



Ledeberg Alive!

'Ledeberg Alive!' is a city renewal project in one of the most difficult districts in Ghent, on an economic, social and ecological level.

In the spatial structure plan for Ghent a number of urban renewal projects, like Ledeberg Alive!, are included. Ledeberg is a neighbourhood in Ghent that is very densely populated, with a high concentration of vulnerable and disadvantaged inhabitants. Ledeberg is part of the so-called 19th century belt; small municipalities around Ghent where industry was formerly located. From the 1970s, the city was faced with increased urban migration to the outside edge of the city, where new housing estates arose. These movements led to an impoverished belt around the centre, including the district of Ledeberg. The urban renewal project Ledeberg Alive! adds new value to the old, densely-concentrated neighbourhood.

The City authority used an approach called '4Ps' (people, planet, profit, policy) for this project, aiming to improve the quality of life within six domains: creation of more green spaces, improved energy efficiency of dwellings, improved traffic management, encouragement of active travel, provision of better transport infrastructure and provision of more community spaces.

The sections below set out how the initiative fulfils the key European Commission and STEP UP lighthouse criteria.

Integration of energy, ICT and transport

Energy

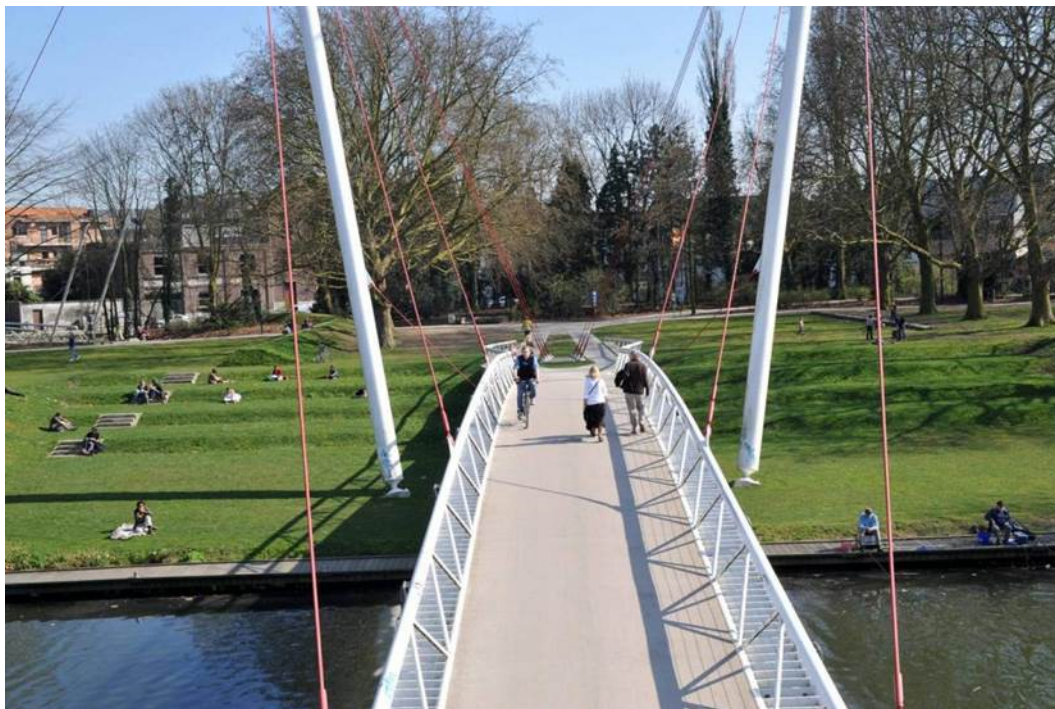
Renovation incentives: in order to stimulate energy efficient renovation in the neighbourhood citizens were given subsidies for renovation, as well as guidance by the energy agency REGent. Financially weak households were supported in their administration of the renovation process. In addition, low energy corner houses have been built by SOGent.

ICT

Monitoring travel: the number of people crossing the new bridge cycling and pedestrian bridge (see below) is digitally monitored by a measuring post with a digital display counting passengers. The display is visual to the passengers.

