Hamburg Study Visit Report

5-7 June 2024

opportunity kensington

Contents

Introduction

Most known as a strategic port city connected to the North Sea, Hamburg is located in Northern Germany and sits on the River Elbe. It is one of three major cities in Germany and plays host to a number of economic, commercial and cultural institutions, including the newspaper Der Spiegel, regional broadcaster NDR, and the Elbphilharmonie venue.

Hamburg is an international and cosmopolitan city, and whilst badly damaged during World War II, has managed to retain historically significant architecture, elegant shopping arcades, and vibrant neighbourhoods, all connected by a series of well-maintained canals.

The trip to Hamburg allowed representatives from Opportunity Kensington, as well as friends of the BID, to meet Chamber of Commerce representatives, in addition to a host of leading individuals connected to selected BIDs in Hamburg.

Area of Focus

Climate change, climate resilience, and climate adaptation are important topics being researched and implemented all over the world. As guardians of places and spaces, BID teams are well placed to encourage businesses to be more responsive and adaptive to the changing climate. The trip therefore focused on what this encouragement can look like when put into action, whether that be collective organisation, the journey to net zero, or flood management.

Development of a Climate Improvement District (CID) in BID Nikolai Quartier

Dr. Sebastian Binger, OTTO WULFF BID Gesellschaft mbH

UK & Germany BID Management

The first Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in Germany originated in Hamburg in 2005 with a focus on public-private partnerships to improve city centre management in retail areas. As well as being the pioneer of the BID model, Hamburg has the biggest concentration of BIDs in all of Germany with 39 BIDs in operation (at time of writing). The budgets range from €100,000 and €10,000,000.

Compared to UK BIDs, the membership model is different in that the levy payers are not the customer-facing businesses, and instead are the property owners of the buildings within the BID boundary. It's important to note that in a ballot only one vote per property can be cast.

Business plans are drawn up and agreed with members before any work begins. This means that during the five-year term, the BID team will only work towards the aims and projects stipulated from the beginning.

BID Nikolai Quartier

The BID is in its second term which began in 2021. The BID is managed by Otto Wulff, a construction and real estate company prominent in Germany. They manage several BIDs in Hamburg, including BID Neuer Wall, which was the first BID implemented in Hamburg.

Over the past three years, the BID team has worked to significantly improve the public realm through key physical infrastructure works. It was important to the members that the BID undertake these strategic works in the first year of management. This way of working set the BID up for intense challenges with the local authority and public. However, due to the BID already being in its second term, it meant that relationships had already been formed and projects could commence in good faith.

The projects undertaken upgraded the area with new paving stones across squares and pavements, and the removal of car parking to extend the pedestrian walkway where possible. These two elements made the area safer for pedestrians whilst uplifting the current public realm visually. Smaller projects include planters along shopfronts for continuity along the street.

Pavement development in BID Nikolai Quartier

In the second year, the BID focused on softer placemaking initiatives to draw people to the new area. It achieved this by firstly creating a historic walking trail. The trail stopped at key points within the BID boundary, with solid plinths marking the locations. BID Nikolai Quartier also illuminated the streets for Christmas and initiated further servicing and cleaning of public areas.

The surroundings of St. Nicholas Church

CID in the BID

Whilst the improvement works completed by the BID created safer environments, there was an understanding that many of the spaces within the BID boundary were not adaptable for a changing climate. Many of the squares and streets had little to no provision of green infrastructure, making them susceptible to higher temperatures and instances of heat islands. Higher temperatures can deter visitors and residents to the area as there is no shade.

In its third term, the BID is focused on implementing a Climate Improvement District (CID). This would be an additional layer to the current BID structure and would include a further levy payment by the property owner members. The amount is still to be determined. The CID would be wholly focused on climate adaptability within the BID boundary and future projects would include tree planting and building adaptation.

