Davos
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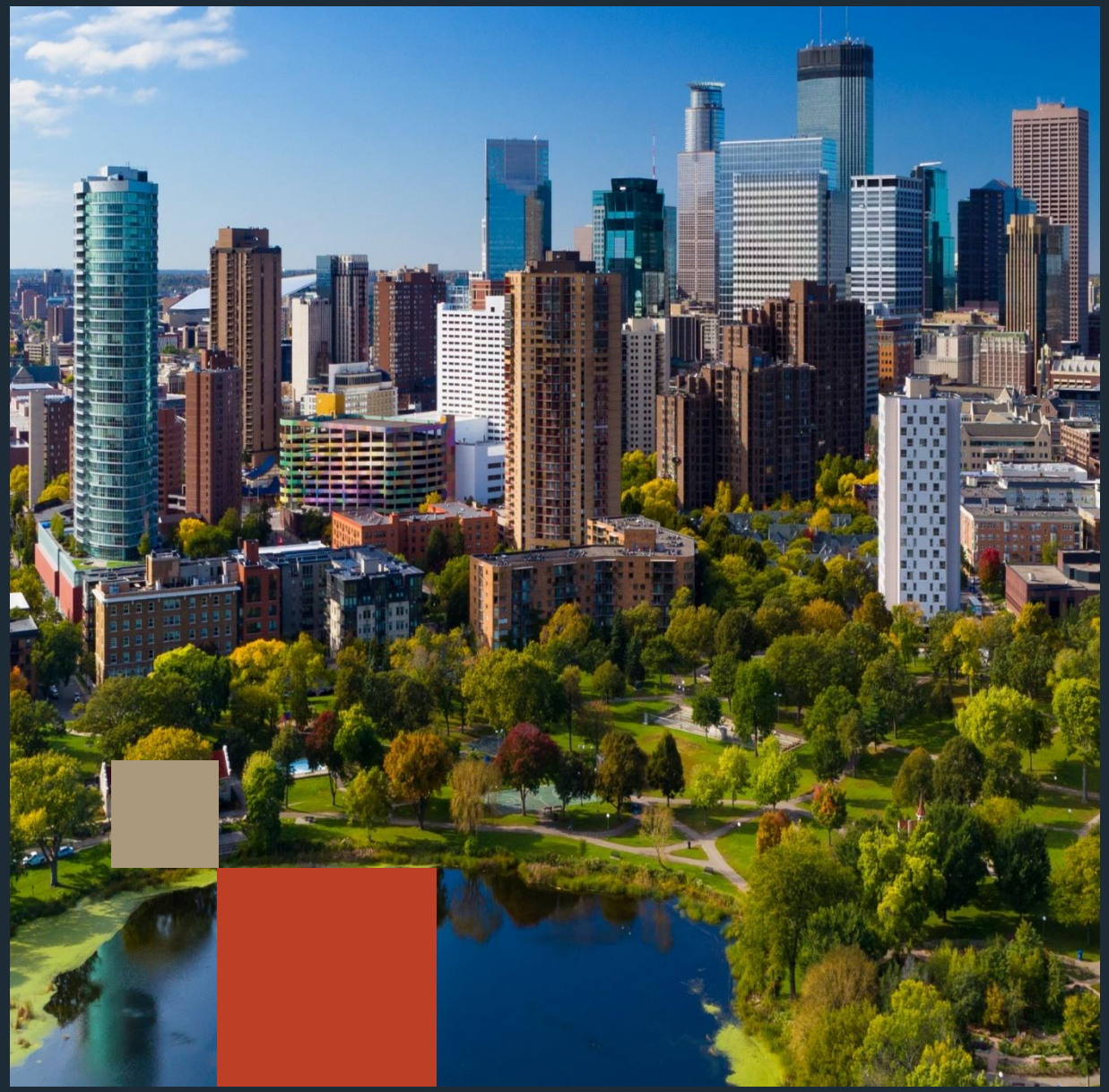
Pioneering Places



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Davos Baukultur Alliance

What is the Davos Baukultur Alliance?

Advances global standards for quality in the built environment.

The Davos Baukultur Alliance brings together national governments, global businesses, civil society and international organisations to address a critical market gap by establishing integrated frameworks that ensure urban development delivers lasting economic, social, cultural and environmental value.