Transport

Accessibility: a new cycling and pedestrian bridge has been created as a way of entering the neighbourhood. As such the accessibility of the neighbourhood has been increased by creating new access and a new connection between Ledeborg and the city centre, at the same time as encouraging people to travel by foot or bicycle.



Cycle friendly bridge – Ledeborg, Ghent

Replication and scalability

The project addresses the challenge of refurbishing properties that are owned by private individuals as part of a wider regeneration of an area. Public schemes of this

kind normally focus on public owned properties, but in Belgium it is more common for individuals to own their properties. In this way the approach complements several other schemes in Europe and provides valuable lessons. The size of the total project means that significant funds need to be available, as well as political determination and capacity to implement it. Ledeberg Alive! provides a good example of how a holistic and integrated approach to large scale investments can be used in order to meet the challenge of improving the quality of life in vulnerable neighbourhoods that is common to many European cities.

The Ledeberg Alive! project was big both in geographical scale and finances. As such the project has not only had an effect on energy consumption, but also on many other aspects that are part of an urban environment, such as the less tangible factors of attractiveness and accessibility. This is an example of how Ledeberg Alive! has had impacts on a city district scale in Ghent.

Integrated building blocks

To achieve a long term solution for the district, the city had to outline several different sub-projects that were intended to mutually reinforce each other. The area is dominated by privately owned houses, and the attractiveness of the neighbourhood is particularly increased by the renovation of corner houses in different streets of the district, which are highly visible to passers-by. To address this, Ghent's city development company SOGent bought difficultly-located houses on street corners and has renovated them into low energy houses. Alongside the subsidies offered to home owners to improve their homes, this ensured that entire streets were improved, both in terms of efficiency and appearance.

Major infrastructure investments have been made to complement the improvements to housing, including a new main road and entrance to the area by means of a new cycling bridge. This has significantly improved cycling access to the surrounding city for the residents in Ledeberg, making them less dependent on car or public transport.

Overall, a number of different activities covering a wide range of different problems have been put together in order to achieve synergy effects when developing the neighbourhood.

Monitoring and reporting

The City of Ghent has set no standards for renovation and the balance between investment and energy savings in buildings has not been measured in connection to

the project. Since the demolished or retrofitted buildings were of very low standard there was no useable reference at the start.

So far the activities in the project have resulted in:

- Renovation of the main entrance road to the district
- A new slow road connecting the district with the city which consists of a cycling and pedestrian bridge. The use of this bridge increased by 9.6% between 2012 and 2013;
- The development of 8 corner houses;
- 20 flats for older people;
- 750 houses screened on quality of life and energy;
- 1,400 applications for subsidies, of which 250 were for roofs, 250 for windows, 170 for heating and 100 for all kinds of insulation; and
- A 'living care zone' to facilitate elderly people to live as long as possible in their own house.

Key winning elements of success

Political leadership with a long term approach

Ledeberg Alive! is part of a major long term political strategy in Ghent. Ghent City Council aims to renovate different neighbourhoods situated in the 19th century belt of Ghent (small municipalities around the city centre where industry was formerly located), and to improve the quality of life of inhabitants in these regions through urban renewal projects. Ledeberg Alive! is one these urban renewal projects.

Collaboration and dialogue with all stakeholders

The project has gathered many key stakeholders and actors, which has proven to be a clear winning element. They represent many different layers of public organisations as well as societal groups. The main actors have been:

- Several city services of Ghent City Council;
- Ghent's City Development Company (AG SOB);

- REGent (Ghent Energy Agency);
- OCMW (national organisation for Social Care);
- Samenlevingsopbouw (Social organisation on the regional level);
- Flemish Public Transport Company (De Lijn); and
- Citizens.