The key challenge outlined by Sebastian was member interest in the initiative. Whilst it is in public interest to create liveable spaces which provide shade and ecological benefits, it has been harder to convince property owners of their responsibility in the public realm. BID Nikolai Quartier have turned to Environmental, Social and Government (ESG) standards as a discussion tool for implementation. ESG standards measure the impact that businesses, or in this instance a place, has on society and the environment, and takes into account how transparent and accountable it is.

An ESG strategy can demonstrate the company is working towards reducing risks to meet future environmental considerations and legislation. The aim of the BID is to centre discussions around the environmental impact, tying in ESG ratings for the area to ESG ratings for the property. Environmental practices can include: reducing energy consumption, introducing green infrastructure and encouraging recycling.

In addition to a tour of BID Nikolai Quartier, we saw other improvement districts in central Hamburg. The districts are highlighted in black on the adjacent map. These included BID Passagen Viertel, Neuer Wall and Mönckebergstraße.

One initiative undertaken by BID Passagen Viertel seeks to increase understanding of the BID and also provide context to the great architectural and historical landmarks in the area.

The plinths are permanent structures produced to a high quality. This level of expense is intentional to fit in with the high quality retail offer.

Lighting is an important part of the public realm, providing safety and illumination for night time users. BID Mönckebergstraße took lighting a step further and use it for entertainment purposes.

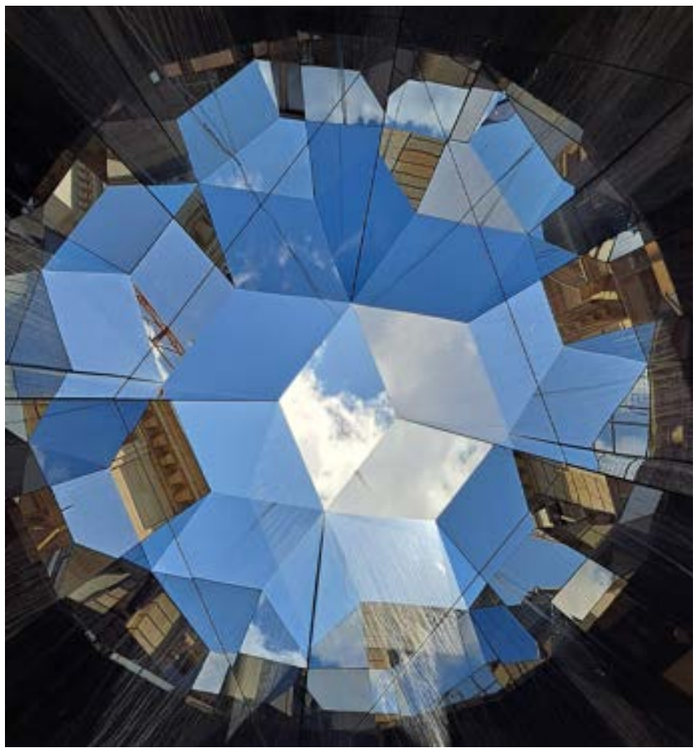
The BID installed its own lighting scheme with street lamps which could change colour and project patterns, bringing life and enjoyment to the street.

With many BIDs sitting so close to each other in Hamburg, the BIDs differentiate by choosing individual colours for the planters and other smaller street items. These photos from BID Neuer Wall show the colour orange instilling a strong character to ensure the BID is visible in the street.

In addition, the BIDs work with each other to choose complementary colours and styles of planters so as not to be visually unappealing when crossing from one boundary to the next.

The canals in Hamburg are as important as the canals in Venice. They not only provided historical cargo routes but now offer exceptional views and cooling for the city.

Interestingly, the businesses use the canal side as the back entrance, preferring to shuffle customers to the front-facing street side. One reason cited was the difficulty of securing two entrances and the low footfall along the canal.



Climate Neutrality by 2040

Christoph Färber, Chamber of Commerce

Christoph gave a presentation on how the Chamber of Commerce is aiming for net zero carbon emissions by 2040. The Chamber has decided to be aspirational with their goals, undercutting the city's agenda by 5 years. Hamburg's Climate Protection Strengthening Act was implemented in 2023 to reinforce the city's commitment to reducing carbon emissions and promoting renewable energy, with the hope to reach climate neutrality by 2045.

