

**LEE KUAN YEW WORLD CITY PRIZE 2026
JURY'S CITATIONS FOR PRIZE LAUREATE AND SPECIAL MENTIONS**

Prize Laureate: London

London is the 2026 Prize Laureate for demonstrating outstanding capacity to reinvent itself through resilient and innovative governance, transformative infrastructure, and creative public-private partnerships. These efforts have sustained its position as a global magnet for investment, talent, and visitors, with the city standing out as an exceptional cosmopolitan centre due to its rich cultural tapestry and international character. London's leadership demonstrates remarkable capacity to forge alignment and deliver transformational change in navigating the complexities of governing nine million residents across a polycentric system of 32 boroughs and the City of London Corporation, as well as multiple levels of government. This was achieved through coordinated metropolitan strategies that provide critical oversight for both current and future challenges. The city's strategic approach to urban development, anchored by world-class transport infrastructure and institutional partnerships, illustrates how historic cities can continue to evolve, balancing heritage with bold innovation through strategic leadership and a commitment to inclusive growth.

Resilient and innovative governance

The evolution of London's governance exemplifies how strong institutional frameworks can enable a city to maintain momentum and effectiveness across changing political administrations. The introduction of the directly-elected Mayor and the Greater London Authority in 2000 created strategic oversight across London's complex multi-tier governance system, with mandate and budget incrementally increasing over time. This institutional innovation enables long-term planning and strategic vision, with policy continuity sustained across three mayors over 25 years. Rather than being rigidly 'plan-led', London's strength lies in its ability to negotiate, adapt, and innovate within a framework that balances strategic vision with local autonomy to catalyse change. The innovative use of Mayoral Development Corporations demonstrates effective delivery mechanisms that cut through bureaucratic complexity, having successfully

transformed projects like the Elizabeth Line and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park while enabling upcoming projects like the Oxford Street pedestrianisation.

London demonstrates bold policy innovation that transforms challenges into opportunities. The Ultra Low Emission Zone pioneers the world's largest clean air zone of its kind, covering 1,500 sq km and achieving an estimated 54 per cent nitrogen dioxide reduction in central London, enabling the city to meet the United Kingdom's legal limits a year ahead of schedule. Social programmes such as the Universal Free School Meals demonstrate strategic social investment, delivering meals to up to 270,000 children each day while potentially saving families over £500 (US\$625) per child each year through universal provision that addresses inequality, improves the health and wellbeing of children, and positively impacts school communities. These initiatives reflect a governance culture that aligns social, environmental, and economic objectives within a coherent and future-oriented policy framework.

Transformative integrated infrastructure planning

London exemplifies how cities can enhance their prospects for sustainable success and inclusive growth by prioritising infrastructure within their long-term strategic planning. The city has consistently integrated public transport networks with land use decisions, making coordinated infrastructure programmes a cornerstone of its development strategy. London focuses on identifying opportunity areas where progressive and incremental improvements can catalyse urban transformation. For mature cities working within brownfield constraints, London demonstrates how strategic interventions in these opportunity areas can catalyse broader transformation and rejuvenation. The Elizabeth Line exemplifies this strategy: its 118km cross-city rail network, built in a very dense and complex historic city, generated a £42 billion (US\$57 billion) economic uplift, enabled more than 71,000 new homes, and has carried 800 million passengers to date.

Transport-oriented development around stations demonstrates systematic integration of infrastructure with housing delivery, while cross-borough coordination ensures infrastructure investments catalyse broader regeneration effects. This long-term focus on integrated mobility, regeneration, and compact growth continues to shape London's trajectory as a highly connected and globally competitive city.

Strategic development projects with integrated programming

London's transformative developments consistently combine 'hardware' infrastructure with 'software' programming initiatives, recognising that success requires both physical development and activation working hand in hand. Transformative developments like King's Cross demonstrate phenomenal success, transforming opportunity areas through private sector collaboration where public vision and infrastructure investment provide certainty to encourage and support private development with long-term return. The redevelopment projects in King's Cross showcase a sophisticated heritage-led approach that blends historical preservation with contemporary development and programming, while cultural institutions serve as development anchors providing sustained confidence and stability for regeneration areas.

