



PUBLIC PRACTICE

How can shared amenity spaces be designed to support successful communities in high-density developments?



Dockside, Brussels (BE) (V+ / MS-A / Trans)

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Where do neighbours run into each other? Where can children meet new friends and play safely? Where can residents help each other out with fixing their bikes? Where can local model train enthusiasts meet and play? Most successful neighbourhoods provide spaces where at least some of these activities are possible. The sidewalk and front porch doubles as an informal meeting space and play space; the community centre and garages host hobby groups and DIY enthusiasts, and so on. These spaces for informal exchanges between neighbours might seem trivial but are in fact vital for successful communities. High-density developments often internalise some of these spaces of exchange. Generous hallways double as play streets and informal meeting spaces. Entrance lobbies double as high-streets lined with laundry rooms, bike

storage, and shared amenity rooms. The building effectively functions as a vertical neighbourhood. But in the current housing crisis - where, understandably, the focus is on deliverability - there is increasing pressure on these internal shared spaces. The need to keep construction costs and service charges down squeezes out many of the spaces that do not generate a direct financial return, or at best reduces them to the bare minimum. This research explores what considerations developers and planners should take into account - in terms of the functions, locations and design of these shared amenity and circulation spaces - to ensure the long-term success and quality of life in new high-density developments.