By embedding these principles into real projects and aligning public and private sector agendas, the Alliance helps partners reduce delays, demonstrate return on investment and strengthen community trust.

Key stakeholders include real estate, engineering and construction, materials, finance and related industries, alongside ministries responsible for housing, infrastructure, planning and culture, as well as regional development agencies, planning authorities and infrastructure providers.

2018
Davos Declaration

2021
Davos Baukultur Quality System

2023
Davos Baukultur Memorandum

2023
The Alliance Founding Act

85
Members

140+
Countries

28
National Governments

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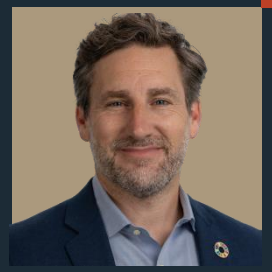
Introducing Pioneering Places

Oliver Martin

Head of Baukultur, Swiss Federal Office of Culture, Chair, Davos Baukultur Alliance

“Over half the world’s population now lives in cities facing the urgent challenge of building resilient, sustainable environments for the future. Meeting these challenges demands collective action and a shared commitment to quality. Together, we are advancing high-quality Baukultur as a unifying standard, strengthening collaboration, inspiring innovation and shaping liveable places for generations to come.”



Jeff Merritt

Head of Centre for Urban Transformation; Member of the Executive Committee, World Economic Forum

“As the inaugural cohort of pioneering places, Kuala Lumpur, Medellín, Montréal, Nairobi, San Francisco and Utrecht stand as beacons of possibility, drawing on their cultures, histories and local geographies to shape thriving places, economies and communities. Their leadership is a call to action, an urgent reminder that sustaining and advancing progress requires more than admiration. It demands investment, partnership, and bold public–private collaboration to build the thriving cities of tomorrow.”

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The Inaugural Cohort

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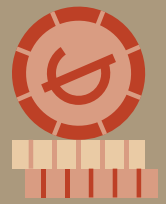
Together, we are shaping places where communities can thrive

As the inaugural cohort of Pioneering Places, you are leading a global movement that will continue to expand over the next three years, improving the living environments of over 100 million people.

You will advance your local priorities as part of a multi-stakeholder network of governments, businesses, and institutions, gaining the knowledge and partnerships to drive lasting change.

Each Pioneering Place will act as a model, showing how embedding holistic quality across policy, planning, investment, and delivery creates value, attracts talent and capital, and builds resilient, thriving communities.



United by a shared commitment, we are setting a new global standard where quality, in all its dimensions, is the rule, not the exception.

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Advancing Global Priorities Through Local Action

Drive regional and national influence through local action

Showcase how advancing quality in your place can shape broader dialogue and priorities.

Address challenges through City Sprints and City to City Collaboration

Harness shared expertise to turn ambition into practical outcomes for your community.

Draw on the global expertise of the Community of Practice

Collaborate with business and civil society leaders to translate insight into collective action.

Exchange knowledge and perspectives with global leaders at the Annual Alliance Meeting

Position your place among leaders shaping dialogue on quality, culture and impact.

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- Utrecht, Netherlands

Sustainability and Circularity

- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Montréal, Canada

Medellín, Colombia

Extending water access to every community by combining innovation, inclusion and infrastructure, using technology to strengthen resilience in the city's most remote areas.

Challenge

Many of Medellín's dispersed rural communities continue to face unequal access to safe and reliable water. Outdated systems, fragmented management and limited resources have constrained service quality, perpetuating social and spatial inequities despite major urban progress.

Opportunity

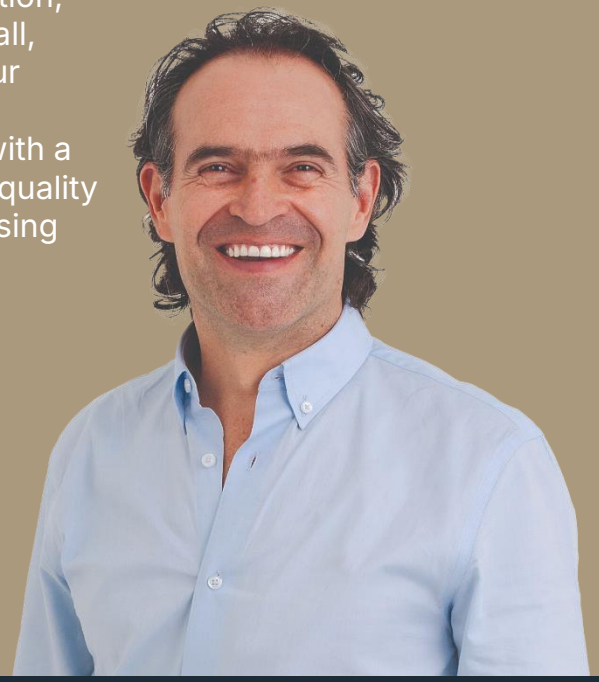
Through its smart water treatment initiative, Medellín will show how infrastructure can embody Baukultur principles of quality, stewardship and social cohesion. The city will automate rural water systems and empower
local communities to manage them, turning essential utilities into shared civic assets.

