SUMMARY

- greening of Copenhagen
- care and development
- spaces within reach
- quality of green spaces
GREENING OF COPENHAGEN

In the foreword to Park Policy 2003, Mayor Søren Pind sets forth three reasons why Copenhagen needs a park policy:

- First, we have an obligation to the citizens – present as well as future – to make sure that the city will continue to be an attractive place to live…
- Second, green spaces are a part of municipal Capital
- Third, given the explosive changes taking place in the city at present, it is essential that green spaces are taken into account and included in planning.

Park Policy will serve as the future basis for the municipal Roads and Parks Department’s work on green sector planning. Park Policy also focuses on green areas in relation to other aspects of municipal planning, emphasizing how a continued high priority placed on green spaces will contribute to Copenhagen’s attractive development. Park Policy is intended to ensure the continued existence and improvement of green spaces for the benefit of citizens, but will also promote the city’s image to guests, investors and other national and international business associates.

In itself the Policy will not translate directly into investment. It indicates the desirable development of the city’s own areas and points to the acquisitions, infra-structural investments and operational costs which would help achieve park policy objectives.

The Park Policy will also serve as the basis of a dialogue, helping Copenhagen develop into an exciting metropolis, in which both private citizens and the business community feel at home. The idea is that citizens shall actively participate in transforming overall policy into district greening plans – which many Copenhageners will certainly experience as closer to their own concerns than a general park policy.

A GLIMPSE OF HISTORY

As early as 1902 city councillor Johansen made the following convincing case for the importance of parks:

“But a park will always be part and parcel of the life of the people and of the individual. This is where the Copenhagener sits as an infant in his pram, forming his first impression of the green world, and where, a bit older, running and playing, he gets into all the mischief that boys do at that age. This is where he falls in love as a young man and it is his final harbour when in old age he needs to rest and shelter under the trees, once more rejoicing in Nature as she reawakens in the Spring.”

The green vision of Copenhagen set forth in Park Policy 2003 paints a picture of the desired future situation at an unspecified future date:

Copenhagen is known internationally as Europe’s green metropolis, a modern capital where green spaces are a natural part of the city’s development and the face it shows the world. Trees, green spaces, the natural environment as well as monuments of the past are protected and developed so that the city’s green capital is increased for the benefit of future generations.
Copenhageners have easy access on a daily basis to beautiful parks and fine playgrounds in the vicinity of their homes. Within the municipal boundaries there are large, continuous green spaces rich in the elements of Nature and with ample space for outdoor activities. The city’s major and minor green areas are linked by a network of green routes for cyclists and pedestrians as well as green street spaces which also serve as corridors for the city’s flora and fauna.

The municipal parks and green spaces are safe and inspiring meeting points where Copenhageners and guests can experience the peace of Nature and join together in common cultural and sporting events. The parks provide a wealth of experience and foster the desire to spend time outdoors or take part in outdoor activities. The development of the municipal parks and green spaces takes place in a dialogue with the citizens.

THE STARTING POINT

Park Policy contends that it pays to promote green spaces. Green spaces help attract citizens and businesses and help hold on to those that are already there. Beautifully landscaped parks, squares and other green areas are a natural part of a modern metropolis. Green spaces contribute to the city’s sustainability and provide quality. Green spaces should be seen as a form of capital, increasing the city’s value and helping to develop it into a modern, competitive metropolis.

At a time of hectic construction, it is no longer enough to maintain and protect existing parks. Existing parks must be developed in accordance with changes in the life style and family structure of the citizens and their changing needs and requirements. Primarily, however, the existing parks must be supplemented with exciting green spaces with which certain sections of Copenhagen are undersupplied. The need for sufficiently large green spaces in the vicinity of people’s homes will always be present.

A green city is simple common sense both in relation to the city’s overall development and the individual citizen’s health and quality of life. One study shows, for example, that a view of green trees produces a sensation of calm, reduces blood pressure and muscle tension – green has a relaxing effect, so to speak. Children, too, need to play and exercise outdoors in order to develop into healthy, social, whole human beings.

GREEN SPACES IN DAILY LIFE

Taking Copenhagen’s green vision as its starting point, Park Policy describes and defines goals for the development of the city’s natural environment, parks and green spaces.

23 objectives are defined within three focus areas:

- Protect and develop
- Spaces within reach
- Quality of the green spaces

PROTECT AND DEVELOP

The characteristic features of Copenhagen’s green landscape are to be found in low lying natural areas, fortifications, royal parks and commons and, when it comes to water, the coast, harbour, lakes, streams, marshes and meadows. The historical and scenic features which have left their mark on the city’s development are to be preserved and made more prominent. For example, some of the historical streams, which are now culverted, can be brought into the open again to form part of the city’s green infrastructure.

The city’s green structures, areas, parks, natural assets and trees are to be protected and ensured through preservation and the drafting of maintenance and development plans. Most Copenhagen parks are protected by law, but not all, the reason for this being that the legal procedure is still in progress. The necessary steps should therefore be taken to bring these cases to a conclusion. There is also an urgent need for new maintenance and development plans which in addition to respecting cultural history would make it easier to bring the parks up to a more contemporary standard.

