



# Livcom Awards 2010

City of Odense  
Denmark

Whole City  
Category D



ODENSE KOMMUNE

## Introduction

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Odense is centrally located in Denmark in the middle of the island of Funen. Although the city is not by the sea, it is connected to a nearby fjord via a canal, 5 kilometres long, established 200 years ago.

The population is 188,000, making it the third largest city in Denmark. Its 1,021-year history makes it one of the eldest in Denmark.

The age distribution of the population is: 20% aged 0–16 years; 59% aged 17–59 years; and 21% over 60.

More than 150 different nationalities live in Odense, and immigrants and their descendants number almost 24,000 – roughly 13% of the total population.

The vision for Odense, adopted in 2008 by the City Council, is: **“To play is to live”**

That means that we want to work and play our way to growth and improving the quality of life in Odense. We are innovative when it comes to nurturing the settings for learning, innovation, development and growth. We want to enhance the possibilities for development in the lives of children and adults and we want to demonstrate wide-reaching social responsibility.



*Ramadan and cultural celebration in front of the City Hall  
2009*

odense

TO PLAY  
IS TO LIVE

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The city has more than 100,000 workplaces, 40% of which are in the public sector. Most businesses in Odense (60%) are SMEs with less than 5 employees. The unemployment rate is 4,7% of the workforce.

Odense Municipality is governed by a council with 29 members and 5 specialist committees. The council is elected for a four-year term.

Odense has a strong focus on culture, business, a vibrant student scene and many parks and green areas which give the city a pleasant atmosphere.



*The river running through the city - at the park Munke Mose*

## Enhancement of the Natural and Built Landscapes

Odense has a tradition of preserving, establishing and developing its green urban areas. For this reason, Odense is renowned for its many green areas that are easily accessible to public.

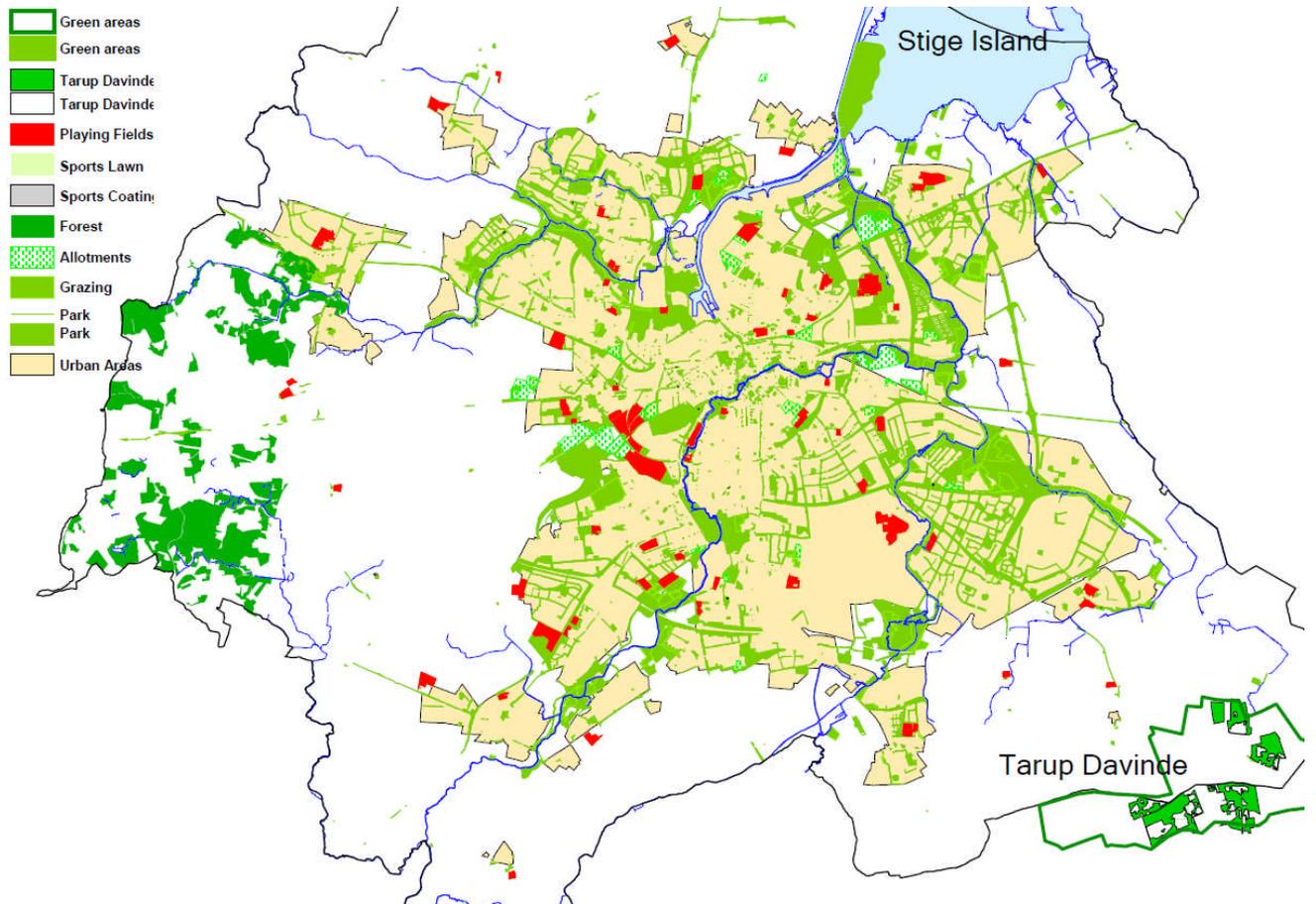
Odense's green profile arose from decisions taken many years ago by far-sighted politicians and residents. When industrialisation compelled Odense to extend its city limits, parks and nature areas were established near the city. Today these green areas are local recreational oases for the people of Odense and for visitors.

