efforts towards public space can ensure the implementation of the policies to be people-centered.
- Public interest prevails over private interest. Cities must avoid the privatization and speculation of public space thereby preventing a net loss of public space as a proportion of urban development.
- Local government planning needs to ensure that public spaces are plentiful, inclusive and accessible to all residents. Local governments create public spaces where they do not exist, in both existing urban and rural areas and new developments. Guiding documents such as local and municipal plans help to develop planning at the local level.
- Governments and stakeholders should also ensure that adequate resources for the operation and maintenance of public spaces are provided to ensure long-term sustainability. Place keeping is crucial when dealing with public space. Specific tools including different collaboration between public and private sectors as well as the civil society needs to be developed.
- Local governments have a duty to promote the use of public spaces in an equitable way by finding the right balance between regulation and deregulation of the use of public spaces. The rules around the uses and activities on public spaces should be given particular attention to avoid negative impact on the urban life and how they might have effects on vulnerable groups. This may require differentiated strategies at citywide and neighbourhood level.

Legal frameworks and declarations of fundamental rights often neglect public spaces. Public spaces must be recognized as a basic local service, like water and sanitation, and as an essential part of the Right to the City for all urban residents.

## WHAT IS A PUBLIC SPACE POLICY FRAMEWORK?

A public space policy framework is developed to create a comprehensive management strategy for local governments in which public space is a central axis. In such policies, public space is a catalyst for city development to enhance citizens' quality of life by ensuring the values of equity, public participation, accessibility, transparency, fairness, and accountability. Public space policies are gathered in a framework that indicates high-level directions for local governments as opposed to detailed prescriptive policy interventions. This high-level framework is to assist municipalities to develop existing public open space and implement a strategy for future public space opportunities.

## WHAT CAN A GOOD PUBLIC SPACE POLICY FRAMEWORK ACHIEVE?

- **Public space & Governance**

-The participation of the community, as well as organized communities such as NGOs, in all aspects of public space development such as planning, design, resourcing, enjoyment and maintenance is an objective to reach for many local governments. This is also called actors-led development referring to a type of governance in which local actors, inhabitants, organizations or associations are involved and engaged. In this model of governance, the openness of the collaboration is sought for the place making and keeping but especially in the use of the space. Public space as they are created and maintained for all citizens. The main challenges in an actors-led governance are the long-term inclusiveness of the collaboration that might at some point overstretch voluntarism or lead to an "excessive ownership" of actors that might be exclusive. To prevent this, it is important to acknowledge social engagement and "cityfiers<sup>[1]</sup>".

-There is another model of governance on public space, among others, in which the community has the role of the user. The plan-led development provides guidelines, in master plans for instance, to help local governments to guide their urban development including public spaces. Plan-led development projects a spatial reality that encourages other government levels or the private sector to evaluate upstream the feasibility of their interventions.

- **EXAMPLE - Actors-led governance to manage public space: The Creative District of Porto Alegre, Brazil. This District was set up in 2013 and is today a meeting point for artists and entrepreneurs from the creative class. This initiative is the result of collaboration with NGOs supported by local governments. Several projects and activities are regularly organized such as the recycled piano initiative in partnership with the Piano Livre project where 10 pianos were installed. In the C District, creativity is not restricted to private art galleries, neighbors organize events for arts to be out in the streets, squares and façades.**
- **EXAMPLE - Plan-led governance to create public space: Regional planning based on intermediary cities, Province of Santa Fe. The Basic Plan is a document to guide the urban development processes of intermediary cities. It provides a spatial dimension to local decision processes and takes into consideration the public interest and the social**

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*needs of the beneficiary city. This concept was created to help intermediary cities with absence of technical and/or regulatory instruments to plan their urban expansion. The Basic Plan program was implemented in the Santa Fe Province including 5 intermediary cities to ensure a territorial balance: Las Toscas, Sunchales, Santo Tomé, Casilda and Villa Cañas.*

