

## **Major urban development principles of Bordeaux and its metropolis OCPM – Summary of presentation in Montréal on January 23, 2020**

### **Background Information**

The City of Bordeaux is built of stone and known for its architectural heritage. Contrary to many other French cities, it did not suffer significant collateral damage during World War II and has not been rebuilt. Therefore, its core therefore still consists of a very compact fabric of small, low stone buildings, and a network of narrow streets, a configuration that does not lend itself well to development. After the war, a strong increase in population (baby boom) and a social structure revolving to some extent around the working classes called for a more extensive housing supply, as in many French cities, and large new residential districts were built in the '50s and '60s on the periphery of major cities, where there was no lack of space. Thereafter, those large social housing estates served as homes for thousands of working-class families, with an extreme concentration of resident profiles. At the time, they had the advantage of being very modern and included a generous offering of often natural open spaces, compared with the offering in downtown areas.

Over time, as the society evolved, those large neighbourhoods again specialized in providing homes for households of increasingly modest means. Various problems began to surface, leading public authorities, in the early 2000s, to adapt their construction projects for the city while attempting to correct past errors. At the same time, they were becoming aware of the complications resulting from urban sprawl (traffic, pollution, environment, urban scattering, etc.).

### **Current projects**

Given the above context, Bordeaux is focusing on two major types of projects to continue the city's development in a more appropriate manner:

- New neighbourhood projects: Such projects are usually developed on large abandoned industrial sites or in non-urbanized sectors. They offer the advantage, for public authorities, of being easier to manage, as they can be designed from scratch and have few existing residents. But the sites are often complex, and may be polluted or hemmed in. For example, the Bassins à flots area (around the old harbour) and the Niel area (on land formerly occupied by military barracks).
- Urban renewal projects: The goal is to improve conditions in neighbourhoods that are degraded or experiencing difficulties, with the existing residents in place, making it more difficult to design and organize the projects, but more often providing added benefits owing to the residents' appropriation of them and the pre-existence of equipment, services and transportation, among other things. Le Grand Parc and Les Aubiers neighbourhoods, for example, are testaments to this type of urban planning, as is the large investment in the historic centre.

### **Major Programming Principles**

A review of those major developments in the '60s gives us food for thought: today, municipalities want to build or repurpose neighbourhoods that come with the public equipment and services required for all types of populations. The issue of transportation is also essential to integrating a neighbourhood into the existing city and preventing it from withdrawing into itself. The development of economic and artisanal activities, services and association activities, and the planning of festive, cultural and sports activities are also essential to creating appeal and a satisfying and harmonious neighbourhood life.

The basic principle for those developments is to seek both a mix of functions and a social mix, and to avoid the concentration of a single resident profile in neighbourhoods.

### **Tools and means to be mobilized**

The targets for new neighbourhood developments in Bordeaux are 35% social housing, 20% affordable housing, and 45% free-sale housing. The community ensures that those percentages are respected on a section by section basis, as construction forecasts are set. The obligation is recorded in the planning documents (local master plan, also comprising housing and transportation provisions): all developments of over 2000 square metres of built area must include 35% of social housing. Occasionally, the planning document also calls for greater obligations in some areas, or for obligations of affordable access. The obligation is checked on the construction permit.

Small developments of only one building thus contribute to the mix of social and free-sale housing, as developers must sell the quota share of social housing to authorized organizations (social lessors) in order to obtain their construction permits. The building therefore provides housing for modest income and more well-to-do families, with no difference between the units.

However, in large social housing neighbourhoods, the aim is to “de-specialize,” and therefore to introduce a new offering of free-sale or social-access housing. The mix is defined during the design phase of the overall project and must be respected. The new offering takes place on available spaces or as a replacement for demolished social housing buildings (previous relocation of residents). Upon completion, the aim is to achieve a rate of social housing below 50%, where it attained 100% at the start. Such projects are usually carried out over a timeframe of approximately ten years.

There are also specific measures for imposing a social housing rate of 30% for existing buildings in the historic centre.

In addition to the above policies, financial resources are allocated to fund social housing (approximately €22 million per year for the metropolis; €3 million per year for the budget of the City of Bordeaux), supplementing the declining assistance from the State (approximately €8 million for all cities in the metropolis).

### **Peopling Policy to Accompany Programming Mix**

The work of restructuring the city takes time. In Bordeaux, over 6000 social housing units have been developed over the past eight years (to accommodate 15,000 to 16,000 households in 2019).

Once the rules were drawn up, the city and the metropolis began to focus on the occupancy of social housing units, again to avoid having the least well-to-do people concentrated in specific areas or residences. In France, there are three levels of social housing, corresponding to three different income levels. Three years’ work with social lessors and communes led, in 2019, to a framework document providing for a common target objective for each city, and to a rebalancing of allocations to the lowest income households throughout the territory, for the long term. Every commune will therefore have to allocate 40% of available social housing units to 40% of the poorest households, avoiding the already poor neighbourhoods.

That is how we hope to achieve a balanced, inclusive city, without discrimination, throughout all of its neighbourhoods.

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