



Citywide Strategic Planning

A Guideline

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Citywide Strategic Planning: A Guideline

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United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)

P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya

Tel: +254 20 762 3120

Fax: +254 20 762 3477

www.unhabitat.org

Cover photo by Remy Sietchiping / UN-HABITAT

Principal authors: Örjan Mohlund and Åsa Forsman

Contributors: Remy Sietchiping and Filiep Deccorte / UN-HABITAT

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Citywide Strategic Planning Guidelines

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Introduction

Citywide strategic planning underpins a more holistic, inclusive, participatory and integrated planning approach; one that takes the whole city into consideration and where a pro-poor focus, good local governance and gender equity are important foundations.

Citywide strategic planning is one of several planning approaches in support of sound and sustainable development of cities and metropolitan areas. In some cases the planning concentrates on the urbanised area only. In other cases it includes the surrounding vicinity, thereby also addressing the concept of rural-urban interrelationship. Strategic urban planning recognises that urban issues cannot be addressed in isolation, but considers the citywide relations and implications between different interventions and looks at the city as a system with interlinked components. Citywide planning thus offers an option to the piecemeal approaches that can often be seen in conventional planning.

Due to limitations in human and economic resources, administrative capacity and time constraints no planning undertaking can cover everything simultaneously.. Consequently, whatever goals and objectives are at hand in a given planning situation, a selection and prioritisation of issues has to be made.

The main characteristic of citywide strategic planning is the focus on a set of strategic issues of principal importance for sustainable development – *issues that make the difference for the city as a whole*. This could include selected thematic aspects related to spatial and land use issues, infrastructure and service provision, local economic development, socio-economy, administrative capacity, legislation and human rights, or safety and security. Apart from the thematic selection the strategic choice also often implies a selection of a geographical scope. Successful implementations of targeted strategic issues (thematically and spatially) will not only solve the issue at hand for a specific place, but will also as a consequence contribute to the direct or indirect solution to several other issues.

The citywide strategic planning process is participatory in its design and implementation. Consultations and coordination are at the heart of the process and need to be well organised so stakeholders will remain committed to the cause. With strong leadership and local ownership it is easier to ensure participation and contribution from different groups in the society. Stakeholder groups should be mobilised or created for continuous consultation and, at a later stage, for providing feedback into the planning process.

The extent of participation and ownership is a major strength for the long-term sustainability of the citywide strategic plan, but demands more from the process leading to it, as it is not easy to include stakeholders from many fields on a continuous basis. The inclusion could be time-consuming and needs to be well planned from the start, so that the consultations and meetings will give timely input. Not only do the major stakeholders need to be involved, but the public at large should also be given opportunities to contribute; not in the details but in the larger picture and main direction of the citywide strategic plan.

Financial resources should come from the city or municipality itself as far as possible, including the key city stakeholders, and not from outside donors. If local resources are used the result tends to be more sustainable and more strategic, as the prioritisation is carried out more carefully. Only the most urgent and strategic activities will be implemented if local resources are utilised to a larger extent. In most developing countries it is impossible for a city to finance implementation of action plans entirely from its own pockets, but it is important that the donor funding only constitutes a part of the resources and that resource mobilisation is included in the process at an early stage. Ways of increasing the local authorities' income should be part of the resource mobilisation. Keep in mind that not only financial resources are needed and that the city can contribute a lot through e.g. making staff available.

The above does not imply that donors and other international organisation do not have a role to play in the citywide strategic planning. On the contrary, in many cases they could be imperative for the process to work, but the city should be careful not to become too dependant on outside assistance. Development partners and donors could and should contribute with their expertise, with funding of certain activities, and with assistance in lobbying and creating useful contacts with other partners for the planning exercise. The role of the donors will also depend on the institutional capacity of the country and city involved. If the capacity is weak, as is the case in many post-conflict or fragile states, more donor support is needed, especially for capacity building and institutional strengthening, and especially in the starting phase.