The Chamber of Commerce believes that climate protection and commercial competitiveness are mutually dependent. By creating its report *Reaching Climate Neutrality for the Hamburg Economy by 2040* they Chamber shows what reaching climate neutrality means for Hamburg businesses and identifies key actions they need to undertake. The Chamber is well on its way to reaching this goal. When records began in 1990 it had already reduced carbon emissions by 32.5% by 2021, with hopes to reduce a further 37.5% by 2030.

"Immediate action from the business community can avoid unnecessary costs, create wellbeing co-benefits and prepare local businesses with a better competitive position in the future climate neutral economy."

Reaching Climate Neutrality for the Hamburg Economy by 2040

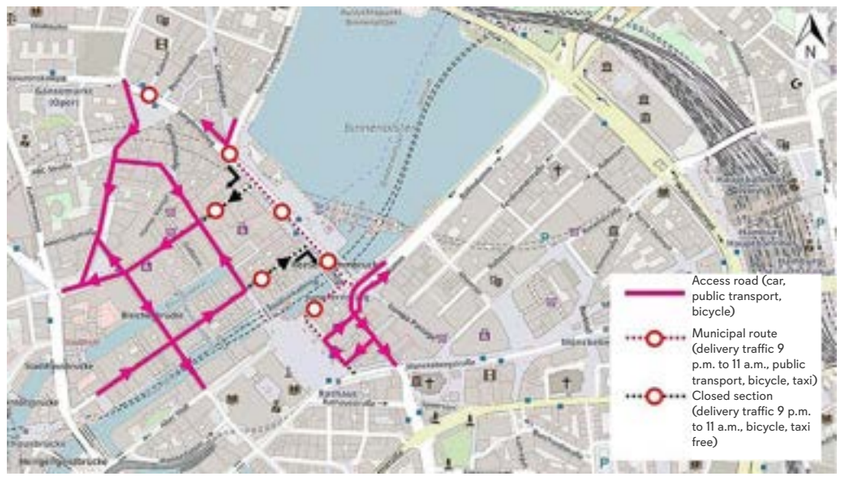
Among others, the report details these key findings:

- Climate neutrality in Hamburg will be most successful if it takes into account the specific regional economic perspective.
- Companies should pursue scientifically-based emission reduction scenarios and develop climate neutrality targets.
- Companies should share infrastructure and knowledge in business networks to make best use of new technologies such as renewable energy.
- The Chamber of Commerce will serve as a platform to strengthen cooperation and measure progress.
- Hamburg is best-placed to position itself as a climate-neutral transport hub because of the port, the city location inland and the highest rail connection in Europe.

There are many ways to reach climate neutrality, however it's pertinent to note that whilst the Chamber of Commerce do use woodland planting as part of their offsetting, it is aware that this kind of practice is not wholly viable to reach net zero.

Jungfernstieg in 2006

Jörn Hustedt for WES Landschafts Architektur



Traffic calming and traffic flow measures implemented on Jungferstieg for new development

The Chamber of Commerce has been involved in a key climate-friendly street redesign of Jungfernstieg.

The Chamber were the driving force behind the production of new plans for the street as part of their Hamburg 2040 initiative. The project entails a reduction in traffic lanes, wider pavements and the addition of a new layer of street trees. As this project is part of the public realm, it has been collaborating with the local municipality and environmental organisations.

Jungferstieg has seen substantial investment as it's regarded as Hamburg's living room. In 2006, the area was developed to include a spacious stairway which spans the whole width of the Jungfernstieg. In addition to this, existing pavilions were either removed or revamped to create three individual character areas. This project was an excellent example of a successful public-private partnership.