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park exemplifies this integrated planning approach as an Innovative District that builds on the legacy of the 2012 Games to transform this area of east London into a thriving district driven by sustained regeneration and inclusive growth. It combines world-class sporting infrastructure with ongoing programming focused on solutions for city challenges, including climate, health, and mobility. The Park demonstrates London's strategic approach to creating sector-specific Innovation Districts that bring together businesses, innovation leaders, universities, researchers, and communities to foster collaboration and create jobs while regenerating parts of the city. Within the Park, East Bank represents £1.1 billion (US\$1.25 billion) in investment in major cultural and educational institutions, including BBC Music Studios, University of Arts London's London College of Fashion, University College London's East campus, Sadler's Wells East and V&A East Museum and Storehouse, which collectively support London's annual multi-billion-pound creative economy.

The London Anchor Institutions Network demonstrates how strategic institutional partnerships can drive inclusive development and good growth, working through collaborative expertise and shared resources rather than large financial investments. Business Improvement Districts and the mayoral regeneration programme for Good Growth Fund ensure thoughtful development activation, facilitating local district enhancements that go beyond physical infrastructure to create vibrant, inclusive

communities. Through these combined efforts, London demonstrates how coordinated activation strategies can sustain momentum and extend the impact of major regeneration projects across neighbourhoods.

Quality public spaces and collaborative development

London prioritises investment in public space, with integrated infrastructure planning and walkable environments, particularly around transport stations. King's Cross exemplifies this approach, demonstrating how quality public space design and public-private partnership can transform former industrial areas into vibrant mixed-use districts. The London Plan provides certainty to private sector partners, enabling major developments through public vision and commitment to fund long-term infrastructure development. Through planning requirements that mandate high-quality public realm, community facilities, and cultural programming alongside physical development, these collaborative approaches ensure that development includes considered thought for activation and community building, and not just physical infrastructure. The City of London Corporation's Destination City strategy transforms the Square Mile from a primarily financial district into a seven-day-a-week cultural destination. It revitalises the area with new pedestrianised spaces and cultural institutions to create a more vibrant, inclusive environment for visitors.

London has also significantly increased its housing budget. This is exemplified with the Transport for London creating the Homes for Londoners programme, allocating billions in grants for affordable housing, addressing the housing shortage situation through coordinated strategic intervention to unlock land, funding, and partnerships. These housing and public realm initiatives reinforce London's commitment to inclusive neighbourhoods and high-quality urban environments, even within the constraints of a mature urban fabric.

London's commitment to continuous reinvention through collaborative governance and strategic infrastructure investment offers valuable lessons for cities worldwide facing similar challenges of growth, ageing assets, housing affordability, and sustainability. The city's proven capacity for adaptation and innovation positions it as an enduring model for urban resilience and transformation in today's rapidly changing global landscape. Its experience demonstrates how a global mature city can remain both

liveable and economically dynamic through long-term planning, institutional innovation, and sustained public-private collaboration.

Special Mention: Antwerp

Antwerp is recognised for its exceptional demonstration of transformative urban governance through good foresight, long-term vision, institutional innovation, and systematic integration of climate resilience with community enhancement. As a pocket-sized metropolis with big city ideas that punches above its weight, it navigates the complexities of balancing Europe's second-largest port with urban liveability for more than 560,000 residents. Antwerp's governance framework is grounded in long-term planning and sustained coordination, effectively converting infrastructure barriers into community connectors through visionary planning and collaborative governance. The ongoing progress of the Big Link project, alongside comprehensive climate adaptation initiatives, reflects Antwerp's ability to implement major projects across political cycles while maintaining strong citizen buy-in and achieving visible improvements to both environmental performance and quality of life.

Institutional innovation for long-term transformation

Antwerp's success is rooted in its pioneering governance mechanisms that transcend traditional municipal limitations. The Covenant structure, exemplified in the Big Link project, demonstrates how multi-stakeholder agreements between the city, regional government, port authority, and civil society movements can maintain project momentum across changing political leadership. The city's Strategic Spatial Plan 2040 provides consistent vision while allowing adaptive 'slow urbanism' implementation, ensuring that transformational projects like the Oosterweel connection and Scheldt Quays renewal are refined over time while keeping their overall direction intact. Antwerp's approach demonstrates how gradual, well-managed development can achieve authentic and sustainable outcomes by accommodating the reality of mixed private-public land ownership while enabling continuous refinement based on community feedback and practical constraints. The city's commitment to constant communication with citizens through a dedicated "Big Link Info Point" ensures sustained public engagement and support for long-term initiatives.

