



INTERNATIONAL  
URBAN REGENERATION  
OUTSTANDING PRACTICES



# THE SECOND CYCLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL OUTSTANDING PRACTICES ON URBAN REGENERATION (IOPUR2)





Building on the success of the first cycle of International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration (IOPUR), this initiative continues to document transformative urban solutions. The inaugural cycle received 77 eligible submissions, with 30 practices recommended by expert reviewers for global dissemination. These outstanding cases will be featured in a dedicated handbook scheduled for release in October 2026. The second cycle aims to sustain this momentum by collecting outstanding practices across diverse contexts. To ensure greater inclusion and an expanded geographical scope, this cycle integrates a third-party nomination leveraging networks of institutional partners and academic institutions.

The International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration is a joint effort between the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and Shanghai University (SHU).

UN-Habitat and Shanghai University (SHU) are undertaking a joint project titled ‘Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages through Regeneration’, with the second cycle of the case collection of International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration (IOPUR) as one of its components. IOPUR aligns with global development priorities by advancing the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and accelerating the localisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a strong focus on SDG 11.

IOPUR will directly contribute to the Organisation’s core priorities of UN-Habitat Strategic Plan (2026–2029), namely land, housing, and basic services. The expected practices will highlight themes such as housing regeneration, informal settlement upgrading, and the provision of basic services, among others, thereby demonstrating practical pathways for advancing inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urbanisation.

## PURPOSE

The International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration initiative aims to recognize remarkable efforts from around the world that have made meaningful contributions to urban-rural regeneration. Its goal is to showcase, exchange, and disseminate international outstanding practices and innovative solutions in urban-rural regeneration.

By evaluating, researching, and disseminating practical cases, the initiative aims to build an international platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration on urban-rural regeneration. This platform aims to foster a shared understanding of sustainable regeneration practices, unlock new opportunities for cooperation, and enhance international dialogue on this topic. By bringing together interdisciplinary knowledge and real-world experiences, it will inspire more actors to pursue innovative regeneration approaches. Ultimately, our goal is to offer practical guidance and thought leadership—helping to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future across the urban-rural continuum.



## OBJECTIVES

### I. Highlight a Global Vision and Multidimensional Value

The initiative covers a wide array of fields, including urban culture and sustainable regeneration design, urban regeneration management and digital governance, as well as policy and finance related to regeneration. By focusing on four key dimensions—impact, innovation, instrumentality, and implantability—the initiative brings together cutting-edge practices from around the world. By doing so, it offers actionable insights and practical guidance to support and scale urban-rural regeneration efforts internationally.

### II. Promote Disciplinary Development and Integration of Industry and Education

The initiative aims to enhance international exchange and cooperation in the realm of urban and rural regeneration by fostering seamless integration between academic research and practical application. It seeks to transform theoretical insights into tangible regeneration actions, while also incorporating innovative real-world experiences into academic research and case studies, thereby building a bridge between theory and practice.

### III. Provide Strategic Support for Urban Governance and Public Services

By extracting and refining effective governance strategies and innovative solutions from urban regeneration practices, the initiative enables stakeholders to better understand the complexities of urban regeneration, identify key needs, address implementation challenges, seize future development opportunities, and foster continuous innovation and improvement in regeneration strategies.

### IV. Lead Future Sustainable Regeneration Collaboration Models

The initiative highlights the importance of interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration. It encourages professionals and institutions across diverse fields—such as cultural arts, social governance, financial investment, environmental science, as well as planning and design—to contribute comprehensive and innovative solutions for urban and rural regeneration, fostering new international partnerships for sustainable development.





## GENERAL INFORMATION

### I. Name

The Second Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration

### II. Theme

Adaptive Urban Regeneration to Improve Quality of Life

### III. Concept Guidance

The Second Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration is guided by three core concepts: “People-centered”, “Intelligent & Inclusive”, and “Safe & Sustainable”. It specifically recognizes initiatives demonstrating remarkable contributions in enhancing community well-being, integrating smart technologies with social inclusion, as well as building urban safety and climate resilience.



#### People-centered

Urban regeneration practices should prioritize people, aiming to enhance quality of life for all. Special attention should be given to protecting and promoting the rights of vulnerable groups, disadvantaged communities, and indigenous peoples. Projects are encouraged to address these groups’ needs through initiatives such as gender-inclusive, disability-friendly, elderly-friendly or child-friendly public spaces and adaptive reuse of buildings for community centers. Evaluations will consider not only the physical outcomes of projects but also the inclusiveness of the development process, ensuring a socially sustainable approach. Engaging diverse local stakeholders—such as residents, civil society groups, and academia—through participatory methods (e.g., co-designing workshops, consultation sessions) is essential. Post-completion, assessments should measure social impact and incorporate user feedback to inform future practices.