Odense still makes a dedicated effort to ensure widespread public access to green areas. As a result, the city now has 125 m<sup>2</sup> of green areas per capita, and few residents live more than 300 metres from a green area.

As part of the city's millenary celebrations in 1988 and the commemoration of the bicentenary of Hans Christian Andersen in 2005, two new woods were established near the city.



*The shape of the new H.C. Andersen woods - laid out in the shape of the storyteller's famous "Sun Face" paper cutting*



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As part of the city's urban development, the municipality has established zoning guidelines for recreational areas. This means that when new urban areas are being planned or when existing urban areas are to be converted for other uses, green areas must be set aside as local and neighbourhood parks.

Ongoing efforts are being made to improve the quality and enhance the attractiveness of the green areas. For instance, there are 90 playgrounds in these green areas, 5 of which are themed playgrounds, including a music playground.

River valleys transect the city as green wedges and are important green connecting routes within the city. Via recreational paths, pedestrians and cyclists can move through the city in green interconnected areas, and the river valleys are also important migration corridors for flora and fauna.

In 1999, Odense took the initiative to protect Odense River throughout Odense Municipality. The protection scheme covers some 800 hectares of private and municipal areas and will be completed in 2010. The conservation measures protect the river valley from further development and technical facilities, preserve old trees, and ensure that the river valley will still be available for recreational purposes in the future.

In addition to the natural landscape, new green recreational areas have been established in recent decades resulting from active efforts to transform and exploit areas previously used for extracting raw materials or as refuse dumps.

Tarup-Davinde is an active gravel pit which is being re-established as a nature and recreational area concurrent with the gradual phasing out of gravel excavation. Today, the area is an attractive excursion spot offering recreational possibilities and outdoor experiences different from those of the natural landscape. The future of the area is being planned and developed in collaboration with a neighbouring municipality.

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Stige Ø comprises Odense's new recreational area. Stige Ø served as Odense's refuse dump from 1967 to 1995. The refuse dump is now covered by one metre of soil and has been transformed into a varied landscape covering 54 hectares of hills and dales. Since 2007, the area has been used as a recreational area by the people of Odense. It is possible to take part in physical activities like kayaking, mountain-biking, roller skiing, and kite-flying and in nature experiences like fishing and bird-watching. The methane gas which continues to be produced is collected and is used for generating electricity and heat for 3,000 households in the neighbourhood.

There is a long-standing tradition of planting trees on the city's squares and along its streets and roads. In the older residential neighbourhoods, trees have been planted in the verges between pavement and roadway and some of the trees are pruned to provide a unique style that enhances the architecture of the specific residential neighbourhood. In newer residential and industrial areas. The vegetation belts are often wider and more natural and have been planted to separate road systems from urban areas.



*Stige Ø - children playing at one of the five activity bases*

## Art, Culture and Heritage

The city of Odense has a long, fascinating history. It started out as a Viking settlement, became a religious centre and, finally, a centre of industry and commerce. Human activity has left its mark throughout the city's more than 1,000-year history. They all combine to give the city its unique identity, an identity that is worth protecting, and a history that is worth telling. For this reason, the city has made a big effort to preserve and re-use its buildings and landscape features.