- **Public space & the Right to the City (social inclusion + Accessibility + raise the question of public space in slums)**
  - It is essential to promote **social inclusion** by providing spaces for people of all socio-economic backgrounds to use and enjoy. Quality public spaces such as libraries and parks can supplement housing as study and recreational spaces for the urban poor.
  - There is a need to ensure that there is an **equitable distribution** of public spaces within cities. Through the provision of quality, public spaces in cities can reduce the economic and social segregation that is prevalent in many developed and developing cities. By ensuring the distribution, coverage and quality of public spaces, it is possible to directly influence the dynamics of urban density, to combine uses and to promote the social mixture of cities' inhabitants.
  - Rights and duties of all the public space stakeholders should be clearly defined. Public spaces are public assets as a public space is by definition a place where all citizens are legitimate to be and discrimination should be tackled there. Public space has the capacity to gather people and break down social barriers. Protecting the inclusiveness of public space is a key prerequisite for the **right to the city** and an important asset to foster tolerance, conviviality and dialogue.
  - Public spaces in **slums** are only used to enable people to move. There is a lack of public space in both quantity and quality leading to high residential density, high crime rates, lack of public facilities such as toilets or water, difficulties to practice outdoor sports and other recreational activities among others.
  - **EXAMPLE: Corridors of freedom, Johannesburg, South Africa**  
*This project illustrates the new vision of making public space an asset accessible to every citizen, in particular the poor. Because of the apartheid spatial legacy, parks and public facilities were all concentrated in higher income neighbourhood while townships remain dense areas with almost no open green spaces. The corridors of freedom is an attempt to re-connect urban areas with access to recreational spaces and freedom of movement. While Apartheid policies created the green areas between townships to segregate, the corridors of freedom look to link them. (More information [here](#))*
  
- **Public space as a driver for urban economics (Local Economic Development + Local Tourism + Informal Economy)**
  - **Land value:** Quality public space has a positive impact on the surrounding property values, in saying that the converse is also true, that poorly managed public space can have a negative impact on surrounding land values. City's needs to view public space as a driver for economic development within urban areas. Whilst quality public spaces added to the diversity of urban areas, it also has the potential to generate income via rates and taxes that are generated from the higher property values surrounding the public spaces. Quality public space stimulates consumption, improves security, and peoples general perception of the area in question.
  - By investing in public space, local governments can have important **economic and fiscal benefits**, as it contributes to the quality of areas, attractiveness as well as

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competitiveness.

- Enhance key areas in the city to promote **local economic development**, particularly through public markets. Markets in public space provide opportunities for small and medium enterprises to get active in urban economy, and foster rural-urban linkages.
- Promote **local tourism** by providing spaces of high aesthetic, leisure, sporting and cultural value.
- *EXAMPLE: The 'souk' as a link between urban and rural territories, Chefchaouen, Morocco*

*The city of Chefchaouen focuses on the interactions between rural and urban areas as components for an integrated territory. The 'souk' of Chefchaouen is a merging point of the urban-rural linkages from an economic, social and spatial point of view. The products of the market come from rural areas close to the city (small producers, especially women) and rural areas in other regions (wholesalers). This market is close to the historical centre, called 'Medina' and is the place for small-scale activities generating social and economic dynamic and strengthening social cohesion. (More information [here](#))*

- **Public space & Mobility and Accessible Network of public spaces**

- A strategy should be implemented to plan and build public spaces as a coherent network in which public spaces are all connected to each other. Within this system, all the citizens must be able to move without facing any obstacles. Roads, bicycle lanes,
- Ensure the mobility of pedestrians, in particular those with physical disabilities, so that they can participate in urban life.
- Provide an integrated public space network at every scale, porous and connected to surroundings (citywide and neighbourhood).
- *EXAMPLE: The Critical Mass (cycling)*

*The critical mass is a cycling event initiated in 1992 in San Francisco and is now in more than 300 cities around the world. It happens on the last Friday of every month and gathers hundreds of cyclists involved in a "monthly protest to reclaim the streets." These events are celebrations and spontaneous gatherings.*