Strategic infrastructure transformation: Envisioning urban connectors for future generations

This institutional innovation enables the systematic implementation of over 350 hectares of Ring Parks, including Ringpark West, Ringpark Het Schijn, and Ringpark Lobroekdok, delivering approximately 15km of cycling infrastructure while reconnecting previously divided neighbourhoods. Meticulous attention to detail such as narrower streets designed to slow traffic and physically separated bike lanes illustrate the city's emphasis on safety and usability at a fine-grain level.

The ongoing Big Link project demonstrates how a long-contested infrastructure project can be reshaped to align with local priorities, with many groups that initially opposed the scheme now actively participating as its benefits become visible. The Via Sinjoor corridor improvements intend to integrate community priorities across Astridplein, Meir, Wapper, and Groenplaats, demonstrating how infrastructure can unite rather than divide urban areas.

Systemic climate integration through multifunctional infrastructure

Antwerp's approach to climate adaptation exemplifies how cities can turn necessary defensive investments into daily community assets. The Scheldt Quays renewal combines 2.5-metre raised flood barriers with over 7km of accessible waterfront spaces designed for recreation and civic use, while the Antwerp Water Plan implements circular water strategies through district-scale rainwater collection, stormwater retention, and infiltration systems.

The Garden Streets programme demonstrates systematic deployment of green infrastructure across ten pilot streets that incorporate plantings and permeability, with residents maintaining 80 per cent of greenery themselves to foster community ownership. The South Park showcases integrated climate adaptation through the conversion of a former dock into a park with underground stormwater retention and bioswales. Collectively, these measures strengthen Antwerp's resilience while improving comfort, greening, and access to public spaces at the local street and district levels.

Heritage and cultural assets as regeneration catalysts

Antwerp strategically leverages existing assets to drive neighbourhood transformation while preserving urban character. The adaptive reuse of the Farmers Tower into a

museum, Meatpacking district warehouses into mixed-use developments, alongside the establishment of the Tomorrowland Headquarters within a former brownfield site, demonstrate how the city incorporates both heritage assets and underutilised land into contemporary development to anchor regeneration.

The Fashion Hub and Royal Museum for Fine Arts renovations showcase how cultural institutions can catalyse broader urban renewal, while Park Spoor Noord's completion in 2009 enabled subsequent developments, including Cadix Hospital and surrounding residential growth. This approach prioritises adaptation and reuse, allowing the city to strengthen its maritime and industrial identity while supporting ongoing regeneration.

The full transformational impact of the Big Link project is anticipated as implementation continues over the coming years. Housing affordability is another complex challenge that Antwerp shares with cities worldwide, as the city works to balance strong cultural preferences for home ownership and lower-density development with planning objectives to thoughtfully increase density while preserving historical character. The city continues to work within these preferences while exploring innovative approaches to social and affordable housing delivery.

Antwerp's systematic approach to converting urban obstacles and challenges into opportunities for community enhancement, combined with its proven ability to maintain long-term vision through changing political leadership, provides a compelling model for cities seeking to achieve transformative change through inclusive, deliberate planning. The city's emphasis on long-term coordination, clear communication, and practical implementation positions it well to realise the full potential of its ambitious vision for urban transformation in the years ahead.

Special Mention: Budapest

Budapest is recognised for demonstrating how meaningful urban transformation can be achieved with limited resources. As a historic European capital of over 1.7 million residents, Budapest has optimised strategic innovation, tactical urbanism, and community-centred planning to achieve urban transformation, despite limited financial means and decision-making authority. The city's remarkable achievements in integrating transport systems both physically and digitally, alongside its success in creating vibrant public spaces and adopting the Healthy Streets programme, reflect strong creativity and a commitment to improving liveability for all citizens.

Integrated transport and digital mobility innovation

Budapest's transport system represents an exemplary model of integrating multiple transport modes and the use of digital innovation to create convenient travel. The transport network is anchored by the successful unification of previously fragmented old tram lines into a modernised seamless tram network both physically and digitally. This achievement required connecting systems originally built by different companies into continuous north-south routes with modernised accessibility across both the Buda and Pest sides of the city, creating unprecedented connectivity for residents and visitors.