Outcomes

- Expand access to safe and continuous water services across rural settlements through automated treatment systems.
- Strengthen community capacity to manage and maintain local water infrastructure, ensuring it becomes part of the social and physical fabric of neighbourhoods.
- Share Medellín's lessons on digital and community innovation through the Davos Baukultur Alliance, strengthening global knowledge on technology and quality of place.

"Medellín has shown the world that real transformation is possible. By joining the Pioneering Places Programme, we want to show how a city like ours can lead with innovation, sustainability, and above all, better opportunities for our people. We are proud to represent Latin America with a project that improves the quality of life of our citizens by using technology to strengthen something as essential as access to water."

Federico Gutiérrez,
Mayor of Medellín



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Medellín, Colombia

Urban and Social Transformation

The story of Medellín's transformation is one of civic leadership and collective resilience. Once marked by violence and fear, the city is now a global symbol of innovation and inclusive growth. Its evolution, recognised by the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize in 2016, demonstrates that lasting change is possible when citizens are placed at the heart of every decision.

Sustainability and Green Infrastructure

Through initiatives such as the Green Corridors, Medellín has reduced urban temperatures by up to 2°C, improved air quality, and restored biodiversity. Alongside the MetroCable, tram, and low-emission buses, these investments go beyond infrastructure as they embody dignity, well-being, and a shared commitment to a sustainable future that connects people with nature.

Living Laboratory of Innovation

Medellín has become a living laboratory where technology, policy, and community innovation intersect to improve lives. From automated water treatment in rural areas to programmes like C4IR Medellín, FutuMed, and Parque Primavera Norte, the city demonstrates how innovation can strengthen both infrastructure and opportunity for its citizens.

Medellín, Antioquia / Colombia. Credit: alexander, Adobe Stock

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Nairobi, Kenya

Delivering sustainable, affordable housing through public–private collaboration and innovative financing to strengthen communities and drive inclusive urban growth.

Challenge

Informal settlements occupy only five percent of Nairobi's residential land area but house at least half of the city's population. Rapid urbanisation and rising costs have created a significant shortfall in affordable housing, highlighting the need for inclusive and sustainable redevelopment models.

Opportunity

Through its urban renewal programme, Nairobi will form joint ventures on county land, align national finance and policy, and set fair price caps to keep homes affordable. The city will advance a 1,000-hectare affordable housing pipeline across six priority sites, with Woodley as an early model adding nearly two thousand homes and social amenities.

Outcomes

- Increase the availability of affordable, sustainable housing that strengthens communities across Nairobi.
- Develop replicable housing policies, financing mechanisms, and delivery models informed by global practice.
- Provide knowledge exchanges through to strengthen the quality of housing and public infrastructure globally.

> "Nairobi is proud to be part of the inaugural Pioneering Places programme, which reflects our shared commitment to building cities that are not only functional, but also vibrant, inclusive, and care for the community. Through the Davos Baukultur Alliance, we have an opportunity to learn, share, and shape communities that honour culture, spark innovation, and improve the quality of life for all. As a fast-growing city Nairobi stands ready to look at new ways of making our urban spaces more liveable, sustainable, and inspiring for generations to come."

H.E Sakaja Johnson CBS, EGH, Governor, Nairobi City County

> "This programme offers Nairobi a unique opportunity to reimagine our urban future in ways that put people, culture, and sustainability at the heart of development. As part of the Davos Baukultur Alliance, we are committed to building communities that are not only functional, but also resilient, inclusive, and inspiring. This initiative allows us to learn from global best practice while showcasing Nairobi's own innovations as we work to create a city that truly serves its people and sets a standard for liveable urban growth."