#### Intelligent & Inclusive

Technology should be used to empower communities, serving as a tool for inclusion rather than surveillance or control. Practices must prioritize solutions that ensure equitable access to digital tools and methods, emphasizing both high-tech innovation and traditional approaches. The latter includes integrating traditional, accessible, and low-cost technologies to bridge gaps in areas with limited digital infrastructure, such as rural regions. Heritage technologies and alternative solutions (e.g., reviving traditional techniques) are encouraged to foster inclusivity. This balanced approach ensures technological advancements benefit all, regardless of socioeconomic or geographic barriers.



#### Safe & Sustainable

Regeneration practices should integrate nature-based solutions to re-green urban spaces and conserve natural heritage, particularly in rural areas. For example, promoting energy-efficient innovation—such as Passive House Standards and Positive Energy Districts—is critical for sustainable buildings and communities. Additionally, extending the lifespan of existing structures reduces construction waste and enhances material circularity, minimizing inefficiencies in resource cycles. By prioritizing ecological stewardship and sustainable design, projects can harmonize urban development with environmental resilience.





## IV. Evaluation Criteria



### Innovation

Innovation refers to the degree to which a regeneration practice introduces original, creative, and context-sensitive solutions to urban and rural challenges. It assesses how the practice applies new ideas, methods, technologies, governance arrangements, financing mechanisms, or design approaches to address complex issues in a way that adds value beyond conventional practice. Innovation may involve cutting-edge digital tools, novel policy instruments, inclusive participation models, or the adaptation of traditional knowledge to contemporary needs. An innovative practice demonstrates relevance to both local conditions and global priorities, offering fresh insights and practical lessons that can inspire other cities and stakeholders.



### Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the extent to which a regeneration practice achieves its stated objectives and delivers tangible results in the short to medium term. It assesses how successfully the practice addresses identified challenges and translates its strategies into measurable improvements, such as better housing conditions, upgraded public spaces and infrastructure, enhanced access to basic services, increased community participation, reduced environmental impacts, or strengthened local economic opportunities. An effective practice demonstrates sound planning, efficient implementation, and coherent coordination across social, economic, environmental, cultural, and governance dimensions. It shows that the methods, tools, and partnerships employed are appropriate and capable of producing meaningful and verifiable outcomes within the specific local context.



### Impact

Impact refers to the broader and longer-term changes generated by a regeneration practice beyond its immediate outputs and outcomes. It reflects the extent to which the practice contributes to lasting improvements in quality of life, social inclusion, economic vitality, environmental resilience, cultural heritage conservation, and institutional capacity. Impact may also be demonstrated through influence on public policy, replication in other cities or regions, and increased recognition at national and international levels. An impactful practice not only delivers clearly defined and measurable long-term benefits, but also serves as a reference for other practitioners and decision-makers by demonstrating how urban and rural regeneration can advance sustainable urbanization and support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.



### Scalability

Scalability refers to the potential of a regeneration practice to be replicated, adapted, and expanded across different geographic, institutional, and socio-economic contexts. It assesses whether the core strategies, tools, and governance arrangements can be transferred and sustained beyond the original project area while maintaining their effectiveness and relevance. A scalable practice is designed with flexibility and practicality in mind, enabling other cities, communities, and institutions to tailor the approach to their own needs and capacities. It provides clear lessons, methodologies, and evidence that support broader dissemination and adoption, thereby amplifying its contribution to sustainable urban and rural regeneration worldwide.





## V. Focus Areas

The Second Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration particularly encourages and welcomes applications in one or more, but not limited to, the following areas:



### Housing-led regeneration

To achieve decent and affordable housing for all, urban and rural regeneration must prioritize housing-related objectives, such as improving housing conditions and upgrading public facilities and infrastructure in neighborhoods. Special emphasis should be placed on ensuring access to basic services (e.g., water and sanitation).



### Waterfront revitalisation

Waterfronts—often central to a city's historical development and prosperity—offer significant potential for transformation. Revitalisation should focus on creating vibrant, inclusive, and publicly accessible spaces that reconnect communities with the water, while celebrating cultural heritage and enhancing ecological resilience.



### Culture and Heritage-led regeneration

Aligned with SDG 11.4, conservation of cultural and nature heritage should be strengthened in urban regeneration practices. This aims to not only create aesthetically enriching environments, but also to shape and reinforce the identity of the place. Sustainability means safeguarding both heritage and ecosystems for future generations. We advocate integrating heritage perspectives into all regeneration projects, ensuring they respect historical narratives and ecological balance.



### Urban-rural linkages and rural revitalisation

Rural revitalisation is critical to improving rural residents' quality of life and strengthening urban-rural connections. Often lagging in modernisation, rural areas urgently require upgraded facilities, including public spaces, renovated housing, enhanced services (e.g., healthcare, education), and community centers for local communities, as well as hospitality facilities for rural visitors. Regeneration should also celebrate intangible heritage—such as spaces for local performances, literature, and customs—while fostering new economies like temporary coworking hubs for urban professionals or small-to-medium enterprise clusters.