Multi-modal integration hubs such as Szell Kalman Square have been upgraded into efficient transport nodes linking trams, metro, buses, cycling, and pedestrian networks, creating efficient transfer points that enhance overall system performance. The city's M4 metro line exemplifies how well-designed infrastructure can catalyse broader urban transformation, with its automated east-west connection significantly increasing ridership while spurring comprehensive regeneration around stations and improving walkability throughout surrounding areas.

The BudapestGO app serves over 1.4 million monthly users (78 per cent of the population) by integrating all transport modes and expanding beyond mobility to include broader city information services. This unified digital platform provides an instructive model for other cities seeking to integrate complex transport networks

through technology while enhancing citizen experience across multiple municipal services.

Tactical urbanism and community-driven innovation

Budapest excels in adapting incremental, low-cost interventions to transform public spaces and quickly uplift neighbourhood environments. The city's approach centres on public space reclamation, converting streets and car parks into pedestrian-priority environments, balancing everyday functionality with opportunities for recreation and community use. The car-free Danube Embankment exemplifies this flexibility, incorporating dual-use functionality that allows for recreational use on weekends and during summer whilst maintaining suburban access on weekdays. Similarly, the Chain Bridge now prioritises public transport and cycling exclusively.

The city's evolution, from having limited public spaces to creating an extensive network of vibrant community areas, has been achieved through effective consultative approaches and participatory planning processes that engage residents meaningfully in shaping their neighbourhoods. The participatory budgeting programme demonstrates how citizen engagement can produce tangible neighbourhood improvements while ensuring municipal resources are allocated to community priorities.

Environmental transformation and climate innovation

Budapest has achieved significant environmental transformation through its long-term commitment to ecological resilience and public health. The Danube River, previously severely contaminated, has been restored to swimmable condition through the implementation of a comprehensive sewage processing plant, demonstrating a dramatic reversal from years of environmental decline. Complementary green infrastructure initiatives include the development of Pünkösdfürdő Park and the expansion of green infrastructure to over 2,500 hectares through cost-effective interventions that integrate flood control and maximise community impact.

Despite the city's progress, it faces several constraints that limit its ability to fully build upon recent improvements. A shortage of affordable housing, the city's approach to land use planning, densification and height control, and a fragmented district-level

governance framework makes it difficult to address demand comprehensively. Persistent funding uncertainty and limited municipal autonomy also challenge long-term planning and delivery.

Budapest's proven ability to deliver transformative results through strategic implementation, community engagement, and institutional creativity serves as an inspiring model for cities worldwide seeking to create urban improvements but are constrained by limited financial resources. Its approach to integrated mobility, participatory planning, tactical urbanism, and ecological renewal positions the city as an inspiring global example of resilient and resource-efficient urban development.

Special Mention: Guangzhou

Guangzhou is recognised for its strategic shift from a growth-led development model to one that embraces community engagement, cultural preservation, and ecological sustainability. As a fast-growing metropolis of 19 million people, Guangzhou continues to refine its approach to balancing rapid urbanisation with long-term liveability. Through policies and programmes that integrate economic vitality with social well-being and environmental resilience, the city demonstrates how rapid growth can be aligned with local identity, community participation, and ecological care.

Guangzhou has guided its development through a polycentric approach, with a robust metro network to connect the various districts to keep the megacity functioning well. With a legacy as a trading hub, the city adopts a welcoming attitude towards non-residents. It has established good medical and educational infrastructure to attract talents. Its long-term plan identified future development areas to support its continued long-term growth.

Balanced growth with community-driven revitalisation

Guangzhou's commitment to liveability is reflected in its community-driven revitalisation initiatives, which place local residents at the centre of neighbourhood improvement efforts. The Public Urban Designer Programme is a notable example that improved living conditions in a district, enhanced safety, and provided job opportunities for groups like the elderly and low-income residents. A successful initiative under the Public Urban Designer Programme is the establishment of over 1,300 elder canteen centres which provides subsidised meals at affordable cost, and free health check-ups and services to the elderly and low-income residents. The initiative has since expanded to serve working young people with limited time to cook as well. These community canteens now function as key social hubs, fostering interaction and engagement among residents.