Visualisation for the future of Jungfernstieg

Moka-Studio for Department of Transport and Mobility Transition

The first phase of the next stage of development has already begun. This saw the road closed to motorised private traffic and the cycle path was relocated to a safer location. Early reports show that the traffic flow has been reduced by 75%. Preparations are now underway for the second and final phase scheduled to start in spring 2025. A central component of the reconstruction will be a significantly narrower roadway which will make it much easier for pedestrians to cross Jungfernstieg. This will create more space on the promenade of Jungfernstieg. There are plans to plant an additional row of trees and create numerous new seating areas to increase the appeal of the area.

BID Reeperbahn+

Philip Peemüller, Project Manager, BID Reeperbahn+

The Reeperbahn is a key tourist and entertainment location for Hamburg. The street attracts visitors from all over the world, as well as the residents of the surrounding St Pauli neighbourhood.

It plays host to a variety of premises from bars and restaurants to night clubs and brothels. This meant that any organisation seeking to improve the area had to be mindful of the area's strong character.

The BID was formed by the St Pauli Interest Group, similar to a business forum, where local companies, businesses and organisations seek to influence the economic and social sphere of the area.

After a successful ballot the BID was formed in 2014. The key prioties of the BID Reeperbahn+ include operational district management such as waste reduction, event management, wayfinding, branding, and marketing.

Surprinsingly, Philip explained that the BID does not commission increased cleaning because it would detract from the overall character of the area.

After the COVID pandemic, the Reeperbahn+ team noticed a heightened tension and hostility amongst the visitors and residents.

In response it launched a campaign called 'Lieb Sein! (be nice!)', asking for no racism, no homophobia, and no sexism in the area.

The Artwalk was launched in 2017. The characters represent the influential people of St Pauli, showing the diversity and special character of the area. The artist is Ulli Pforr.

Hamburg: Towards a ‘Sponge City’

Sonja Schlipf, Department of Water Management and Urban Development, Hamburg Wasser

Hamburg Wasser (HW) is a group of public water and wastewater utilities. It has oversight of a huge complex network which provides water and sanitation services to Hamburg. This means it is constantly informed about stresses on the system - climate related impact being one of the major concerns.

The organisation, alongside the Ministry for the Environment, Climate, Energy and Agriculture (BUKEA), has started work to mitigate risks of flooding and overheating by introducing the Rain Infrastructure Adaptation Initiative (RISA). This initiative is underlined by the main goal of becoming a ‘sponge city’, where urban development is informed by the sustainable use of rainwater.

A sponge city is designed to absorb rainwater through measures such as underground water storage, blue/green infrastructure like parks and ponds, and the removal of impermeable surfaces.

Over the years one of the main impacts of climate change has been seeing large rainfall in spring and then not enough rainfall in summer, subsequently drying out plants and greenspaces during the hottest period of the year.

Hamburg Wasser has turned to rainwater collection as a tool to help not only cities but also individual homes. In doing so, this decreases the strain on existing sewer systems. If water can be diverted it reduces the chance of overwhelming the network. For new housing, a scoring system can be used to indicate how flood resilient a new house will be. As it is a public body, HW are able to research and implement policies in city governance which developers are required to follow.

The diagram explains 7 ways RISA is working towards a sponge city for individual homes and the wider public realm:

Tobias Wandres for Hamburg Wasser

1. Soil filter against street dirt
   Rainwater is filtered through sand, gravel and reed beds to clean the surface run off which may be heavily polluted.

2. Cisterns for rainwater
   Large underground water storage tanks to relieve the burden on the sewer system.

3. Green roofs and facades
   The planted roofs store an amount of water on the roof, keeping the plants healthy and also acting as a heat shield on hot days.

4. Multifunctional rain retention
   Public spaces can be adapted by installing large underground reservoirs where the water then evaporates or is released into the sewer system at a reduced rate.

5. Permeable surfaces
   Instead of concrete and asphalt, use gravel, wooden or unsealed surfaces for absorption.

6. Open drainage system
   Swales, ditches, or basins to collect water during heavy rainfall.

7. Blue/Green streets
   Connecting streets with nature by introducing more trees, ponds and permeable paving.

Blue/Green Infrastructure in Streetscapes

Dr. Michael Richter, Blue-Green Infrastructure Lab, Department of Environmentally Sound Urban and Infrastructure Planning, HafenCity University

The Blue/Green Infrastructure Lab is a group at HafenCity university which aims to innovate, develop and evaluate the effectiveness of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in urban environments. It strives for streets to meet multifunctional needs of liveability and sustainability.