- **Public space & Culture and Identity**

- Promote city identity and culture through art, design and cultural activities in public spaces. Public art and performances in public spaces can celebrate and validate a sense of community, identity, belonging and well-being.
- Public spaces can preserve heritage (both material and immaterial), protect diversity, promote creativity and contribute to a distinctive urban development and identity.
- *EXAMPLE: Biblio Red Bogota*

*Biblored is an innovative network of public libraries initiated in 1998 by Enrique Peñalosa, the mayor of Bogota at that time. The network is made up of 3 complementary levels of libraries: metropolitan libraries, local libraries and neighbourhood libraries all spread in the city. Peñalosa made the network a key part of the city's development plan related to a strategy for equal access to culture and public space. The idea was to create a "social fabric" offering cultural, recreational and educational places with free access for all the citizens.*

- **Public space & Urban renewal**

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- Act as a catalyst for inner city and urban regeneration by increasing surrounding land values. Public space is an important tool for improving less developed urban areas and should be included in cities' urban expansion plans.
- Public space development provides great opportunities for cities to renew deteriorated urban areas. Urban renewal projects offer the opportunity to improve the supply of urban spaces and offer greater opportunities for citizens to exercise their social and economic rights.
- **EXAMPLE: Besalu and Girona urban regeneration of historical city centres and EU funding Jessica**

*JESSICA (Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas) is an initiative of the European Commission developed with the European Investment Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank to support urban development projects. JESSICA was set up in 2007 to 2013.*

- **Public space & Gender Equality and participation in urban life for all**

- Contribute to gender equality by improving comfort of women and girls, elderly and marginalized groups (migrants) in public spaces and enabling their participation in public life (including economic, political and cultural participation).
- Better lighting, wider pavements, transparency for security (see and be seen) and well maintained and accessible facilities such as public toilets as a first step make women and girls feel safer in public spaces and avoid sexual violence. Women have different perceptions and uses of the space. Planners and decision makers should take it into account and include women in the process.
- **EXAMPLE: Safety Audit in Delhi, India**

*7 women's safety audits were conducted in 5 municipal areas of Delhi as part of the project called "safer cities free of violence against women and girls". The findings were studied and analysed in 2013 and concluded that poor lighting, lack of well-maintained public toilets and no pavements make women and girls feel unsafe in public spaces. The Ministry of Urban Development used the recommendations to improve the street lighting infrastructure in Delhi. (More information [here](#))*

- **Public space & Food Security (related to food markets and urban-rural linkages)**

- Public spaces allow opportunities to ensure food security. Through the development of public food markets in open public spaces, cities are able to provide green spaces with connections to the natural environment and foster urban-rural linkages but also ensure that there is a possibility of creating food security opportunities for the citizens. With the increase in food prices, more communities are turning to local food suppliers and systems to ensure locally sourced food that is nutritional. Public spaces can allow for the development of community food gardens especially in neighbourhoods and around community facilities.
- **EXAMPLE: The Brazil's national school feeding programme.**

*The national school-feeding programme initiated in 1955 in Brazil part of the "Zero hunger strategy" adopted by the Ministry of Development. In 2009, the government passed a law requiring cities to spend at least 30% of their school meal budget on produce from family farmers. This programme fosters interaction between small local farmers and public schools. It is a way to boost local agriculture while providing food and nutrition security to students from low-*

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*income neighbourhoods. This example illustrates a strong synergy and coordination between the national government and local authorities.*