The city’s valuable plant and animal life is to be registered, protected and developed better than formerly and open green spaces are to provide a wealth of outdoor experience. Citizens are to be given the opportunity to experience the cycle of Nature. Close to home, trees help clean the air and the green wedge along the harbour and the western section of Amager is a vital green lung for all of Copenhagen.

The focus area of protection and development has defined objectives in the following categories:

1. A green metropolis
2. An attractive residential city
3. Sustainable development
4. Water in town
5. Culture and nature
6. Green street spaces
7. City trees

I A GREEN METROPOLIS

The idea is to develop an internationally attractive green metropolis while retaining the city’s own identity. Copenhagen shall find greatness and recognition in its attention to detail and the ability to make the most of a humble landscape with due respect for urban history. For this reason the cultivation of the natural environment and a sense of history shall be present everywhere. The historical monuments, parks and landscaping of Copenhagen shall meet international standards.

SPACES WITHIN REACH

The greatest challenge is to find spaces for the greening of the underprivileged districts of Copenhagen. There are ample opportunities to be found in disused railway and abandoned industrial areas. The municipal average of open spaces is approx. 25 m² per inhabitant. The districts with the fewest open spaces are districts such as inner and outer Ørestad, Østerbro and Sundbyvester, with an area of approx. 2-3 m² per inhabitant.
The closest green space should be no farther away than the bus stop, 200m. Where green spaces are few and far between, the areas should be utilized more flexibly; ie sports facilities could be designed so that they can also be used for more general recreational purposes. In other cases, as a compensation for lack of space, focus can be put on enhanced quality, while link-ups for cyclists and pedestrians and green streets could encourage citizens to avail themselves of green areas that are somewhat farther away.

The focus area Areas within a reasonable distance has defined objectives in the following categories:

8. City, district and neighbourhood
9. District greening plans
10. More and better open spaces
11. Green link-ups
12. Behind the fence
13. While we wait
14. Open and flexible green spaces

8. CITY, DISTRICT & NEIGHBOURHOOD

The City of Copenhagen has at its disposal parks and natural areas which, thanks to their location, size and features, provide excellent opportunities to experience a beautiful and protected environment. In addition, there are also minor areas of great significance to the inhabitants of the local communities, providing a breath of fresh air, a pleasant place to pass through or an essential component of the view from their window. This hierarchy of parks forms a mosaic which is to be maintained and developed. This is a crucial prerequisite if Copenhagen is to offer pleasant local sanctuaries as well as the unique experience of the natural environment within the city’s own boundaries.

QUALITY OF GREEN SPACES

Parks should provide a wealth of experience and afford the opportunity to take part in many different activities and events, without preventing general public access — ie areas for playing football should not be fenced off and become the province of individual clubs, but should also be available to other users that are not officially organized.

Parks should provide biological variety, the opportunity for spontaneous sport and exercise as well as being a place for children to play and learn. There should be a park in all districts, where nature can be experienced without the distraction of the noise of city traffic.

Work is being done on the maintenance and development plans for Utterslev Mose, Bellaehøj, Amager Fælled, Falderparken, Damhusengen, etc. Areas scheduled for development are Amager Strandpark, Prags Boulevard, Nørrebroparken, Narrebro Banetræren and Fæstningsringen.

The focus area Quality of the green spaces has defined objectives for the following categories:

15. A VARIETY OF EXPERIENCE

Copenhagen should be able to provide space for silent contemplation as well as outdoor activities all year round 24 hours a day. Places with space to feel Nature’s rhythms and absorb her beauty and places where games, movement and outdoor activities can be combined. This means that there should also be a focus on winter activities such as running, skating, sledding and angling. The possibility of putting up lights on running tracks shall be investigated. Attention should be paid to attractive places to sit in the sun, particularly in the spring, and more eating places are to be established in the parks, making it possible to meet outdoors for a meal.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

In the final chapter of Park Policy it is explained how the development of the city – from the fortified city, to the fall of the ramparts, to industrial development, urban expansion, urban planning, and the Finger Plan – has affected the development of city park structure. Since World War II the Finger Plan has directed Copenhagen development along five main arterial “fingers”, including railway lines and motorways. The areas between the fingers are meant to serve recreational purposes.

Revitalization of the cities most urban areas have been a great success. Old buildings without bath or green surroundings have been renewed into new open spaces. The experience of water, including transformation of the harbour, also provides new recreational opportunities.

There is at present a unique opportunity for Copenhagen to meet the recreational needs of all those who already live in the city and create attractive green spaces for guests, tourists and future citizens.

Over the past 10 years Copenhagen development has emphasized quality: Valbyparken, the renovation of Kasteller, Havneparken, the urban innovation areas, planting of new street trees and the renovation of city playgrounds.

Some of the city’s disused military, port and industrial areas, the disused railway areas in Nordhavnen and Sydhavnen as well as sections of Amager and some of the older, outer urban areas are rapidly being transformed into attractive, new districts. Taking Park Policy as a starting point it will be possible to create optimal urban link-ups to the other sections of the city, ie bridges across the harbour which would give certain districts improved access to attractive open spaces. The experience of water; including transformation of the harbour, also provides new recreational opportunities.