Dr. Michael Richter gave a presentation on how Hamburg is piloting stormwater management using different types of tree pits. Tree pits are large holes created to plant trees in. In urban environments with hardstanding, the size of the hole will depend upon the type of tree and how large it is expected to grow over the course of its lifetime.

To aid climate adaptation measures, Michael is testing various types of tree pits which can use or store rainwater more effectively.

Stockholm tree pit

The current project evaluation results show that:

- Tree roots grow deeper in stormwater tree pits, meaning they are more stable and grounded during adverse weather events.
- The water storage is emptied over two weeks easing pressure off the sewer system and decreasing the amount of watering trips by the local government.
- There was no waterlogging of trees and they grew healthily.

In the discussion after the presentation, it was found that both Kensington and Hamburg face similar issues and would like to achieve similar goals. The main issues facing public realm projects like these come from lobbying for radical change and being able to recover land which is currently used by roads. However, with similar goals of pavement widening and the introduction of stronger green infrastructure there was an agreement that working together and learning from each other's experiences would be beneficial for the future.

One such example where learnings could be taken is the redevelopment of Königstraße. This wide and busy road is being designed with space for cyclists and trees, utilising Michael's work in stormwater tree pits to aid in flood management for the street.

The Königstraße redevelopment will bring multiple benefits to a congested and polluting road.

Some of the key improvements include:

- About 2.3 km of new structurally protected cycle lanes with a sufficient width of up to 2.5 m.
- 7,600 sqm of pavement will be renovated to create wider welcoming routes.
- Renewal of bus stops for inclusive access which is barrier-free.
- Around 29 trees will be planted along Königstraße.
- Greening along the street will improve the quality of stay and the local climate, in addition to connecting green corridors like the Platz der Republik, Schleepark, and Grünzug Altona.
- Efficient use of rainwater and surface run off which would otherwise end up in the sewer. After the conversion, this will be discharged directly into street tree pit.
- 300 m of green troughs will be created for the trees, which can hold about 400 litres.

Königstraße before

Königstraße proposed (computer generated)

HafenCity Insights

Thorsten Gödtel, Urban Planner

We were shown the Hafencity by Thorsten, a highly experienced guide and former planning student at Hafencity University. With a footprint of 157 ha, Hafencity is Europe's largest inner-city urban development project. It is arguably a city in itself with its combination of workplace and residential uses, education, culture and leisure, tourism and retailing. It is best known to the outside world as the site of the Elbphilarmonie – a futuristic concert hall designed by Herzog & De Meuron and built on top of an existing brick warehouse.

HafenCity Hamburg GmbH was set up in 1997 to oversee the development process. In 2000 a masterplan by the Hamburgplan team with Kees Christiaanse and ASTOC was approved by the city and remains the development framework to this day. To date ten of the masterplan's neighborhoods have been created, all with different characters.

The visit started in the Kesselhaus (the information centre) with a look at the detailed eight-by-four metre 1:500 scale model of HafenCity. Plain wooden blocks represent future construction projects, whilst existing or planned buildings display authentic cubature and façade designs.

The HafenCity's credentials are listed below:

- More than 2.5 million sqm gross floor area (GFA) is to be constructed above ground.
- More than 7,500 residential units for around 16,000 residents are being built.
- Business premises offering in excess of 45,000 job opportunities (of which 35,000 will be in offices).
- Educational institutions (child daycare, schools, universities), restaurants and bars, retail, cultural and leisure amenities, with parks, plazas and promenades.
- Public open spaces throughout HafenCity will cover an area of more than 28 ha while the total length of shoreline extends is 10.5 km.
- After overall completion, 80,000 visitors per day are expected.

