

Barcelona, Spain

Peter Nelson

The Complete
Integrated City



Aerial view of Barcelona
source: gettyimages.com



Barcelona is now widely known as one leader in innovative planning in the world. Internationally, it is celebrated for its accessible open space and walkability. It has survived the economic, environmental and social changes of the last decades through focusing upon the provision of great urban spaces that centralize activity on a variety of scales: city, neighborhood, and within each block. In short, Barcelona has been transformed into a city that provides an example of how to facilitate increasing density while maintaining a livable and relatively compact city.

Some of the guiding principles of Barcelona's urban planning include:

- Focusing the creation of public amenities in delapidated neighborhoods first,
- Orienting the city back to the Mediterranean Sea by creating access and usable beaches,
- Provide adequate public facilities to every neighborhood
- Reuse of brownfields sustainable planning,
- Restricting urban sprawl by focusing on redevelopment rather than new development,
- Reclaiming famous inner courtyards that act as open space within each block

"No one can survive merely by conservation. If there is no new construction, the city cannot stand; not even the old will endure.

*-Pasqual Maragall,
Mayor of Barcelona
1982-97*



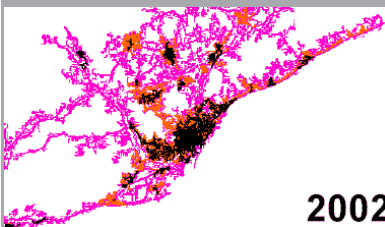
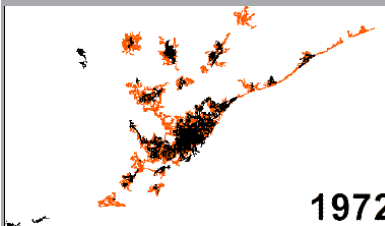
context
source: barcelona-home.com

City Statistics

City Population:
1,582,000 (2003)
City Area:
101 km²
Density Level:
14.9 people / km²

Governing bodies:
City of Barcelona
Barcelona City Council

Density growth



source: geographyfieldwork.com
barcelona-home.com



Context

The foundation for Barcelona's transformation has been the city's Eixample district, a series of 520 street blocks planned on a grid with major boulevards cutting through the pattern at 45 degree angles. The visionary urban planner Ildefons Cerdá worked on the design for twenty years and has been an example to planners ever since the 1860 plan was implemented. Its high quality architecture, attention to community green space on large and small scales, and ease of access have stood the test of time and still provide a city that people from around the world love to visit.

Essential Planning Timeline

1860- Walls surrounding Barcelona demolished to make way for Ildefons Cerdá's Plan for Urban Renewal