H.E Njoroge Muchiri, Deputy Governor, Nairobi City County

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Nairobi, Kenya

The World's Only Capital City with a National Park

Nairobi is globally unique for having the Nairobi National Park right on its doorstep. This park is home to a large and diverse wildlife population, including lions, rhinos, giraffes, and zebras, plus a wide range of birds with over 500 species recorded. Set against the striking backdrop of the city's modern skyline, it offers a one of a kind urban safari experience.

A Global Diplomatic and Innovation Hub

Nairobi is one of only four cities in the world that hosts a major global headquarters for the United Nations, specifically the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) and the headquarters of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). This status, combined with its reputation as "Silicon Savannah," a leading tech and innovation hub in Africa, highlights its extraordinary role in both international diplomacy and the future of African technology and business.

The Heart of an Extraordinary Public Transport Culture

The city's distinctive matatu culture, its fleet of vividly decorated minibuses and vans, plays a central role in urban mobility and social expression. Beyond transport, matatus embody local entrepreneurship and creativity, reflecting the city's identity through bold visual art, music, and commentary that capture the rhythms and aspirations of everyday life.

Nairobi, Kenya Photo credit: Amar. Adobe Stock

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San Francisco, USA

Advancing urban resilience and economic revitalisation along the Central Embarcadero by uniting climate adaptation, design excellence and public–private collaboration.

Challenge

Major initiatives converge at the Embarcadero–Market Street interface, one of San Francisco's most recognisable civic gateways, yet operate across multiple timelines and jurisdictions, risking fragmented delivery of flood and seismic resilience projects, public realm improvements and economic activation.

Opportunity

Develop a unified urban design and resilience framework aligning Port, City and federal partners, ensuring that climate protection investments also deliver vibrant, inclusive and economically resilient public spaces.

Outcomes

- Catalyse a shared design vision and delivery roadmap to be endorsed by key public and private partners for a climate-ready Central Embarcadero.
- Support one to two pilot efforts that demonstrate integrated resilience and activation, helping to inform the next USACE design phase.
- Establish innovative partnership and financing approaches to attract private investment and build long-term public confidence.

> "For more than a century, San Francisco's downtown waterfront has greeted newcomers and been a defining symbol of our city. We are proud to join with the Pioneering Places Programme to renew this iconic place, act on critical climate adaptation goals and offer a warmer welcome at the City's front door. Together with global partners, we are excited to plan for the next 100-years of innovation, culture, resilience and opportunity."

Alicia John-Baptiste, Chief of Infrastructure, Climate and Mobility, City & County of San Francisco

> "San Francisco has long been a pioneer in climate innovation, where people and nature thrive together. By blending nature-positive solutions with bold economic revitalisation, our city continues to demonstrate how ecological resilience and community well-being go hand in hand. We look forward to building on this legacy to ensure San Francisco remains at the forefront of shaping thriving, sustainable cities for the future."