Hafencity's approach to developing individual sites is interesting and assisted by the fact that Hamburg is a state with its own planning framework. Tenders are invited for plots scheduled for residential use; the competition result is decisive. It is not the highest bid that succeeds – the crucial factor for awarding the contract is the quality of the concepts submitted. Sites for office buildings, on the other hand, are not generally processed this way. Instead, companies planning to staff 60–70% of a building or site for their own purposes can apply to HafenCity Hamburg GmbH to purchase a site. Thorsten told us that 50% of plots were sold to fund the regeneration of Hafencity.

Following approval by the Land Commission an exclusive option period begins. The builder/user, in agreement with the BSW and HCH, has to stage an architectural competition. The site is not sold to the developer before approval. This way the city retains its ability to influence the building's quality by intervening during the development process.

A scale model of the HafenCity masterplan

The key observations of the Hafencity project are as follows:

- It is a vast regeneration project using public land which is being led by the state.
- All the new development on the site has been raised between 8 and 9 m above sea level on artificial compacted mounds (warfts). Access to the water is maintained while guaranteeing protection from floods.
- The use of red clinker brick opposite the Speicherstadt and in the centre of HafenCity defines the character of the area.
- There is a large amount of active ground floor space.
- The strength of the vision for this new urban quarter is undeniable. Much of the initial vision and concept has been delivered to the original masterplan, producing a hugely diverse range of uses and building styles.
- There was a large volume of social housing , about 40%, and the levels of rent were as low as 300 euro per month.
- Hafencity ran a competition for public realm design that was won by EMBT & Beth Gali architects from Barcelona. It features elaborate brick designs on the sides of the plinth that supports the new buildings.

Thorsten mentioned that no money had been spent on the public realm since it was first installed, and a level of neglect and an absence of activation was noted during the tour which makes the role of BIDs clearly important in energising an area for the public.

With Thanks

Opportunity Kensington would like to offer its sincere thanks to the hosts and speakers in Hamburg, including:

- **Heiner Schote**
- **Sara Kleinfeldt**
- **Christoph Färber**
- **Dr. Sebastian Binger**
- **Julia Staron**
- **Philip Peemüller**
- **Sonja Schlipf**
- **Dr. Michael Wichter**
- **Thorsten Gödtel**

Sources

BID Nikolai Quartier, Otto Wulff
https://www.otto-wulff.de/unternehmen/nikolai-quartier

Business Improvement District (BID), City of Hamburg
https://www.hamburg.de/politik-und-verwaltung/behoerden/behoerde-fuer-stadtentwicklung-und-wohnen/themen/stadtentwicklung/konzepte-und-strategien/business-improvement-districts

Chamber of Commerce presents plans for downtown Hamburg, Hamburg News
https://hamburg-business.com/en/news/chamber-commerce-presents-plans-downtown-hamburg

Make the city centre the multifunctional heart of the Hamburg metropolitan region, Hamburg Chamber of Commerce
https://www.ihk.de/hamburg/servicemarken/presse/pressemeldungen/pm-11-05-2021-innenstadt2040-5119504

First phase of Jungfernstieg's conversion ends successfully, Hamburg News
https://hamburg-business.com/en/news/first-phase-jungfernstiegs-conversion-ends-successfully

Reaching Climate Neutrality for the Hamburg Economy by 2040, OECD Regional Development Studies
https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/reaching-climate-neutrality-for-the-hamburg-economy-by-2040_e1e44672-en/full-report.html

BlueGreen Streets, HafenCity Universitat
https://www.hcu-hamburg.de/en/research/research-groups/reap/reap-projects/bluegreenstreets

How Hamburg becomes a sponge city, Hamburg Wasser
https://www.hamburgwasser.de/umwelt/vorsorge/schwammstadt

Hamburg, Britannica
https://www.britannica.com/place/Hamburg-Germany

Reconstruction of Hamburg's Königstraße in Altona has begun
https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/hamburg/Umbau-der-Hamburger-Koenigstrasse-in-Altona-hat-begonnen,koenigstrasse128.html

www.opportunitykensington.co.uk