The donors can also help link the planning process with other ongoing interventions. The citywide strategic planning should not be an isolated project but instead endeavour to incorporate other development initiatives and complement ongoing efforts. Harmonisation between different interventions is key for the citywide strategic planning.

Structure of the citywide strategic planning process

Strategic planning could simply be described as a process consisting of three questions – where are we today? - where do we want to be? - how do we get there?

The first question (where are we today?) is answered through *analyses* of the present situation, the second question (where do we want to be?) through the formulation of a future¹ *vision*, supported by realistic and tangible overall *objectives*. The third question (how do we get there?) is met by the preparation of an overall strategic *action plan* (including medium-term action plans for each step of the implementation); i.e. a sort of road map that takes us from the current situation to the future as outlined in the vision (see figure 1 below).

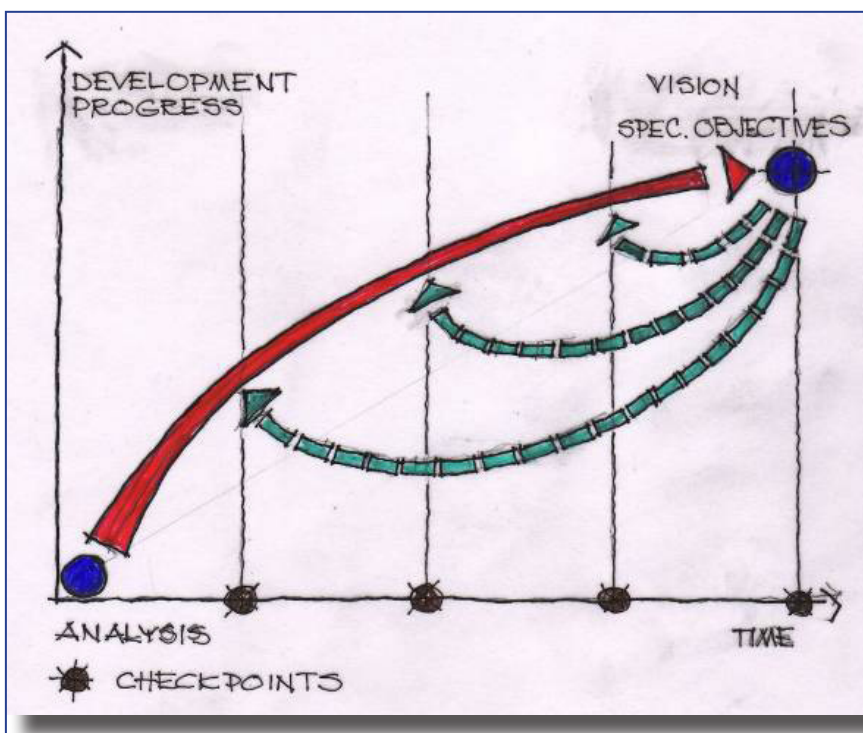


Figure 1.

The purpose of the guidelines

These guidelines provide a more detailed description of how to initiate a citywide planning process, resulting in a citywide strategic plan. These guidelines are generic, meaning that in a given planning situation, deviations may have to be made to fit into the actual situation.

And finally, no guidelines can ever replace the devoted, innovative and constructive thinking of involved politicians, technicians and stakeholders, and the dreams and aspirations of the public at large.

¹ Around 15-20 years for stable states and less for fragile states

Implementation reminders

The major problem with most development plans is not linked to their contents, but to the fact that many of them are never implemented. The planning process risks losing momentum if it is only focused on long-term goals and if it takes too long to reach there. Therefore, the process should preferably have short-term and mid-term, as well as long-term objectives. Quick-win interventions, which could be implemented without or with little external support, give rapid results from local resources and efforts. Early successes, even if they are small, keep stakeholders active and committed, and could lead to further involvement by new partners.

