

## Ax:son Johnson Foundation – Oral Comments at PrepCom 3

Honorable Co-chair and distinguished delegates: The Ax:son Johnson Foundation and the Future of Places network applaud the current draft of the New Urban Agenda, in particular its recognition of the central role of public space as the essential connective matrix on which sustainable cities must grow. Following are general comments on the draft which reflect the Key Messages that emerged from our four-year forum series, bringing together over 1,500 researchers, practitioners, officials and activists, coming from over 700 organizations, 275 cities and 100 countries. We have submitted more specific written remarks, which are also available on our website, [www.futureofplaces.com](http://www.futureofplaces.com).

1. Open public space systems are the essential frameworks for sustainable economic, social, and ecological development and regeneration. They are the critical urban commons where diverse people from across the city may interact and create robust, equitable, resource-efficient economic and cultural growth.
2. To function optimally, public spaces must be created, and partially co-created by the people themselves, as a continuous network system with crucial geometries and scales, beginning with the adaptive human scale of experience and movement, and continuing through a range of supportive scales of building, plot, block, street, neighborhood, and polycentric region.
3. In particular, streets are, in their own right, public spaces and drivers of prosperity. This means that they must be designed not only to accommodate vehicles, but as well-functioning networks of **places**, with supportive private and semi-public edges.
4. New research is demonstrating a very important connection between well-structured urban form – with networks of public space at its core – and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This finding offers an important strategic link between the New Urban Agenda and the COP21 framework.
5. Unfortunately, sprawl – which is to say, fragmented and privatized urban forms, lacking in adequate, safe, open, capacity-building public space networks -- is a rampant global phenomenon today, posing an enormous barrier to implementation of the New Urban Agenda.
6. Therefore we must recognize the urgent need to change the “operating systems for growth” - the economic incentives and disincentives, the laws, rules, standards, and other factors that reward and even mandate sprawl. We must be prepared to implement alternative governance and capacity-building tools and strategies, and the means to distribute and share them.
7. Related to this, there is a critical need to “monetize externalities” to reduce rapid resource depletion and short-term approaches, and to shift away from a “supply-side” urban economics favoring unsustainable concentrations of wealth and displacement, toward a more diverse, more regenerative, more sustainable kind of urban economy.
8. We must recognize the vital resources and treasures that are embodied in historic structures and their living evolutionary patterns, offering us a rich evidence-based resource for the challenges of an urbanizing future.

In conclusion, we applaud the call for accessible, practical, evidence-based, **shareable** tools and strategies, we fully align with the previous remarks of our GAP colleague, and we commit now to the crucial implementation process ahead. Thank you.