### Smart & intelligent regeneration

The application of emerging technologies, such as digital twins and AI, can significantly enhance the regeneration process and deliver positive outcomes. In particular, for places and communities that have been left behind, smart technologies like autonomous public transportation can offer innovative solutions to improve livelihoods. In heritage-related regeneration, digital twins can document historical elements and support the restoration process. Meanwhile, in dense urban areas, the integration of advanced technologies can help with design and shorten construction periods and improve efficiency.



### Industrial land regeneration

As industries are rapidly restructuring, converting industrial land for non-industrial uses has become a trend in post-industrial cities. Polluted industrial sites should be remediated before regeneration begins. We advocate for conserving and reusing existing industrial infrastructure (e.g., transforming factories into cultural hubs) rather than complete demolition. Through design and innovation, these structures can adapt to new functions, promoting sustainable resource use and preserving their historical character.



### Comprehensive and mixed-use regeneration

Large-scale regeneration projects, such as redevelopment of transportation hubs, act as engines for urban and economic development due to their transformative scale and impact. These initiatives offer unique opportunities to catalyse growth, reshape urban environments, and integrate mixed-use spaces (e.g., combining housing, commerce, and culture). Beyond economic benefits, projects must prioritize high-quality public spaces and inclusive cultural facilities to serve all citizens equitably.



### Low-carbon regeneration

To accelerate progress toward carbon neutrality, we seek to align the urban regeneration agenda with climate mitigation goals by improving building efficiency, promoting the use of renewable energy and distributed energy systems, integrating net-zero-ready infrastructure, retrofitting existing built environments with low-impact approaches, and reducing emissions associated with urban regeneration.



### Temporary and informal regeneration

Before formal redevelopment begins, adaptive reuse of buildings/sites for temporary or informal purposes (e.g., pop-up galleries, creative studios) can attract artists and innovators, sparking creativity and community engagement. Examples include industrial-artistic clusters in New York and Shanghai, or Germany's "Zwischennutzung" (in-between use) model. Similarly, rural areas are increasingly repurposed as coworking spaces or "second homes" for urban creatives. These bottom-up practices are vital to fostering inclusive and sustainable urban transformation.





## VI. Targeted Applicants

The Second Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration is open globally to entities with experience in urban regeneration practices and innovative solutions to participate. This includes, but is not limited to, local governments, enterprises, and research and design institutions.

Applications may be submitted either through self-application or by nomination from partner organisations, academic institutions, and professional networks among others as appropriate.

## VII. Eligibility Requirements

1. The entity submitting must have actively participated in the practice and played a significant role in shaping the project. This could include, for instance, city administrations that approved the project, architects or urban planners who have designed it, real estate developers who invested in it, local institutions that have coordinated its implementation, or any other institutions.
2. In cases of third-party nomination, the nominating entity must provide a brief statement verifying the practice's impact and the submitting entity's role. This ensures that the practice is recognised by external partners as a benchmark for excellence in its respective context.
3. The regeneration practices in urban and rural areas must meet the following criteria:
  - The practice must have been completed or have achieved measurable progress within the past five years (from January 1, 2021). Projects that have completed design but have not been implemented are not eligible for submission
  - The practice should align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.





4. Applications may not be considered under the following conditions:

- Incomplete application materials or submissions received after the deadline.
- Information or documentation found to be inaccurate, or misleading may affect the eligibility of the application;
- Shortlisted practices that fail to provide sufficient information for a comprehensive review may not proceed to the final evaluation stage;
- Any actions that could compromise the integrity of the evaluation process, including attempts to influence outcomes, may lead to removal from consideration.





## VIII. How to Apply

The practices/case studies should be submitted through the official English website ([www.wurbp.org](http://www.wurbp.org)). While the call remains open via the official website, we have integrated a Third-Party Nomination to proactively source practices endorsed by strategic partners, academic institutions, and professional networks to expand geographical reach and inclusive representation.

Please note that the application must be submitted in English and the supporting documents could be in UN languages. All supporting materials required during the application process, including but not limited to the Project Profile, Proof of Applicant's Association with the Project, Video Subtitles, and Certificates of Honor, may be submitted in any of the United Nations official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, or Spanish.

## IX. Selection Process

The evaluation is conducted by a panel of distinguished experts and scholars from both China and abroad, representing multidisciplinary fields such as architecture, urban planning, rural revitalisation, urban-rural linkages, transportation, economics, social science, and culture. The process includes the following stages:





## X. Selection Benefits

Following a multistage evaluation process including eligibility review, online recommendation, and final on site recommendation, The Second Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration will recommend no more than 32 shortlisted practices, from which up to 10 final practices will be determined.

The final selected practices are intended for incorporation into the publication on the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration.

Shortlisted and final recommended practices will receive an honorary certificate and be given priority for invitation to participate to major international events organised by Shanghai University on urban regeneration, such as side events on the occasion of World Urban Forum and World Cities Day.





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For more information,  
please visit the official English website  
[www.wurbp.org](http://www.wurbp.org)



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