In many cases an inadequate budget also turns out to be a serious obstacle that results in a plan that remains on the shelf. The budget should be connected to the plan, and revenue collection and spending should be addressed.

The following points need to be accomplished to support implementation:

- A sequenced action plan with activities, benchmarks and deadlines for both short- and long-term interventions
- Resources outlined for every activity in the action plan (human, financial, organisational resources etc.)
- Responsible actor appointed not only for the whole process, but for every activity in the action plan. Stakeholders and affected parties should also be identified for every activity.
- A risk management strategy with checkpoints and risk mitigation options, due to the political difficulties that can emerge during the process (e.g. land rights issues, conflict of interest between different state bodies or civil society organisations, gangs in control of certain areas of the city, land grabbing).

The Citywide Strategic Planning Process

– Step by Step

1. Political support, leadership and ownership

Once the decision is taken to embark on a citywide strategic planning process, a prerequisite is to ensure adequate political support. This gives the process the political power required for proper prioritisation of the work. In some cases the planning initiative also needs political support at the national level. However, the most important level is the city itself and its local authorities or informal power structures and their guaranteed backing of the planning.

Civil society has an instrumental role in the process and should be involved at an early stage to express people's needs, ensure women's rights, represent marginal and vulnerable groups and reflect the reality on the ground. At a later stage, civil society organisations will act as watchdogs, ensuring that the plan is followed.

Activity 1

1.1 The group or individuals who initiated the idea of citywide strategic planning should obtain formal approval from relevant bodies to commence the citywide strategic planning process. This is also the moment to get a commitment (preferably in writing) from the same bodies for continuous support.

1.2 Inform concerned local authorities and state and non-state organisations (including the public at large, NGOs, private sector, special interest groups) about the intended planning and engage them in the process. They will constitute the initial stakeholder group, which will later become more defined.

2. Responsibility for managing the citywide strategic planning process

In almost every country, several administrative and technical local and/or national government bodies are involved in urban planning, too often with unclear mandates and responsibilities. In order to facilitate a smooth and efficient citywide strategic planning process, a clear definition of the managerial responsibility for the process has to be established. To get started, the responsibility of the process will be decided on before all stakeholders have been identified, and before a joint vision in the city has been created. It follows that the relevant decision-making bodies must appoint this responsibility. First it is important to start with a small core team that has been given its mandate from the decision-making bodies. At a later stage, the responsibility could be moved to another office, take another form and be staffed differently, according to the wish of all stakeholders that are then engaged.

Activity 2

2.1 A technical core team should be established with a clear mandate from the relevant decision-making bodies to manage the process. That means to have the authority to organise, plan, drive and co-ordinate the process. This core team should be small, say three to four technical staff² (probably from the decision-making bodies, but preferably with one person from the outside) and function as a secretariat.

2.2 A team leader should be appointed, either by a competitive process or as secondment from one of the concerned state bodies. The team leader should be approved by the major stakeholders, which at this stage consists mainly of governmental bodies.

2.3 At a later stage a more permanent unit or office could be established (but if possible keeping the original small size) according to the needs as the planning process develops and more stakeholders get involved and can influence the process.

2.4 Initial funds must be attained to start the process. Resource mobilisation should begin even before the objectives and activities for the citywide strategic planning have been agreed on.

3. Reaching a common understanding of citywide strategic planning

What is citywide strategic planning for this particular city? The concept of citywide strategic planning could be interpreted in several ways, depending on the focus of the intended planning process and the physical, political and economic situations on the ground. The entry point could be on spatial and land use issues, or on economic development aspects or on any other aspects of importance to strategic city development. It could also be a combination of several aspects. The key issue is however, that there are no standard solutions to the concept of citywide strategic planning. Each city needs to recognise its own opportunities and shortcomings, and to adapt the process according to its own local needs and priorities.

Activity 3

3.1 In order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding, which later may lead to disappointment among the involved stakeholders, it is imperative that the initial stakeholders develop a definition of the concept in the local context as early as possible. During the course of the process this definition may be modified to better meet the needs and aspirations emerging from the process.