Daniel Lurie, Mayor of San Francisco

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San Francisco, USA

City of Innovation and Inclusion

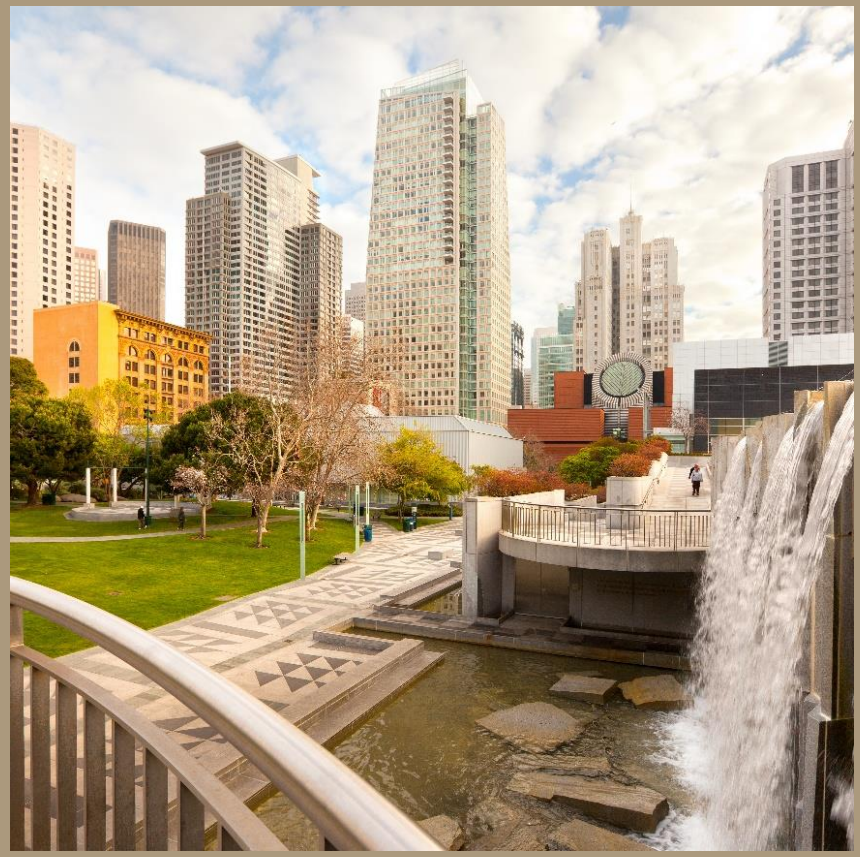
A global centre where technology, design and civic ambition converge to shape the future of urban living. Policies focused on equity and sustainability drive affordable housing, inclusive growth and community resilience, setting a benchmark for socially conscious urban transformation.

People Centred Renewal

Transformation across the waterfront and inner neighbourhoods reflects a commitment to adaptive reuse and design for connection. Public realm projects and cultural investment are revitalising open spaces and reinforcing the relationship between people, place and nature.

Collaborative Climate Leadership

Partnerships between public agencies, research institutions and private leaders are accelerating progress on climate action, digital infrastructure and mobility. This culture of collaboration and experimentation positions the city as a living laboratory for resilient and inclusive urban futures.



Yerba Buena Gardens. Photo credit: Jose Luis Stephens. Adobe Stock

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Utrecht, Netherlands

Building a healthier and more resilient region by linking economic growth with quality living environments that enable people to lead longer, happier lives.

Challenge

Rapid population growth and limited land have increased pressure on housing and infrastructure across the Utrecht region. Maintaining affordability and access to green, well-designed neighbourhoods has become essential to sustaining the city's high quality of life and economic competitiveness.

Opportunity

Through its Heart of Health vision, Utrecht will show how housing and urban design can directly improve public health. The Cartesius neighbourhood will serve as a model for this approach, translating Baukultur principles of functionality, environment and governance into practice.

Outcomes

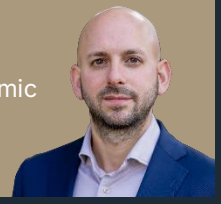
- Achieve measurable improvements in public health, and urban quality through coordinated delivery.
- Deliver the Cartesius neighbourhood as a model for health-centred urban development hat connects health, sustainability, and prosperity.
- Share Utrecht's findings through Alliance case studies to inform global practice on wellbeing and the built environment.

> "In the province of Utrecht, we work together towards healthy people, in a healthy living environment, within a healthy society. After all, health is the foundation of happiness – and happy people, in turn, contribute to a strong society, a vital community, and a well-functioning labour market. A concrete example is Cartesius: a new urban district near Utrecht Central Station, in the heart of the country. Here, thousands of additional homes and workplaces come together, close to each other and easily accessible. In this way, we bring jobs closer to people and people closer to their work. This means less travel time, more happiness, and better health. At the same time, we strengthen the business climate and increase the earning capacity of the region. A healthy living environment thus proves to be not only good for people, but also for the economy."

André van Schie, Regional Minister for Economic Affairs of the Province of Utrecht

> "Who doesn't want to become over 100 years in good health and happiness? In five blue zones worldwide, this is the case. The success factors could be a plant-based diet, regular natural exercise, strong social connections, a purpose in life, and strategies to reduce stress. Businesses, governments, citizens, and knowledge institutions cooperate to implement and monitor this success factors in the neighbourhood Cartesius. Our social key performance indicator is a 5-year higher life expectancy in good health and happiness. Our region wants to maximise the contribution to healthy people in a health environment. Our mission is to become the global Heart of Health."

