

Best practice 40: Urban I in Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Scale: Historical centre

Stage of tourism development: Beginning

Main objective: Improve urban quality of life

Categories of effects:

Effects on urban governance

- Integrated urban planning
- Stakeholder participation

Effects on quality of life

- Built heritage diversity
- Cultural practices and representations
- Urban economies

The URBAN I programme for the Delfshaven area in the centre of Rotterdam covered a population of around 75.000. The programme aimed to target opportunities and problems by integrating policies, implementing measures to stimulate sustainable economic development and employment, as well as promoting a safe environment and social innovation. A wide range of measures included promoting local business through networks and start-up facilities, stimulating tourism, refurbishing public spaces, reduction of drug related problems and strengthening the community function of local schools. A key action was the refurbishment of The Prinses theater in 1997. Previously used as a cinema and a place of worship before being abandoned, the Prinses theater in the Rotterdam borough of Delfshaven was restored with support from the EU under the URBAN I Community Initiative. This aimed at promoting cultural development and diversity to boost innovative cultural activities in the neighbourhood. It received a new purpose as a restaurant that revives the heyday of the theatrical revue. The authentic Art Deco and Jugendstil details of the theatre, including wooden panelling, leaded windows, chandeliers and paintings on the walls and ceilings, were restored. The Prinses theater also plays an important social role. On theatre nights, visitors can enjoy their dinner while watching a performance. But during the rest of the week, the Prinses theater is at the disposal of local residents and various ethnic communities, who organise and participate in a broad range of cultural activities. The Prinses theater has helped in turning around the negative image of the area, not only by stimulating local economic development, but also by providing facilities for cultural activities and thus enhancing social cohesion in the Rotterdam borough of Delfshaven. This initiative shows how a large scale renovation process can positively impact quality of life in a city centre.

Source: EU, 2005. Inforegio Success Stories Database. Profiles of projects in Europe. Accessible from: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/projects/stories/index_en.cfm

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