3.2 Transfer of experiences in terms of international or national expertise in equivalent areas that could share experiences on planning, expenditure and political difficulties, give advice and contribute to the discussions on the way forward.

² The technical staff could have a mix of knowledge related to planning, participatory methods, socio-economics and project management. At a later stage, when the citywide strategic planning process is more defined, a re-staffing would take place to reply to the actual needs, according to the selection of strategic issues.

4. Initiating the process

At the initial stage of the planning process, the main task will be to develop an organisational framework for the entire process. This will be carried out by the core team and through a number of meetings and seminars. The activities may include but not be limited to the following:

Activity 4

4.1 Stakeholder analysis and power relationships mapping to identify (a) a broad group of stakeholders, including national and local government, civil society organisations, private sector and donors, and (b) a group of the key stakeholders that will be most involved in the citywide strategic planning process.

4.2 The stakeholder analysis and power relationships mapping will also lead to a definition of the roles of the various stakeholders and of the informal and formal connections between the stakeholders.

4.3 Creation of a transparent planning organisation, starting in the core team that was designated in activity 2.1, with a Steering Committee, reference or advice group(s), task teams, etc. The organisation structure does not need to be finalised at this stage, but an embryo must be created that could be developed later.

4.4 Establishment of appropriate information dissemination and feedback systems. It must be easy to receive, send and share information between stakeholders at different levels.

4.5 Convening of a number of initial seminars, workshops or other activities with key stakeholders for discussions, modifications (as required) and approval of the above proposed approaches and definitions.

4.6 Continued efforts on resource mobilisation.

5. Review of key documents and analyses of present situation

Usually, there are several sector studies, reports, plans and policies already carried out at national and local level of varied relevance to the citywide strategic planning process. In order to benefit from these activities and to avoid reinventing the wheel, these documents should be reviewed, analysed and significant conclusions drawn. Other development strategies should be examined, to make use of existing frameworks and link up to other interventions. Existing baseline data in terms of statistics, maps and other essential information should also be examined.

Depending on the entry points of the citywide strategic plan, there are a number of analyses of the present situation to be carried out. These analyses will be instrumental for discussion and identification of priority issues to be addressed. In order to sustain the momentum

of the planning process, it will be essential not to go too deep down in details, but rather apply the concept of “rapid analysis”³. Later on, when the final document is being prepared, it might be necessary to widen the information/data base in specific sectors.

A spatial analysis, i.e. a general representation of the city in the form of basic maps or drawings, should be made at an early stage in the process. The spatial analysis will be able to pinpoint the major urban elements of the city and describe them (e.g. topography-related, road or drainage networks, historic patterns and market nodes). A conceptualisation of the spatial elements will render the diverse realities of the city easier to understand for professionals as well as for municipal staff and for residents. The spatial analysis works very well as foundation for decision-making and prioritisation of activities, as it explains a complex reality with a few lines.

According to the method described in the introduction for developing a strategic action plan, the first step is to carry out joint sessions with relevant stakeholders and administrations agree on present status of the area, through available information, rapid analyses, spatial analysis and/or SWOT analysis⁴.

Activity 5

5.1 Review of relevant documents, followed by analysis and conclusion. Work will be undertaken by different task teams that will report back to the core team.

5.2 Review of relevant legislation concerning e.g. planning, land use and land administration. If there is need for additions or new bylaws in order to continue the planning process, it should be addressed as soon as possible (but avoid lengthy and complicated revisions; at this step it is more about quick fixes).

5.3 The following issues might be considered for rapid analysis/assessment:

- Spatial aspects (structuring elements, land uses, service and technical infrastructure provision, etc)
- Economic and socio-economic aspects (formal and informal sector, the economic drivers of the city, etc);
- Administrative aspects and hinders (procedures, coordination structures, available human, financial and technical resources, bureaucracy, capacity needs, as well as red tapes, corruption and incompetence);
- Legislation (planning, land accessibility and -rights, safety and security, etc.)