Michiel Dijkman, CEO of multi-helix organisation Economic Board Metropolitan Region Utrecht



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Utrecht, Netherlands

Human-centred regeneration

The Cartesius District is redefining urban living through circular design, adaptive reuse and climate neutral construction, applying Blue Zone principles to foster healthier and more connected lives. Former industrial land is being transformed into a mixed-use neighbourhood centred on wellbeing, biodiversity and social connection. It stands as a benchmark for Europe's next generation of sustainable districts.

City shaped by movement

Recognised globally as the world's cycling capital, integrating active mobility into every layer of city planning. With the world's largest bicycle parking facility and a city centre designed for people rather than cars, Utrecht demonstrates how accessibility and liveability can strengthen each other.

Collaborative governance and innovation

Utrecht's Heart of Health vision, recognised by the World Health Organisation, aligns municipal, provincial and national ambitions to integrate housing, climate and well-being goals. Partnerships with universities, developers and civic groups strengthen evidence-based decision-making and position the city as a testbed for circular, inclusive growth.

Artist impression Cartesius Utrecht. Photo credit: Ballast Nedam

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Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Advancing adaptive reuse through urban renewal projects across the Federal Territories by transforming vacant buildings into vibrant places that preserve heritage, reduce carbon and strengthen local identity.

Challenge

Across Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan, hundreds of key buildings stand vacant or underused, representing one of Southeast Asia's largest adaptive reuse opportunities. Rapid growth and rising construction demand have intensified pressure on resources and heritage assets, limiting progress towards a high-quality built environment.

Opportunity

Through the RENEW policy (Repurposing Adaptive Reuse), the Federal Territories will demonstrate how the Baukultur principles of adaptive reuse for continuity work in practice. The initiative will update planning rules, pilot new projects and test investment tools that prove how reusing existing assets delivers faster, more affordable and culturally grounded urban renewal across Southeast Asia.

Outcomes

- Advance a national adaptive reuse policy and regional implementation playbook, tested through the CHASE City framework (Clean, Healthy, Advanced, Safe, Eco-friendly).
- Share learnings across cities to shape incentives and financing models that strengthen the viability of adaptive reuse.
- Position Malaysia's Federal Territories as leaders in adaptive reuse and sustainable urban renewal through engagement with the Davos Baukultur Alliance.

"RENEW reflects our belief that cities must respect what they already possess while also daring to dream of what they can become. By breathing new life into underutilised spaces, Kuala Lumpur demonstrates how heritage, sustainability, and innovation can move forward together. This is the pathway to greater global competitiveness and liveability."

H.E. Ms Zaliha Mustafa, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories), Malaysia

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Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Economic Core and Urban Scale

The Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan together generate over 16% of Malaysia's GDP, serving as the nation's administrative, financial and cultural core. Home to more than 2 million residents, the Territories anchor Malaysia's capital region, with Kuala Lumpur advancing its ambition to be a globally competitive and liveable city.

Transformation Potential

Through the CHASE City framework (Clean, Healthy, Advanced, Safe, Eco-friendly), the Federal Territories are turning over 110 vacant or under-occupied buildings in Kuala Lumpur into one of Southeast Asia's largest adaptive reuse opportunities.

Sustainability Leadership

The Federal Territories are embedding sustainability into urban governance and planning, advancing alignment with Malaysia's net-zero pathway and circular-economy agenda.

The Godown by Ling Hao Architects. Photo credit: The Godown SDN BHD

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Montréal, Canada

Placing circularity at the core of urban development, embedding quality Baukultur quality principles into design, policy and procurement to cut carbon and strengthen cultural identity.

Challenge

Construction in Montréal continues to generate high embodied carbon, despite progress on reducing operational emissions. Circular practice adoption are still limited across industry, policy and procurement frameworks.

Opportunity

Implement Montréal's Circular Economy Roadmap 2024–2030 to embed reuse and circularity across the entire development value chain. By applying Baukultur quality principles, the city will demonstrate how circular practices can cut carbon while strengthening cultural identity and urban character.

Outcomes

- Identify and establish pilot projects that cut virgin material use and embodied carbon, with results captured in Alliance case studies.
- Mobilise industry adoption of circular practices through resource directories, exhibitions and collaborative initiatives that drive market uptake.
- Embed circularity and quality principles into Montréal's procurement and regulatory systems.

