

Identity & Branding

- Area-specific development leads to successful neighbourhoods –

Introduction

'Identity and Branding' focuses on the development of a method for strategic visions on area development, based upon place-identity and key values of the existing situation in urban areas. This new method is based on experience in four pilot projects in neighbourhoods in Rotterdam and The Hague.

Problem

Working on successful residential areas

The two initiating housing corporations concluded that for a successful performance and a competitive position, the 'Randstad south wing' needs differentiated residential environments. The notice of declining quality, lack of recognizable living areas and concentration of arrears motivated them to start this Identity & Branding project in 2003. They want to contribute to the future of the south wing, where they are involved through property ownership. According to them the key solution is to locally create distinctive and recognizable profiles for residential areas. At the moment opportunities of enhancing the specific identities of different areas within the Randstad aren't utilized in the development and restructuring of existing urban residential areas. A better relation between build environment and preferred living conditions results in the development of more successful residential areas, satisfied residents and a more successful South wing of the Randstad.

Description

Housing corporations Staedion (The Hague) and Woonbron (Rotterdam) started the Identity & Branding project because they felt the responsibility to improve the living quality in the south wing of the Randstad. They wanted to develop new instruments and a method to develop area-specific, differentiated residential areas. One of the main goals was to give people a real choice to elect their ideal living environment. The method is based on the experience in four pilots and the origin of this method is an integral, process orientated approach (not only physical but also social, cultural, economical and administrative) in four process phases. The identity of the residents and the area are the basis for the vision on long-term development and future of the residential areas.

Approach

Important conclusion of this project is that the task of an area prescribes the approach and the instruments, the approach has to be 'designed' in each pilot. In some cases the support of involved people was a goal on itself. The method focuses on strengthening partnership and strengthening the area identity itself. Instruments such as organizing a workshop or other interactive approaches were used to create an alliance between partners.

Based on the experience in four different case studies in two large post-war and two smaller pre-war residential areas (Rotterdam: Hoogvliet en Nieuwe Westen and The Hague: Mariahoeve en Schipperskwartier) the method is developed.

Four successive parts of the process have led to the developed of an area vision for each area and a general working method:

- *Research area characteristics*
This process phase: 'research and analyses of the area characteristics' explains the present aspects of identity (physical, economical, social, cultural and administrative) out of the historical background.
- *Branding*
During the phase of 'branding' or 'area identity determination' the identity of the residential area is determined in key-values.
- *Market research*
This phase investigates the identity of the (possible future) inhabitants of the neighbourhood and their values and preferences.
- *Area vision*
In this part of the process an area vision and development strategy for the area is developed based on all results of the prior three phases.

Results

Since identification with a place identity is the central connection to successful residential areas, the insight in appreciation of place identity by different groups of inhabitants and entrepreneurs is an important result.

Of vital importance for a joint vision on future developments is partnership between the interested area partners. The role of these 'area partners' in the development process has to be clear. Inviting all people who are important to an urban renewal process in the beginning of the project is of vital importance to have support for the renewal from the beginning. It makes communication of results easier and the outcome and further developments are easier to control.

Another important conclusion is that in areas without a 'sense of urgency' an Identity and Branding project can create one, an I&B project can cause a lot of energy in an area. The results such as key values an area theme's can help the several different professionals to gain a joint vision on the future (development) of an area.

For the specific results of the pilots please visit the 'Identiteit en Branding' website www.identiteitenbranding.nl

Beneficiaries

Inhabitants on several scales can profit this approach. Not only the inhabitants directly concerned but also the residents of the region as a whole can benefit. They have a vote in the development, their wishes are being heard, and the developed houses and living environment suite their wishes better. Because the residential areas are designed based upon the identity of the place people can really choose between different residential areas.

This project focuses on 'value creation' in general. The corporations and local authority can benefit this approach because they can built more durable, successful residential areas with satisfied residents, less problems and thus less (control) costs. In addition to this the creation of value is also reflected in the property value. Therefore all the property owners benefit the approach.

Resources used

The project is subsidized as part of IPSV by the Dutch Ministry of Housing and Environmental Planning (VROM)

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Links

www.identiteitenbranding.nl

Themes

Urban Policy > Economy knowledge & employment

Keywords

Urban economy