Denmark's most famous author, Hans Christian Andersen, was born in Odense in 1805 and still leaves his mark on the city in many ways. The Hans Christian Andersen Museum is one of the oldest museums to commemorate an individual in Europe and it celebrated its centenary in 2008. The museum contains a vast, superb collection of documents and artefacts associated with Hans Christian Andersen, and it collaborates with Odense University on research projects involving the writer.

Just south of the city centre is The Funen Village, an open-air museum where old houses and farmsteads characteristic of the region have been rebuilt. The museum makes it possible to study old architectural styles, traditions and farm animals, and in the summer volunteer "inhabitants" help to make history come alive.



*The old village - children learning about life in the old days.  
Active participation in experiencing history*

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Odense has a renowned symphony orchestra in residence at the city's concert hall. The concert hall seats 1300 and the building also houses the Carl Nielsen Museum. The museum presents the history of Carl Nielsen, Denmark's most famous composer, who was born and raised near Odense.

Odense has its own academy of art, conservatory of music, music schools, theatre and a drama school. The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen also has a division of its ballet school in Odense.

Visionary architects saw the potential of the old industrial buildings in the centre of Odense early on. One example of a successful preservation strategy in the city centre is the old clothing factory "Brandts Klædefabrik". This large building complex was transformed into museums, an art academy, a cinema, shops, cultural facilities, cafes and restaurants in the 1980s. Back then this seemed controversial and innovative. Today, no one could imagine Odense without this dynamic cultural centre.



*The old clothing factory*

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Another example is the old cattle market (Kvægtorv), which was transformed into the headquarters of one of Denmark's two public television stations in 1988.

A third example is the old industrial port, currently being transformed into a new urban area. The port area should not only be for those who live and work here. It should be for everyone – and play, movement, exercise, life and variation are its buzzwords. Empty warehouses are available to artists, skaters and performers for temporary use – free of charge or for very low rent.



*Odense harbour revitalised - activities on the waterfront in front of one of the new residential areas*

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Odense has a library with several branches throughout the city. Besides books, the library offers the free lending of music, films, and works of art, as well as access to databases. The library organises exhibitions, lectures and courses (e.g. how to use different services on the internet), and provides access to computers. There is a very modern children's library where one of the latest activities is a large media shop called "Palle's Gift Shop". Here children can play games, read reviews and take part in competitions, polling and quizzes. In one urban district with many residents of foreign origin, the library has been integrated into the district's cultural centre.

Each year, a number of events are held, and these are getting bigger by the year. They include the Odense International Film Festival, which primarily focuses on short films; the Waterfront Festival, which attracts people to Odense's new urban area along the waterfront; the Hans Christian Andersen Christmas Bazaar, organised in collaboration with Odense's retail trade; the Robot Festival, organised in collaboration with the University of Southern Denmark; and the Flower Festival, organised in collaboration with local nurseries. Odense is Denmark's leading city of nurseries, making the festival a showcase for the prowess of this trade.



*The Flower Festival in front of the city hall*

## Environmental Best Practices

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Odense Municipality has been making a comprehensive environmental effort for years. We have made a name for ourselves as a leader in many fields, both in Denmark and abroad. For instance, the first wastewater facility was built in Odense more than a century ago, and Odense continues to be one of the leaders in wastewater treatment and waste management.

Odense wants to do even more for the environment. For this reason, the city council adopted an ambitious Environmental Plan in 2008, which aims to make Odense into Denmark's most sustainable big city by 2025. Concurrent with Odense's environmental policy, an environmental action plan was adopted, stipulating that a new environmental action plan will be adopted every year until 2025, to ensure ongoing follow-up and continuation of the Environmental Plan.

As one element of its Environmental Policy, Odense Municipality has also adopted a Climate Plan for 2010–2012. The Climate Plan sets out realistic proposals for the measures required for enabling Odense Municipality (as a geographical area) to reduce its carbon emissions in compliance with the targets set, i.e. an 8% reduction in carbon emissions by 2012, 50% by 2025 and carbon-neutrality by 2050.

These carbon-emission reductions should be achieved by means of a general conversion to renewable energy sources and by implementing energy efficiency measures. In addition to its preventive efforts, the long-term aim of the Climate Plan is to ensure that Odense Municipality sustainably adapts to the climate of the future. The negative effects of climate change must be mitigated wherever possible, and the positive effects must be exploited through measures like using rainwater for recreational purposes.