Technology is also used to further enhance and support, rather than replace, social networks – wearable devices and community-based sensors monitor health and mobility trends, providing caregivers and neighbours with timely information while

strengthening community support systems by empowering residents to assist vulnerable groups effectively.

Guangzhou has implemented other community-driven micro-regeneration initiatives, which includes Liurong Street Community, Yongqingfang Historical and Cultural District, and the transformation of Lieqiao 110kV Substation that focused on targeted improvements to public spaces and historic lanes and districts. These projects rely on incremental upgrades, community discussions, and local stewardship, enabling neighbourhoods to improve without large-scale clearance or relocation.

Cultural preservation through adaptive reuse and technology

Efforts to preserve cultural heritage underpin Guangzhou's broader regeneration strategy. Projects such as the restoration and revitalisation of Yongqingfang Historical and Cultural District and the Liwan District have carefully restored and repurposed historical landmarks for current use, fostering vibrant, sustainable growth and job creation while maintaining cultural integrity and identity within the area.

In Yongqingfang Historical and Cultural District, efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage are supported through initiatives that promote local crafts, providing opportunities to artisans while strengthening the city's cultural fabric and economy. The city further promotes adaptive reuse of heritage spaces by supporting multifunctional zoning and business planning, ensuring these historic sites remain relevant, active, and integrated into today's urban economy.

Sustainable urban growth through green infrastructure and smart technology

Guangzhou shifts its focus to liveability by integrating sustainability into its urban planning with an emphasis on expanding urban greenery, adopting green infrastructure and restoring biodiversity. The city has embarked on a greening the city programme over the last two decades and seen an overall increase in green space per person from 20,573 hectares in 2015 to 26,657 hectares in 2024, as calculated within the urban built-up area.

Two significant projects are Haizhu Wetland Park and Nansha Coastal Zone which demonstrates how ecological landscapes and biodiversity can be protected and

enhanced while remaining accessible to the public, offering both environmental benefits and recreational spaces. The Haizhu Wetland Park is a 1,100-hectare green central space located amidst Guangzhou's high-density urban centre in Tianhe District and is a popular recreation space well used by the community daily. It has also become one of the key destinations for the annual dragon-boating competition in the region.

Smart technologies are adopted to further complement nature-based solutions through AI-powered environmental sensors that monitor air quality, water levels, and biodiversity in real-time, ensuring efficient management. Guangzhou has developed digital twins for proactive urban and climate resilience management in Haizhu Wetland Park. Guangzhou's strategic repositioning of the new city axis that aligns with the Haizhu Wetland Park sets this central green lung as an anchoring structure that guides future urban growth, committing to its shift in environmental resilience.

Guangzhou's ecological planning strategy also extends to districts such as the China-Singapore Guangzhou Knowledge City, where the masterplan is planned around the integration of green spaces, including the transformation of farmlands into a public park with a lake that is accessible to the community and designed for rainwater detention, as well as designing a sponge-city system into its urban development infrastructure. These efforts demonstrate the city's continued commitment to integrating environmental preservation with urban growth, ensuring long-term sustainability and liveability.

Strategic regional positioning and enhanced transport networks

Guangzhou sees itself as a hub city serving an 88 million population within the city and the surrounding cities and districts. It is now part of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) which is shaping Guangzhou's urban and economic development priorities. The Nansha district has been strategically identified as an economic and technological hub for attracting investment in high-tech manufacturing, finance, and digital innovation. Infrastructure projects, including the port, logistic centres, and residential areas, support the GBA's rapid expansion and enhance regional connectivity with cities like Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Macau. Guangzhou's extensive high-speed rail network further strengthens its inter- and intra-regional connectivity, facilitating the effective and efficient movement of people.

Despite significant progress, Guangzhou faces ongoing challenges as it works towards a more liveable and inclusive future. One key issue is traffic congestion and management despite the extensive metro network that serves all the districts supplemented by public buses. The city has identified the opportunity to better integrate land use and transportation by intensifying development along metro corridors and introducing more mixed-use areas. This is partly to enable the city to de-densify the city centre, and partly to minimise the need for long-distance commutes over time. The city also recognises the need to continue implementing urban renewal of the remaining densely-populated urban villages sensitively, drawing lessons from the successfully-implemented projects that managed to maintain affordable housing and preserve community networks.