3 There are several methodologies available for “rapid assessment”, such as Rapid Urban Spatial Analysis (RUSA), developed by UN-Habitat, and Rapid Planning Initiative (RPI).

4 At this stage avoid too many additional surveys and detailed data collection, since this will delay the activity. Additional data could be gathered once the vision is defined and agreed upon

6. Brainstorming to reach a common vision and overall objectives

Based on the information gathered from activity 5 and any other information of relevance, the time has now come to formulate a statement of “where we want to be in the future – that is to devise a vision with supportive overall objectives. Key words in this context are *realism* and *achievability*. In order for overall objectives to be realistic and achievable, set medium-term objectives with an expenditure framework. It is very tempting to be over-optimistic, just to gain political favour or to “show muscles”. But remember, it is better to be small, strategic and successful, than to be big and fail.

The formulation of the vision and overall objectives must be carried out as a joint venture between the key stakeholders identified in activity 4.1 in order to obtain mutual ownership of the vision. Means to inform and get feedback from the public at large is also very important.

Activity 6

6.1 The methodology for formulating a vision and overall objectives usually includes a number of brainstorming workshops⁵, where representatives from all interest groups - governmental agencies, CBOs, NGOs, the private sector, local communities etc. - meet to address critical strategic issues. The issues may vary depending on the present situation and the findings from activities 5 above, but might include:

- The role of the city in a wider regional context.
- What are the unique and/or exclusive assets of the city.
- The economic and socio-economic “drives” of the city.
- What are the most urgent needs to be addressed.
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- What are the most important issues of strategic significance for a sustainable development of the city?

Finally, a consensus is reached on strategic focus issues, vision and overall objectives.

6.2 To inform and get feedback from the public, a campaign could be carried out with support from local media, where citizens are challenged to express in writing (or on video) their dreams and aspirations about their own future. One opportunity for the citizens to express their interest will not be enough. The campaign must be followed by continuous information and feed-back opportunities, backed up by local media and possibly supported by international organisations.

5 To capture the ideas and needs from different socio-economic and geographical areas, and from marginal or vulnerable stakeholders (e.g. children, urban poor who have no time to sit in a workshop, informal settlers, homeless people), workshops or other gatherings could be held which will select representatives to attend a converging event at city level.

6.3 Identify thematic and geographic scope as an entry point (or entry points).

7. Preparation of overall strategic action plan

The preparation of the overall strategic action plan is done by the core team with input from technical experts, concerned authorities and the group of key stakeholders.

, As a part of the overall strategic action plan, medium-term action plans have to be developed for each phase. In many countries, it is practical to let these intervals coincide with the cycle of political mandates. The medium-term action plans could be sector-oriented, provided that there is a mechanism in place that will ensure proper integration between the various sector plans.

Fund-raising should be seriously considered at this stage. A resource mobilisation plan must be developed, taking into account not only the financial means but also other resources that can be invested in the process, from all stakeholders.

The process for preparing the strategic action plans will usually include presentation and discussion of several drafts in seminars and workshops, attended by stakeholders, before a final version is agreed upon. The overall strategic action plan should be accompanied by benchmarks, indicators and a system for monitoring and follow-up.

Activity 7

7.1 Prepare the overall strategic plan and the first medium-term strategic plan that outline required interventions (for the two different time scales) to implement the jointly specified vision and objectives:

- types of actions or interventions.
- timetable, work plan, budget, reporting procedures etc.
- resources required for every activity.
- responsibility for every activity – who does what.
- private sector alignment.
- public/private partnership.
- risk management plan with checkpoints and mitigation measures.

7.2 Prepare a resource mobilisation plan (increase of the city's own income, state allocation, donor funding, public-private partnership, secondment of staff etc.)