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The Climate Plan strongly encourages collaboration between utilities, the business community and the general public, as Odense Municipality is responsible for only a minor percentage of the carbon emissions.

Odense has one of the world's most highly-developed district-heating systems, and thus is able to utilise energy very efficiently. District heating is the primary source of heating in Odense, and the heat is supplied to 95% of Odense's households, i.e. more than 80,000. The district heating is primarily supplied by the Funen Power Station, a combined heating and power plant. The plant has just commissioned a new straw-fired unit to replace the coal-fired unit. This equates to annual reductions in carbon emissions of 245,000 tonnes.



*The new straw-fired unit. 310.000 straw bales will be burned here every year. This generates heating to 60.000 citizens and electricity to 35.000 households - reducing the use of coal by 100.000 tons a year.*

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In 2008, Odense Municipality signed the international environmental contract "Countdown 2010" relating to biodiversity. This means that the municipality undertakes to support the UN's 2020 targets for curbing the loss of biodiversity before 2020, so it will also be possible for future generations to enjoy the benefits of a multiplicity of flora, fauna and natural resources. The inhabitants of Odense Municipality should now and in future feel enriched because they can experience a fine diversity of wildlife and natural beauty on their doorstep. One of Odense's targets is to double the size of green areas before 2015.

Odense is world-renowned as a cycling city. The first cycling tracks were laid already more than a century ago, and cycling has been a high priority ever since. Cycling is an eco-friendly mode of transport which contributes to reducing pollution and carbon emissions.



*Cycling in the city center. The cycle counter counts the number of cyclists passing every day.*

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From 1999 to 2002, Odense was officially designated Denmark's National Cycling City. During these and subsequent years, Odense Municipality has taken many initiatives to improve the physical conditions for the city's cyclists to make it more attractive to cycle than it is to drive a car. In addition, many activities, campaigns and competitions have been organised for the public to encourage even more people to cycle.

The evaluation of the comprehensive National Cycling City project was issued in 2004, and the results were outstanding. They included the fact that Odense residents took 35 million new trips by bicycle in the project period from 1999 to 2002 and that the number of accidents declined, in spite of the fact that more people were cycling.

The "Cycling City of Odense" has now changed its name to "The City of Cyclists". The change of name is due to the change of focus – from the mode of transport to the individual cyclist. The vision for the City of Cyclists is to make Odense a city where cyclists have the best conditions, because Odense makes cycling easier, safer and more enjoyable. The targets for the City of Cyclists include increasing the number of trips by bicycle by 25% up to 2012 and increasing traffic safety for cyclists. Odense's cycling efforts were recognised when Odense was selected to take part in the Urban Best Practice Area at EXPO 2010 in Shanghai. The "Spinning Wheels" pavilion presents many aspects of cycling.



*Odense's Pavillion at EXPO 2010. Cycling is an outdoor activity and therefore the pavilion is an open construction and the main building materials used is glass and steel, allowing the visitor to enjoy the exhibition from all sides.*

## Community Participation and Empowerment

Odense Municipality gives high priority to involving residents in the decisions that affect them and their daily lives. In addition to statutory requirements for public hearings, the municipality also wishes to involve residents in many other areas. To achieve this, in 2007 the Odense City Council adopted a "Strategy for Increased Public Involvement", to bring focus to bear on public involvement as an important element of the political process.

Most public institutions which serve the citizens in one way or another have a board representing users, employees, politicians and stakeholders in the area. All kindergartens and schools have a board, for instance.

Another democratic instrument is a users' council where the users of a given institution or stakeholders within an area can exert influence via user-elected or designated representatives and thus express their opinion. For example, there are an Elderly Council and a Sustainability Council, the latter of which was set up as part of Odense's environmental policy and constitutes an important element of municipal efforts to become a sustainable city. The council is unique in Denmark and represents a broad scope of politicians and experts in the areas of the environment, health, economy and social issues. The council focuses on a holistic approach and on creating sound, long-lasting, sustainable solutions for the whole city.



*Citizens and stakeholder meeting*



*Give your opinion!*



*Information stand about the Traffic and Mobility Plan*

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Municipal efforts involving nature areas and outdoor activities are discussed and presented in the Green Council where outdoor organisations, nature organisations, the tourist industry, agriculture and the city museum, as well as two politicians are represented.

Another example is Odense's Integration Council comprising 16 members appointed on the basis of an election held among the city's residents of foreign origin. The members of the Integration Council serve as bridge-builders between Odense Municipality's residents with an ethnic background other than Danish, on the one hand, and the municipal system, on the other, and in so doing the Council contributes to promoting mutual understanding, openness and respect.

