

## Empowering Neighbourhood Associations – Riga, Latvia 1/4



The Riga pilot focuses on finding solutions to improve collaboration and trust between the municipality and local neighbourhood communities.

This includes two steps:

1. Developing a neighbourhood project co-design system.
2. Improving the system for financing local development and creating strategies that reflect the needs and aspirations of the community (based on a community-led local development approach).

### WHY | Purpose

There is a strong neighbourhood movement in Riga, with many active community members. However, this community resource and its capacity for activism are limited due to financial and personal reasons, most activities are done pro bono.

One of the aims of this pilot project is to create an environment where neighbourhood associations can become partners (co-designers) alongside the municipality. By providing more tools, methods, and opportunities for greater independence, these associations can play a more active role in shaping the development and well-being of their neighbourhoods.

By incorporating Public Interest Design (PID) principles and a community-led approach into the project activities, the Riga pilot aims to create a more inclusive, sustainable, and community-driven model for developing and strengthening neighbourhoods.

### HOW | Field of Action

- Implementing bottom-up planning mechanisms to give residents a more significant role in decision-making processes regarding their neighbourhoods.
- Mapping local stakeholders to identify key actors and potential contributors.
- Facilitating networking among stakeholders to establish strong and cohesive local partnerships.
- Organising workshops focused on co-design and community-led local development.
- Conducting informative seminars to share knowledge and best practices among stakeholders.
- Organising field trips and urban dives to provide practical insights, strengthen understanding, and enhance knowledge.

### WHO | Actors

NGOs:

- Avoti Neighbourhood Resident Association
- Grīziņkalns Neighbourhood Resident Association
- Riga Neighbourhood Alliance

Public Sector:

- Riga City Council specialists

Indirect Stakeholders:

- Other larger municipalities
- Regional NGOs
- Relevant ministries



### Contact

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## Empowering Neighbourhood Associations – Riga, Latvia 2/4

### Charter principles

Three Principles and Approaches We Keep in Mind to Drive Change:

#### Design Principles for the Public Good

Throughout the project, we apply design principles to deeply understand challenges, engage with users, and develop effective solutions. Design concepts offer the necessary approaches and tools to enhance our work with neighbourhood associations, particularly through engagement, partnership, and prototyping methods and systems. These include tools such as urban dives, interviews, and circles of concern.

#### Co-Design with Citizens

Co-Design is the key principle of our pilot. We aim to develop improved co-design practices between the municipality and neighbourhoods, empowering local communities and fostering partnerships. It is also crucial that communities learn new methods and discover opportunities to improve their surroundings and self-organise using community-led local development tools.

#### Integrated and Holistic Planning

We incorporate diverse perspectives from neighbourhoods—both citizens and institutions—into city planning through a bottom-up approach. Within this framework, communities can define their own goals, areas of interest, and affected stakeholders. During the pilot, it is essential to identify methods that enable the creation of flexible planning systems applicable to various areas and challenges.



## Empowering Neighbourhood Associations – Riga, Latvia 3/4

### Activities

#### Ongoing (since July 2023)

Continuous communication with stakeholders to find common ground between the needs, capacities, and interests of local communities and the municipality.

#### July 2023

Initial meeting with local NGOs and the Riga Neighbourhood Alliance.

#### Until June 2024

Development of the co-design roadmap.

#### July 2024

Urban dive and stakeholder interviews.

#### October 2024 – April 2025

Informative seminars with leading NGOs working with the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach.

#### November 2024

Charter piloting workshop with neighbourhood NGOs.

#### April 2025

Study visit to observe good practices in the Riga Planning Region.

#### May 2025

National and local stakeholder workshop: “Exploring the Potential of CLLD in Urban Areas.”

### Potential follow up activities

The focus of future activities is on developing the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach both in Riga, and in other municipalities across Latvia. This includes follow-up meetings with involved stakeholders, local strategy development training for neighbourhood activists, and study visits integrated in the final conference.

There is also potential for international exchange and visits to observe good practices in European cities that are implementing or planning to implement the CLLD approach.





## Empowering Neighbourhood Associations – Riga, Latvia 4/4

### Lessons learned

- Visions and decisions are influenced not only by city-wide challenges, but also by personal experiences of individual community members. It is important to recognize that representatives of neighbourhood associations are not compensated for their input and activism. If the city aims to strengthen local communities. There must be provisions for additional financial support, including coverage of administrative costs.
- Discussions and actions do not happen immediately. Trust between stakeholders is developed gradually, and over time, they gain deeper knowledge and understanding of the relevance of the issues.
- While the municipality shows interest in transferring decision-making power to communities, it remains unclear whether communities are currently willing and capable of taking on additional responsibilities and duties.
- The Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) tool is not yet available for urban areas in Latvia during this planning period. However, the potential implementation of this approach is also relevant for other state cities. It is essential to develop strong arguments supporting the adaptation of this approach in urban areas at the national level, as this can help accelerate the process of change.