Guangzhou demonstrates a willingness to rethink its development path in the midst of rapid urbanisation and growth. By combining practical experimentation, authentic community engagement, and digital tools, the city offers valuable insights for fast-growing urban centres seeking to balance and foster economic development while maintaining environmental and social resilience and liveability.

Special Mention: Taipei

Taipei is recognised for its ability to shape practical, people-centred solutions through collaborative governance, innovative community partnerships, and integrated sustainability strategies. Serving 2.6 million residents within tight geographical constraints, Taipei has developed a governance culture that embraces civic participation as a core planning tool to deliver positive and responsive change through integrated transport systems, neighbourhood-scale initiatives and community-led environmental actions.

Civic engagement as governance foundation

Taipei's governance model demonstrates how genuine community participation can strengthen municipal decision making. The city has cultivated a culture of civic consciousness that manifests in everyday practices and major policy initiatives. Community-driven waste management systems achieve remarkable environmental outcomes through social norms and collective responsibility, rather than infrastructural interventions alone. The Participatory Budgeting System enables residents to propose and vote on neighbourhood improvements, while the Long-Term Development Guidelines 2050 engages citizens as partners in shaping coordinated planning rooted in liveability, sustainability and inclusivity. Projects such as the 1.65km Xinzhongshan Linear Park demonstrate how collaborative design processes that incorporate ideas from residents, academics, the public sector, and the private sector can transform urban infrastructure and create vibrant public spaces. The linear park has catalysed visible positive transformation to the neighbourhoods through which it runs.

Socially-embedded infrastructure as community-building catalyst

Taipei's strategic deployment of social infrastructure serves as a catalyst for community building, setting a good example for integrated planning that addresses both functional needs and social cohesion. The "Fresh Milk for Every Child" programme serves 208,000 students through public-private partnership, encouraging daily interaction between schools, families, and local business communities. The One Sports Centre per District policy provides comprehensive sports facilities, with extensive volunteer participation reflecting strong civic ownership of public amenities. The adaptive reuse of Songshan Cultural and Creative Park further demonstrates this

approach, transforming a former tobacco factory into a community hub that supports local artists, designers, retailers through curated events and markets. By pairing heritage preservation with contemporary programming, the park has become a tourist magnet as well as strengthening neighbourhood identity and providing an inclusive platform for creative industries and community-led activities.

Climate resilience through innovation

Taipei's environmental strategy shows how citizen participation can amplify sustainability. The "No Trash Left on the Ground" policy achieved 67 per cent general recycling rate through behavioural shifts anchored in community engagement, creating new social norms promoting environmental responsibility. Integrated water management systems have increased the city's rainfall resilience, while projects like Jinrui Flood Management Park combine flood retention with ecological preservation and volunteer-led educational programmes, showing how climate adaptation infrastructure can serve both environmental and community-building roles.

Accessible and sustainable transportation

Taipei addresses chronic traffic congestion resulting from high population density through a comprehensive green public transport network. The 131.1km expanded rail transit system and YouBike public bicycle rental system have achieved a 63 per cent green transport modal share toward a 2030 target of 70 per cent. With near-universal public transport coverage serving over three million daily passengers, this integrated approach has inspired adoption across 13 municipalities, demonstrating how coordinated transport planning can simultaneously address mobility needs, environmental goals, and enhance liveability in dense urban environments.

Despite notable progress, Taipei continues to face significant structural challenges. Housing affordability remains pressing, with high property prices driving young residents out of the city. Transport challenges persist despite excellent metro coverage, with ongoing traffic congestion, widespread motorcycle usage, and parking along sidewalks that detract from otherwise well-planned streetscapes. The river wall separating the city from its waterfront presents a long-term opportunity to reconnect communities with the natural assets. These challenges reflect the complex balance

between accommodating diverse urban needs while maintaining pedestrian safety, environmental resilience, and liveability in a dense metropolis.

Taipei's commitment to authentic civic engagement through collaborative governance and sustained infrastructure investment offers valuable lessons for dense cities worldwide facing similar challenges of demographic transition, environmental resilience, and social cohesion.