7.3 Develop an efficient and manageable monitoring system that should be in place throughout the entire implementation period, with proper reporting procedures for – as required – modification, correction and enforcement.

8. Formal endorsement of the citywide strategic plan

In many cases the formal endorsement and approval of the citywide strategic plan in accordance with established formalities and legislation will require rewriting the plan into another format. There may also be legal decisions that have to be taken at different levels in the society. In addition, it is wise to establish an 'urban pact' that will ensure the commitment of the major stakeholders. An urban pact is an agreement between the key stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental, to formalise their commitments, in this case to follow and contribute to the citywide strategic plan.

Activity 8

8.1 Examine the legal requirements for approving the citywide strategic plan (this activity should start earlier on in the process, but should be considered in more detail once the plan is finalised).

8.2 Rewrite the plan according to regulations and make sure other necessary steps are taken, such as decisions in different local and national authorities.

8.3 Develop an urban pact specifying the future commitments (including financial obligations) and roles of the key stakeholders. The urban pact should be sanctioned by all key stakeholders.

9. Marketing the citywide strategic plan

Too often, plans are forgotten very quickly, regardless of their quality and usefulness. In order to avoid such a destiny for the citywide strategic plan, there are certain activities and measures to consider. It is important not only to spread information to the public, companies, authorities and others, but also to ensure that the plan is being used as framework for other local development plans. The community based area development plans should contribute to the development goals in the citywide strategic plan, as should the development strategy for the free trade zone, for example, or the environmental management plan for protected areas. It is only if the citywide strategic plan is used as an umbrella for all development efforts in the city that it will reach its vision.

Activity 9

9.1 Prepare brochures, pamphlets, for a public information campaign on the content and purpose of the citywide strategic plan.

9.2 Establish a good rapport with local media for continuous flow of information to the public at large.

9.3 Ensure that local authorities and other local bodies are aware of the plan and use it while preparing local development plans.

9.4 Hold annual follow-up seminars for key stakeholders and representatives of the public, where the achievements are presented, successes and failures discussed and recommendations provided.

10. Regular updating of the citywide strategic plan

New medium-term strategic plans need to be developed after the end of every interval. At these points in time, progress against the benchmarks set up for monitoring will be measured to learn for the coming new medium-term strategic plan. Furthermore, no plan can maintain its usefulness and accuracy forever; so even the overall strategic plan might need to be updated. Basic conditions will change over time, new information will be available and political preferences may shift. To ensure that the citywide strategic plan will keep on being a vital and relevant planning instrument throughout the implementation period, it needs to be updated and revised.

Activity 10

10.1 A system should be established where the plan is reviewed and revised according to the time period for the medium-term strategic plans. If the period is too long (e.g. if it follows political mandate periods of five years), mid-term reviews can also be held.

10.2 The updating could also include other activities, such as preparation of new cost estimates, identifying additional sources of funding and local resource mobilisation strategies.

Capacity building

Capacity building is not only necessary for experts – planners and technicians – but more so for the staff who will use the Citywide Strategic Plan in their daily work, such as service providers, notaries, building inspectors. If staff are not competent in using and implementing the plan, it might be no use in developing it in the first place. Similar training needs are usually found among political decision-makers. Another target group of equal importance for capacity building are the stakeholders involved in the planning process. In order to wisely execute their roles as vital contributors and members of the planning process, they need to know the basics of the concept of strategic planning. Being part of the process, they will “learn by doing”, but an initial training would be a great advantage. Not only human capacity building is needed, but also institutional capacity building. Poor transparency in municipalities and the central state could be improved through better information systems and clear rules for access to information. The division of roles and responsibilities could be revised to achieve a less bureaucratic and less corruption-prone environment. Capacity needs assessments should be carried out on both institutional and human levels. Finally, capacity building is not a one-time event. Capacity building is a process that should last for many years. The current staff, politicians and stakeholders will change. New individuals will need to develop their capacities. Moreover, competence and capacity are fresh commodities and if not institutionalised, put into practice or updated, the newly acquired skills will disappear. For both human and institutional capacity building support should be sought from development partners or other external partners.