Odense Municipality involves residents and stakeholders in drawing up its plans, large and small. There is a longstanding tradition for residents to get involved in even the smallest projects, for example when traffic calming is set up for a single street.



*Event celebrating calming of street*

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Typically, residents will be widely involved in the initial phases of a project, after which either an expert monitoring group or a task force is set up to follow the project through to completion. For large green projects or for the renovation of green areas public meetings are often organised. At these meetings, information is provided about the intended changes, after which public input is incorporated wherever possible. In many instances, a second public meeting is held where the municipality describes the adapted plans. Politicians often participated in these meetings.

One element of the Public Involvement Strategy is the Digital Panel of Citizens, whose purpose is to underpin widespread involvement of the city's inhabitants and thus local democracy and dialogue between the inhabitants and the municipality. The Digital Panel of Citizens acts like an ordinary opinion survey, the only difference being that the same people are asked to give their opinion on several occasions. This ensures a certain degree of uniformity in the topics surveyed and makes it easier to collect responses from a large number of residents. This makes the Panel of Citizens a modern tool for involving the public to supplement the existing public meetings and hearings. The surveys implemented include the City Centre, Environmental Policy, Sustainable Public Behaviour, the vision To Play Is to Live, Cultural Life, etc.

## Healthy Lifestyle

As of 1 January 2007, Denmark's local governments were charged with responsibility for preventive, health-promoting efforts. This was one reason Odense Municipality decided to draft a health policy in 2007. Health is broadly defined in the policy and covers residents' physical, psychological and social well-being – in other words, it also includes quality of life. For this reason, all administrative units of the municipality are involved in the implementation of the Health Policy.

The vision of Odense Municipality is to improve the quality of life for its citizens, combat social inequality and ensure a healthy environment. Twelve action areas have been selected for implementing the vision. Each action area is described in the Public Health Plan, including details of how it affects public health and the extent of the problem in Odense Municipality.

ACTION AREAS	
Smoking	Responsibility for personal health
Alcohol	Mental health
Physical activity	Social networks
Diet	Environment
Sexual health	Accidents
Substance abuse	Working environment

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Odense has many initiatives intended to promote the health of its citizens. For instance, our infrastructure helps to support a healthy lifestyle. There is a finely meshed network of paths in green areas that invite public exercise. Running has become incredibly popular and the paths are ideal for this purpose. The local newspaper organises jogging sessions and outdoor exercise equipment has been set up in selected locations which runners can use as part of their regimen.

Another example of backing physical activities is the municipal support to a number of fun runs arranged by organisations and clubs in Odense. The municipality puts facilities at the organizers disposal and in some of the runs a large number of employees from all departments in the municipality administration participate.



*From one of the fun runs*

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As previously mentioned, Odense is keenly focused on cycling. Odense's more than 510 kilometres of designated cycling tracks make it convenient to move about by bicycle. Riding a bicycle instead of driving a car benefits the environment, but cycling is also an important element in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The initiatives and campaigns launched by Odense over the years mean that a large percentage of the population ride a bicycle. For instance, 24% of all trips within the municipality are made by bicycle. This level is stable in Odense but is declining nationwide.

In Denmark, children learn to how to ride a bicycle at a young age. To encourage children to ride bicycles, Odense Municipality has made a dedicated effort over the years to create safe school routes and has launched various initiatives and campaigns focusing on children and cycling, exemplified by "All Children Cycle" and "Safe and Secure School Routes" in schools and children's bicycle/tricycle campaigns in kindergartens. As a result of these initiatives, 82% of all children cycle or walk to school from the third class upwards.

For many years, Odense Municipality has offered cycling courses for immigrant women who want to learn how to ride a bicycle. An ongoing electric bicycle campaign focuses on the motorists who live less than 5 km from work and encourages them to cycle to work instead of driving. Guided cycling tours are organised for elderly residents, and, in the nation-wide activity "We Cycle to Work" held every May, Odense has the highest per capita participation of any city in Denmark.



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In order to have a general impression of the citizens state of health, Odense Municipality makes with years interval a citizen health profile. A representative number of citizens from 13 years of age and up participate in a questionnaire survey, mailed or by internet. A health profile describes the state of health of the citizens as they describe it themselves. The tool gives a good impression of how the citizens themselves feel their health, what they can improve, if needed and so on. The health profile can be compared with similar information from the region or nationwide.