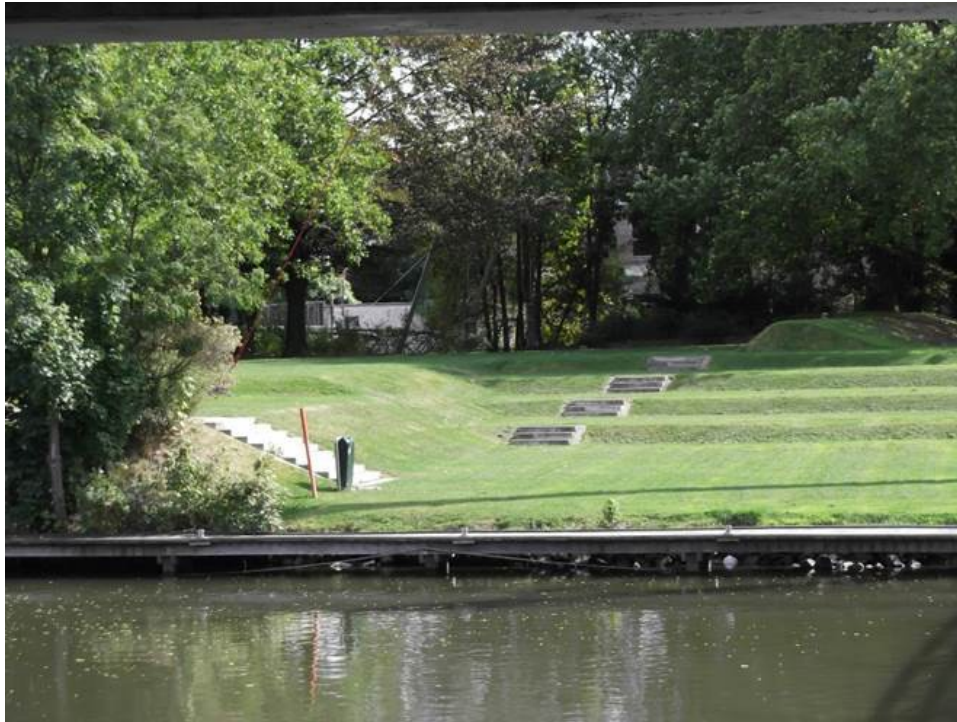
A Sounding Board Group was created to bring inhabitants and other actors together to shape the project. Children were also involved in the project.

Residents have been closely engaged throughout the project. In particular, those undertaking renovation works to improve the energy efficiency of their homes could receive a grant. The energy scanners of the REGent energy agency provided many households with guidance and advice in the renovation process. The city also involved and paid for a third party constructor, Domus Mundi, to support deprived households in practical matters and in the administration of the renovation.

Contribution to multiple policy objectives

The broad variety of impacts that the project has had have been made possible through an integrated approach where different sectors and geographical areas have been connected. The project has focused on establishing new buildings in difficult areas, as exemplars to show what social, environmental and economic benefits are possible. For example, the focus on housing quality and sustainable living has been linked with advice, guidance and financial support for residents.

Furthermore, the initiative has been linked to other city strategies and projects for additional benefits, such as the City of Ghent light plan, which has made the area both safer and more attractive for residents and visitors. The project has also improved connections with the city centre, making it easier for residents to travel for work or social activities, and leaving them feeling less isolated from the rest of society.



New park in Ledeborg - Ghent

Business models to attract investment

Central to securing resident buy-in and the resulting success of the project was the offer of a subsidy to owners of private houses in the project area to encourage them to make improvements to their homes. The grant includes 30% of the total amount (VAT excluded) of the renovation invoices and a maximum of €10,000 per house. Conditions to receive this grant are that the income of the household in the third year before the registration may not be more than €35,000 for singles, or €50,000 for married and cohabiting couples, and for singles with one person in charge. Per extra person in charge the amount increases by €2,800.

Promotion of the initiative

Ledeborg Alive! is promoted by a project website, digital and printed newsletters sent to inhabitants, and a communication campaign using leaflets and posters. The promotion has occurred in collaboration with all involved partners. Inhabitants and local organisations were involved from the earliest stages of the project (for example in the Sounding Board Group), as stakeholder participation was seen to be key to its success.

In 2011 a large housing fair was organised in Ledeborg, where all involved partner organisations informed inhabitants on energy efficient and high quality housing in the

district. In 2012 this fair was held again with testimonies of inhabitants who had already renovated their houses with the guidance and energy subsidy of Ledeberg Alive!. As well as printed leaflets and newsletters, campaign posters were disseminated in the district. Home owners that received the energy subsidy from Ledeberg Leeft hung the campaign poster “Hier wonen is de max” (“Awesome to live here!”) in their front window to inform neighbours of their involvement and their willingness to provide others with information on the project.