- **Public space & Health, Well-being and Safer cities**
  - Improve citizen health and well-being through spaces that can be used for sports and recreational activities.
  - Contribute to the physical activity of children and young people, and to sustainable family life, in particular in green open spaces.
  - Make cities safer, with lower rates of crime and violence. Community ownership and appropriate design of public spaces, including urban furniture, in consultation with inhabitants, especially women, children and youth, can contribute to building safer urban areas. The design has an important role to play but to make cities safer it has to be combined to maintenance and place keeping.
  - **EXAMPLE: Government program to rescue and improve public spaces, Mexico**  
*Since 2007, SEDESOL, the Mexican Ministry of Social Development, has “rescued” 42,000 public spaces across the country by promoting the realization of social actions and the execution of physical works to restore community meeting places, social interaction, and everyday recreation in insecure and marginalized urban areas. The goals of the Rescue of Public Spaces program are to help improve the quality of life and safety through the revitalization of public spaces in cities and metropolitan areas across Mexico, thereby promoting healthy living. This program is a notable illustration of articulation between the national government, the active participation of local community members and the support and guidance of local authorities. (More information [here](#))*
  - **EXAMPLE: Public Market Research with the Ford and W.K Kellogg Foundations and Project for Public Spaces**  
*In collaboration with the Ford and the W.K Kellogg Foundations, the Project for Public Space initiated in 2002 a national funding program around public markets and farmers in low and moderate-income communities. Forty markets in 22 states were awarded funding and their efforts showed that through small amounts of funding markets could boost the sustainability of vendors and management, resulting in increased market sales and higher market operating revenue. They all support the idea that public markets diversify their vendor and customer base, support youth development projects, provide increased access to healthy food and serve as transformational places for their communities to gather. (Find the reference and more information [here](#))*
  
- **Public space & the Natural Environment**
  - Public space as an extension of the Natural Environment: Public space is an essential element in the search for greater urban sustainability. Public green areas play a fundamental role in strategies for mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change and help to reduce the risks posed by natural hazards and threats to public health.
  - Mitigate climate change by increasing opportunities and develop the infrastructure required to promote non-carbon based urban transport, particularly walking and cycling. This can lead to improved resilience for cities. Introducing bicycle lanes and platforms better suited to pedestrian traffic can do

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this. Creating incentives to use other forms of transport will make it possible to improve the quality of urban life, the urban environment and the public health of all local citizens.

- Public space is a generator of cities as it acts as an integrator between the physical and the natural environment.
- **EXAMPLE: “Vancouver 2020: a bright green future”, Canada**  
*In October 2009, the Greenest City Action team released “Vancouver 2020: a bright green future”, an action plan for becoming the world’s greenest city by 2020. This roadmap sets out a long-term vision and 10 goals. It includes recommendations for the city of Vancouver such as its contribution to the protection of endangered species and ecosystems, the wetlands, the streams and the riverbanks but also the implementation of a programme to monitor and control harmful invasive species. (More information [here](#))*

## UCLG INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS ON PUBLIC SPACE

- **International Charter for Walking**

Built on extensive discussions with experts throughout the world this Charter shows how to create a culture where people choose to walk. It identifies the needs of people on foot and provides a common framework to help authorities refocus their existing policies, activities and relationships to create a culture where people choose to walk. Numerous UCLG members, but also communities are associated to the charter. The NGO promoting the charter has also cooperated with UCLG during the UCLG congress held in Rabat in 2013, where the first African walking audit was implemented with 7 mayors that signed the charter.

- **The Charter of Public Space and the Biennial of Public Space in Rome**

This short document deals with the definition, creation and management of public spaces. It aims to raise awareness on the importance of promoting lively and accessible public spaces for all. UCLG contributed to the second edition of this charter adopted in May 2015 during the Biennial of public space in Rome.

- **The Global Public Space Toolkit**

The committee actively participated in the development of the [Global Toolkit for public space](#) led by UN-Habitat. UCLG emphasized the relevance of local governments for public space and provided practical cases and inputs. The toolkit has been launched during the Barcelona Thematic Meeting on public space the 5 April 2016 after 3 years of work.

- **Peer learning events addressing the subject of public space:**

- A two-day event was held in **Maputo, Mozambique on “hygiene, health and markets”** in October 2012. This event was meant to establish the building blocks for initiating the project on decentralized cooperation between cities of

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Brazil and Mozambique. Urban management was the main subject of the event including public markets, waste management, street vendors and the question of gender equality.

- **Mentorship programme addressing the subject of public space:**
  - **From 2008 to 2012, an innovative four-way partnership between the City of Johannesburg, the Lilongwe City Council (LCC),** and as well as Durban and Mzuzu as part of the Cityfuture programme of Cities Alliance and UCLG. The peer support has led to the substantial improvement in the capacity of the Lilongwe City Council to formulate and adopt strategies in economic management, shelter, land and infrastructure. On the management front, the Lilongwe City Council computerized much of its accounting and billing system resulting in improvements in transparency; accountability and efficiency that was essential for identify, protect and create public spaces. See more on the [Cities Share](#).
  