Capacity building activities throughout the planning process

1 Capacity building needs assessment of human capacity, institutional capacity and organisational capacity will give a good baseline. Not only the state bodies should be concerned, but the whole range of stakeholders.

2 Seminars and workshops on citywide strategic planning (target group: planners, technicians and decision-makers):

- Its purpose, nature and scope, potential for development support and limitations.

- The strategic plan as a guiding vs. legal instrument and the consequences thereof.

- How to use the plan in daily work:

3 Informal training seminars on citywide strategic planning – its purpose, nature and scope, potential for development support and limitations (target group: key stakeholders).

4 Organisation and management changes if necessary, in order to increase efficiency, avoid overlapping, decrease corruption, increase accountability and transparency.

Further reading

As the strategic citywide planning is a new concept, there is not much written about it, but the following documents could be useful when approaching the issue.

UN-Habitat: *Urban Trialogues, Localising Agenda 21*, 2004

UN-Habitat (Urban Planning and Management Programme in Kosovo): *Training Programme for Urban Planning and Management Framework. Training Manual.*

UN-Habitat: *Pro-Poor Land Management. Integrating slums into city planning approaches*, 2004

UN-Habitat: *Rapid Urban Spatial Analysis – (RUSA) Guidelines*, November 2004

UN-Habitat & Transparency International: *Tools to Support Transparency in Local Governance*, March 2004

The Global Land Tool Network

The main objective of the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) is to contribute to poverty alleviation and the Millennium Development Goals through land reform, improved land management and security of tenure.

The Network has developed a global land partnership. Its members include international civil society organizations, international finance institutions, international research and training institutions, donors and professional bodies. It aims to take a more holistic approach to land issues and improve global land coordination in various ways. These include the establishment of a continuum of land rights, rather than a narrow focus on individual land titling, the improvement and development of pro-poor land management, as well as land tenure tools. The new approach also entails unblocking existing initiatives, helping strengthen existing land networks, assisting in the development of affordable gendered land tools useful to poverty-stricken communities, and spreading knowledge on how to implement security of tenure.

The GLTN partners, in their quest to attain the goals of poverty alleviation, better land management and security of tenure through land reform, have identified and agreed on 18 key land tools to deal with poverty and land issues at the country level across all regions. The Network partners argue that the existing lack of these tools, as well as land governance problems, are the main cause of failed implementation at scale of land policies world wide.

The GLTN is a demand driven network where many individuals and groups have come together to address this global problem. For further information, and registration, visit the GLTN web site at www.gltm.net.

About this publication

Citywide Strategic Planning articulates the necessary ingredients for initiating and implementing a planning process that focuses on a set of strategic issues of principal importance for sustainable urban development. The guide presents the citywide strategic planning rationale and approach. Three main questions are addressed – where are we today? - where do we want to be? -how do we get there?

Conceived as a land tool, this guide shows you why and how focusing on strategic issues that can change the face of the whole metropolitan area has several social, institutional and economic benefits. This guide draws lessons from various practices and experiences. It takes you through the necessary steps on how to initiate and sustain a comprehensive planning process, resulting in a citywide strategic plan. The guideline is generic; in a given planning situation, modifications should be made to adapt to the local situation.

This guide can never replace the devoted, innovative and constructive thinking of involved politicians, technicians and stakeholders, or the dreams and aspirations of the public at large. Urban planners, decision makers at the metropolitan level, development partners, land professionals, grassroots communities, national and local leaders will find this guideline helpful in carrying out their duties.

UN HABITAT

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME

Shelter and Sustainable Human Settlements Development Division

Shelter Branch (UN-HABITAT)

P. O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya

Tel: +254 207623120; Fax: +254 207624266 Website: www.unhabitat.org



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