

Creating Quality Open Space in A Neighborhood of Beer-Sheva

Forward

The quality of the urban environment is created by a tapestry of public open spaces that should be green and well cared for. It is one of the key ingredients of quality of life in cities.

92% of the citizens of Israel live in urban settlements.

80% of our time is spent in built urban environments.

The location and development of public open spaces is an essential part of the renewal of city centers and neighborhoods. **In these neighborhoods, although they may be degraded, people continue to live, and they have clear ideas and wishes about their local environment. Therefore, renewal and redevelopment of such neighborhoods has to be done with full participation of their inhabitants.** This participation will hopefully create a sense of responsibility and ownership over the local environment helping its long term viability.



MIU, which promotes humane and high quality urban environments, as well as the advancement of democratic values in planning, initiated, last year, together with the city of Beer-Sheva, and with the help of the Green Environment Fund, a dynamic public participation planning in three sites:

- **Neighborhood A:** developing green open spaces and pedestrian and bicycle paths, in the neighborhood's public space.
- **Neighborhood B:** renewal and development of the neighborhood center, and the Authors' Garden Park.
- **Neighborhood C and Ramot:** Development around the new Railroad station as a connector between the neighborhoods and the university.

The Challenge

Continuing planning with public participation, and implementation of one of the projects we began in 2005. The project chosen by us for implementation is: **Developing quality open spaces in Neighborhood A in Beer-Sheva.** This is a continuation of the work achieved in the first year in which a vision and objectives for the project were formulated, an area for the project chosen and studied, the local residents have learned some of the issues related to the planning of these areas, and a concept was developed in the workshops which were held in December.

We intend to continue design development of the project in order to prepare it for implementation. This stage will be carried out with neighborhood residents, representatives of the municipality, and volunteer planners and designers members of MIU.

Project aims

- Raising awareness for the issue of the quality of urban environment, and the importance of public open space in the city, as an integral part of urban renewal.
- Promoting democratic values in planning, Strengthening the old neighborhood which was neglected by the municipal authority.
- Transformation of the participants (neighborhood residents, municipal employees, local professionals and volunteers from MIU) into **agents for change** and promoters of sustainable city planning and management.
- Completion of public participation process that was begun, in order to build up confidence in the method and its capacity.

Method & Participants

Organization of a short and intensive public participation workshop (charrette) in Neighborhood A in Beer-sheva.

Participants:

- Residents of Neighborhood A in Beer-Sheva.
- Representatives of the municipality: planning and engineering department, social services department, community workers, representative of the city's board.
- Representatives of local environmental and social NGO's such as the local chapter of SPNI.
- Planners from the district offices of central government: Ministry of Construction and Housing, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of the Interior, Israel Land Administration.
- Professional teams members of MIU: Architects, Landscape Architects, Traffic Engineers, Urban Economist.
- Moderators with experience in public participation in planning.

Project Stages

1. Preparation for the Charrette.
2. Charrette – three day charrette in the neighborhood with all participants .
3. Conclusion and approval of design – public meeting with mayor and council for presentation of the charrette's results.
4. Implementation–Elaboration of the plans by the professional teams into contract drawings.
5. Meeting for final approval of plans by the community.
6. Approval and adoption by the city for implementation.

Project evaluation criteria

- The city's commitment to implement the project as designed through the public participation method.
- The attendance of all participants in all stages and meetings
- The quality and quantity of projects in the charette.
- Approval of implemental plans.
- The level of interest and public awareness of the project
- Willingness of the city of Beer-Sheva, and other agencies involved with planning in the city to continue using public participation in their projects.



Expected outcome

- Detailed design and execution guidelines for reconstruction and development of public open spaces in the neighborhood.
- Construction of key aspects of the project, and budgeting for continuation.
- Restoration of trust between neighborhood residents and municipal authority.
- Increased awareness among residents of their immediate surroundings and care for its quality.
- Understanding at the municipal level of the importance of quality open spaces as part of renewal of neighborhoods.
- Publication of the project among local and state planning bodies and organizations.