- **Peer learning events specifically on public space:**
  - ‘Reimagining Public Spaces’ was held from **4-6 June 2014 in Durban-eThekweni, South Africa**. The commitment of the city’s politicians, officials and partners was outstanding, and the learning exchange was a milestone for the UCLG South-South exchange, widening recognition of the issue of public space and enabling the city to enter into a new era of commitment.
  - In October 2014, a two-day peer-learning event called “**public space and citizenship**” was held in **Porto Alegre**. Urban governance, the right-to-the-city as well as safeness in public spaces were raised to nurture the discussion on the future public space policy framework by and for local governments.
  - A peer learning exchange on public space in the African context took place from **7-9 December 2015 in Blantyre, Malawi**. This learning exchange was an opportunity for the Blantyre City Council and all participants to actively contribute in shaping global policy whilst at the same time developing implementable solutions at the city level that will produce tangible results that all citizens can enjoy. A work around public local policies on public space has been privileged during the event and will culminate in an overall policy framework for local governments to implement at a city level.
  
- **Conferences and meetings:**
  - UCLG held its first **Policy Debate session on 17th June 2014 in Liverpool during the Executive Bureau**, dedicated to a crosscutting theme of UCLG’s global agenda: [Planning and Public Spaces](#). The role of local urban policies in the global agenda, analysing public spaces as a

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crosscutting issue demonstrated a new way to understand the city as a concentration of public goods and values: a common space with equal access to leisure, communication, expression and identity for all. The Bureau encouraged the Committee to elaborate this policy framework.

- **Public Market Conference:** UCLG and the committee, Project for Public Spaces (PPS), the Institut Municipal de Mercats de Barcelona (IMMB) in partnership with UN-Habitat and various partners gathered together the world's leading public market operators, developers, and thought-leaders at the **9<sup>th</sup> International public markets conference in March 2015** in Barcelona. You can further view the Declaration of the 9th International Public Markets Conference [here](#).
- **The 3rd World Forum of Local Economic Development (LED) took place between 13 and 16 October 2015 in Turin, Italy.** The event was an opportunity for the Urban Strategic Planning Committee and UN-Habitat to organize a panel session dedicated to opportunities for LED through effective public space policies, displaying a range of perspectives related to the social, cultural and economic benefits of public space, markets, job creation and the informal economy, logistics and mobility, protected land and citizen participation. Interventions from the floor also touched on the links between gender and dignity in public space policies and the right to the city.

Towards Habitat III:

- **The Habitat III Africa Regional Meeting took place in Abuja, Nigeria from 24-26 February 2016.** UCLG and UN Habitat raised the topic of public spaces during a side event on 25 February 2016. The side event was the occasion to discuss issues in the African context such as the consideration of public space as a public service, the importance of strong urban governance or banning gated communities among others. (More information [here](#))
- **On 4 and 5 April, the City of Barcelona hosted a Thematic Meeting on public space** to develop inputs to the New Urban Agenda. On 4 April, the UCLG Committee on Urban Strategic Planning and UN Habitat Nairobi held a side event on the role of local governments in creating and maintaining public spaces. This side event enabled decision makers, and technicians to share and discuss the role and vision of local governments with regard to public spaces. (More information [here](#))
- **Habitat III Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Meeting held in Toluca the 11 - 13 April 2016** was the chance for UCLG to organize a side event on Public Spaces in Latin America: the challenge of building equity, inclusivity and sustainability in our cities. (More information [here](#))
- Looking forward, **October 2016 will see the celebration of the Habitat III Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in Quito, Ecuador and the UCLG World Congress in Bogota.** Both will be an opportunity to build on SDG11 by ensuring access to basic and social services, mobility, public and green spaces and the enjoyment of natural and built heritage and by recognizing and protecting the Right to the

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City more

broadly.