Special Mention: Tianjin

Tianjin is recognised as an emerging model for sustainable urban development while balancing growth with ecological and cultural heritage preservation. The city's evolving approach prioritises liveability, integrating eco-friendly initiatives and historical revitalisation to create a resilient urban environment for a population of 13.4 million while managing the pressures of urbanisation and an ageing population. The city's leadership demonstrates a clear intention to align modernisation with long-term environmental and cultural goals, positioning Tianjin as a competitive and attractive metropolis.

Public space and urban identity

Tianjin is making significant progress in integrating cultural preservation with innovative urban development to strengthen its urban identity. The revitalisation of historical districts like Wudadao, combined with the activation of public spaces such as Xiannong Courtyard and Minyuan Stadium, reflects the city's commitment to creating dynamic spaces that blend tradition with modernity.

The heritage district of Wudadao has undergone a successful revitalisation by retaining its architectural identity while introducing modern amenities. This area, once at risk of losing its historical charm due to urbanisation, is now a vibrant cultural and commercial hub through conscious frameworks to preserve the urban texture, spatial scale and fabric. The Minyuan Stadium has been thoughtfully revitalised to maintain its architectural structure while adapting it for modern uses. Once a symbol of the city's sporting history, it has been transformed into a dynamic venue for cultural events, sports activities, and public gatherings, contributing to the city's lively public space network. This transformation has successfully turned the stadium into a key destination for the community, reinforcing Tianjin's identity as a city that creates dynamic public spaces that blend history with modernity.

This progressive approach to transforming public space not only celebrates Tianjin's rich heritage but also nurtures community interaction and engagement, ensuring a high quality of urban life. Ongoing efforts to reclaim road space for pedestrians and

expand walkable public realm further enhance the city's accessibility and urban environment.

Ecological mindset and sustainable initiatives

Tianjin has embraced a holistic, eco-conscious approach to urban planning, ensuring environmental preservation is integrated into every level of urban planning. In Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City, the uninhabitable salt-farm wasteland has been transformed into a highly liveable, vibrant, and valuable township. This transformation reflects the city's commitment to protecting arable farmland from urbanisation while continuing to develop sustainable, high-value industries and homes.

Another key ecological restoration project is Qilihai Wetland. The effort to recover rare bird species around the coastal area has been successful with 182 species in 2017 growing to 308 species currently. The city has also restored approximately 870 km² of its wetland, increasing its green coverage significantly from 31 per cent to 86 per cent, and reinforcing its commitment and efforts toward environmental preservation in urban development. These efforts align closely with Tianjin's long-term sustainability goals and serve as a key driver for attracting and retaining talent, particularly young residents who value environmental quality.

The city's emphasis on green mobility, including the expansion of pedestrianisation and cycling infrastructure and electric vehicle adoption, further reflects its commitment to a cleaner, healthier urban environment that enhances liveability for all residents.

Structured planning process

Tianjin's development is guided by a structured and professional planning process that underpins its ability to manage urban regeneration effectively. The city's ability to balance modernisation with heritage preservation reflects its deep-rooted planning legacy. Tianjin's clear commitment to long-term goals, such as its dual-carbon legislation, alongside the implementation of comprehensive green infrastructure, ensures that urban growth remains sustainable. The city's planning process not only supports current urban needs, but also establishes a resilient foundation for future generations, emphasising a growth model that prioritises both economic development and environmental stewardship.

Despite significant progress, Tianjin continues to face significant challenges that affect liveability and long-term sustainability. Integrating green mobility initiatives, including electric vehicles, into a coherent transport strategy remains difficult, particularly where congestion is still common. Coordination between land use and transport also requires strengthening, as overcrowded sidewalks with bicycles and the need for improved regeneration around transportation hubs continue to impact mobility. Additionally, the current aging housing stock presents opportunities for urban renewal, as older residential buildings would significantly benefit from upgrades to align with modern liveability standards. However, Tianjin's commitment to addressing these challenges while maintaining its focus on sustainability and modernisation ensures continued growth and improvement.

Tianjin's success in urban regeneration is driven by its structured, process-driven planning that balances modernisation with heritage preservation. By combining long-term planning discipline with a willingness to experiment with new ideas, the city offers a compelling example for rapidly-developing urban centres seeking to balance growth and talent retention with environmental and cultural priorities.