> By adopting the Montréal Agenda 2030 for quality and exemplarity in design and architecture, the City of Montréal's intentions were to position designers and architects as frontline allies in achieving the ecological transition. It is on this basis that we are now placing circularity at the heart of our efforts to improve quality in the built environment and support the Davos Baukultur Alliance. Our goal is to facilitate the emergence of businesses in circular design through a variety of municipal levers, ranging from project support to procurement processes. Together, the city and the design and architecture ecosystem can succeed in the challenge of increasing the circularity index in the construction sector.

Valérie Poulin,
Director, Market Development,
Economic Development Department

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Montréal, Canada

Design Leadership

Montréal created the position of Design Commissioner in 1991, becoming the first city in North America to recognise design as a driver of urban policy. Building on this foundation, Montréal was later designated a UNESCO City of Design in 2006, reinforcing its international reputation for creativity and design excellence.

Innovation in Urban Development

Since 2006, Montréal has delivered more than 50 design and architecture competitions across projects of all scales, from urban furniture to major infrastructure. This approach embeds design quality and innovation in every aspect of the city's development.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Home to 2.1 million residents, Montréal accounts for 24 percent of Québec's population, with a workforce in which 41 percent are bilingual in French and English. This linguistic and cultural duality underpins the city's creativity, international connectivity, and economic dynamism.

Photo credit: Adobe Stock

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Declaration of Commitment

We, the undersigned city leaders, as part of the Pioneering Places programme, commit to advancing quality in our living environments. Through local action, collaboration, and shared learning, we pledge to contribute to stronger communities, informed policy, and global knowledge that shapes thriving places of the future.

Kuala Lumpur

H.E. Ms Zaliha Mustafa
Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories)

Medellín

Federico Gutiérrez
Mayor of Medellín

Montréal

Valérie Poulin,
Director, Market Development, Economic Development Department

Nairobi

H.E Sakaja Johnson CBS, EGH,
Governor, Nairobi City County

San Francisco

Alicia John-Baptiste,
Chief of Infrastructure, Climate and Mobility, City & County of San Francisco

Utrecht

Michiel Dijkman
Chairman, Board of Directors, Economic Boards the Netherlands

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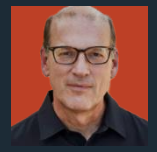
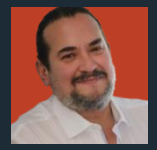
Davos Baukultur Alliance

Guided by the Expertise and Insight of a Community of Practice

A selection of Davos Baukultur Alliance leaders bringing global expertise to Pioneering Places



Jonathan Reckford,
Chief Executive Officer,
Habitat for Humanity International



Juan Caballero,
Chief Executive Officer,
Build Change

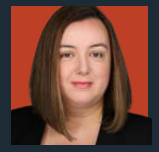
Louis Downing,
Chief Executive Officer,
Global Infrastructure Basel

Iñaqui Carnicero,
Secretary-General for Urban Agenda, Housing and Architecture, Spain

Cha-Ly Koh,
Chief Executive Officer,
Urbanmetry

Laia Gasch,
Director, World Cities Culture Forum

Anacláudia Rossbach,
Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director,
UN-Habitat



Lisa Kelvey,
Global Head of Infrastructure & Transport, KPMG

Aziza Akhmouch,
Head of Division, Cities, Urban Policies & Sustainable Development, OECD

Ming Zhang,
Global Director, Urban, Resilience and Land Global Department, World Bank

Rupesh Madlani,
Chief Executive Officer,
Bankers without Boundaries

Antonio Gomez-Palacio,
Chair, Dialog

Lars Petersson,
Group Chief Executive Officer, Velux

Yeongmin You,
Senior Vice President,
GS E&C

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA
Federal Office of Culture FOC

Davos Baukultur Alliance

Amplifying Impact through Global City Networks

Strengthened through collaboration with leading global city networks, bringing broader perspectives, shared learning, and greater reach.

C40 CITIES

Participating places may explore opportunities for collaboration with C40's Reinventing Cities initiative, which supports the transformation of underused sites into zero-carbon, climate-resilient projects.

Reinventing Cities winning project, Aria, Milan
Photo credit: Wolf Visualising Architecture

WORLD CITIES CULTURE FORUM

Cohort Places may be considered for participation in the World Cities Culture Summit 2026, the flagship convening of the World Cities Culture Forum.

2024 Dubai Summit thought leadership session
Photo credit: WCCF

Davos
Baukultur
Alliance

Pioneering Places marks the start of a shared journey, translating vision into lasting change for people and places worldwide.

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