Mental health is also part of the Health Policy. To inspire residents to increase their feeling of peace of mind and harmony in their busy daily life, Odense Municipality is the first municipality in Denmark to implement a project called "Relax in Nature". Five short films and audio files have been prepared in collaboration with a meditation instructor. They instruct the user in how to perform outdoor exercises. The films and audio files are available at the municipality's website and can be downloaded from there. There is also a map showing selected suitable sites for relaxation.



*From the Waterfront Festival.*

## Strategic Planning

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We use a variety of administrative tools in our work to ensure efficient strategic planning and management based on clear political goals and strategies, and the Policy Concept is our point of departure.

The purpose of the Policy Concept is to ensure that we achieve the policies and strategies required and that their structure is uniform. It also ensures greater consistency and transparency between vision, policy and strategy, and our current policies and strategies have been prepared with the extensive involvement of politicians and citizens. The Policy Concept has four levels, illustrated in the pyramid below.

The top of the pyramid is the vision, charting the long-term direction in which we wish to head. The vision is converted into action through our policies. There are interdepartmental policies affecting all administrative units, such as the environmental policy and the public health policy. The City Council plays an active role in preparing the interdepartmental policies and is involved from the conception of an idea through to its final approval. But policies should also be viable for citizens, which is why the users of the area concerned are also actively involved in the process.

The level below the interdepartmental policies comprises the committee-based policies which specifically consider the target groups or the remit of the various administrative units. The interdepartmental policies also serve as an umbrella for all or part of the individual administrative unit's sphere of responsibility. The following are examples of current policies: Cultural Policy, Public Information Policy and the Senior Citizens Quality of Life Policy. Here, too, users and partners are involved in the process to create a sense of ownership and to ensure that the policies reflect strategic directions considered important by the local communities affected.

The level below the interdepartmental policies and committee-based policies consists of strategies prepared by the administrative unit. The purpose of the strategies is to "translate" or implement the policies in either a specific action area or for a well-defined user group – exemplified by the urban renewal strategy, the internet strategy and the user involvement strategy.

Policy concept in Odense





We wish to guarantee and highlight a clear connection between the visions inherent in the policies on the one hand and the administrative strategies and action plans on the other, and to be able to evaluate and follow up on the effects of our efforts. In Odense Municipality, contracts are drawn up for all directors and all Level 2 managers. To ensure that the political and strategic objectives are put into action. It also strengthens strategic development, planning and prioritisation and lays the groundwork for continuous follow-up, evaluation and control. Preparation and follow-up are carried out in accordance with a fixed yearly cycle which applies to the entire municipal administration.

Along side the policy and strategy pyramid we have the planning process. The vision for Odense is part of the municipality's Urban Planning Strategy – Odense's overarching strategy for planning and development in the years ahead. The strategic areas of the Urban Planning Strategy are part of the Municipal Development Plan, which in turn is implemented through local urban development plans. This ensures planning consistency between the vision and the individual local urban development plans.

Apart from the plans which we are legally bound to implement, Odense furthermore has a long tradition of introducing a kind of "intermediate" plans which often cross the traditional boundaries of the development plans. This is a very strong tool, both in securing up-to-date and coherent city planning but also for dialog between the municipality and the citizens. These plans may look at a certain area of town – for example the Inner City Plan or The Plan for the Harbour area. Another example is the very extensive Traffic and Mobility Plan which has as a goal to create a whole and integrated city centre with focus on urban life; to prompt cycling, walking, and the use of public transport. One of our political goals in relation to city planning is to "create a city for the people living in it" – to put people first instead of cars.



The well-being of the citizens is core to the development of Odense. An example is the urban life survey. Three times – in 1988, 1998 and most recently in 2008 – Odense Municipality has commissioned a “physical check-up” of the city centre in the form of an urban life survey. The ten-year interval between surveys makes it possible to obtain a clear developmental perspective. The reports were prepared by Gehl Architects together with Odense Municipality and are based on compiled data, analyses of urban spaces and activities and on censuses, interviews and questionnaire surveys of the people of Odense. The reports thoroughly examine how the city is perceived and experienced and give inspiration and concrete proposals for action as to how we can make the city a better place to live.

## **Conclusion**

Hans Christian Andersen said more than 150 years ago "To travel is to Live" - and that was what he did. Today, in his native town, we say To Play is to Live - and that is what we do. We wish to make Odense a modern sustainable fairy tale for the citizens and the people who come to visit us and we tell that fairy tale here.