1975- End of Fraquismo and beginning of democracy

1976 - General Metropolitan Plan Implemented

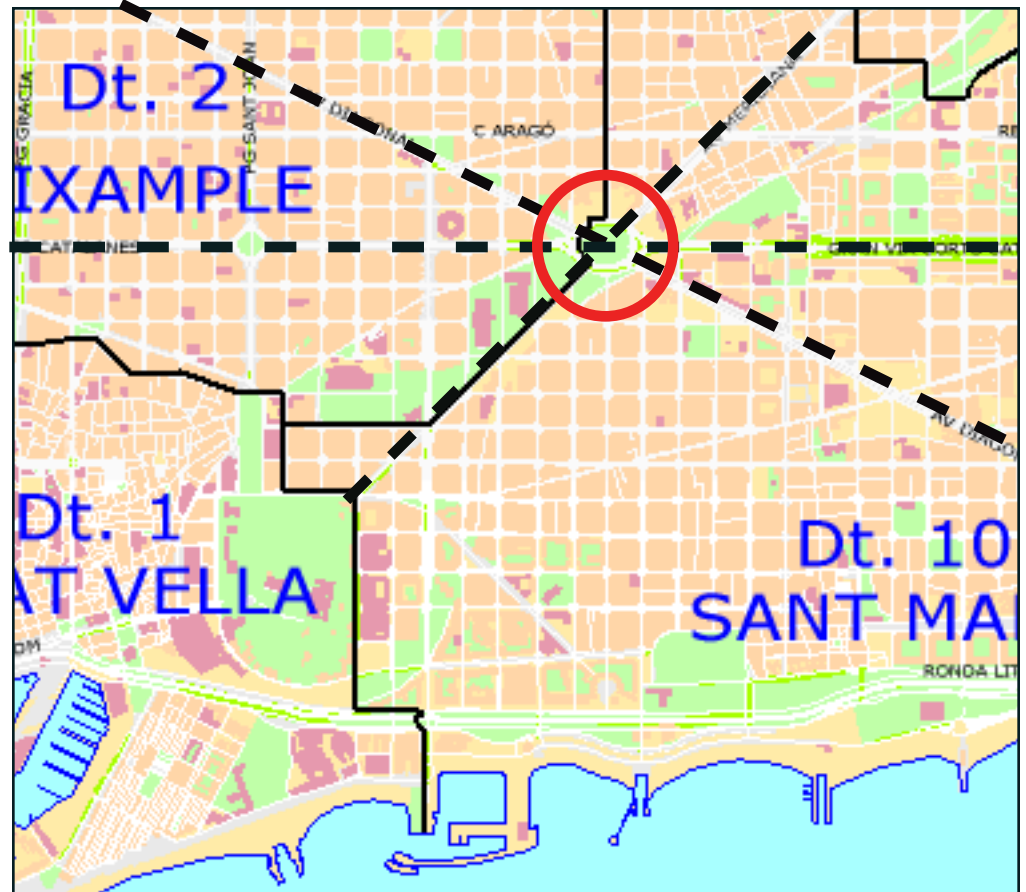
1979 - First democratic municipal elections were celebrated

1980's - City is transformed in preparation for the 1992 Olympics

1980 - Architect Oriol Bohigas arrived in the city council

1983 - The inauguration of public spaces started

1982-92 - More than 490 acres of park had been gained (while 40 years of Franco produced only 172 acres)



source: geographyfieldwork.com

"...getting the authorities to give us a set of traffic lights meant forty days of barricades and stopping cars coming into the district where four or five fatal accidents had taken place" -Avelina Perez

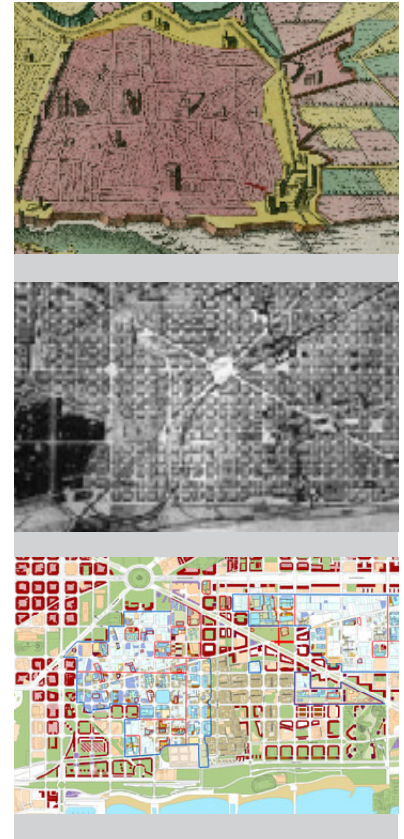
The Complete Integrated City

Urban Renewal

The major catalyst of the modern transformation of Barcelona in the eighties to the present was the 1992 Olympics. With the end of a long dictatorship known as Francoism, the city took advantage of its new found democracy as the Urban Social Movement began. Faced with serious problems of urban decay in both inner and peripheral districts, planners used the Games to gain enough funding to complete an amount of reconstruction that would take any city decades to accomplish.

Olympic facilities were built on neglected urban areas, with the Olympic Village, developed on brownfields close to the coast. The rail lines that cut and divided the city from the sea were opened and for the first time in its history, Barcelona has been able to turn and face the sea with pride. Six artificial beaches were created to handle the capacity of tourists that would be in the city for the upcoming Games.

This change was championed by one planner in particular, Oriol Bohigas, who used the Games as a springboard to built more than two hundred parks, plazas, schools, and other public facilities in Barcelona. Most of these amenities were inserted into derelict areas where crime was high. In one area in particular, El Rival, buildings were retrofitted to house a modern museum, police station, and other amenities.



Progression over three centuries
sources:
historiccities.huji.ac
www.cesca.es
<http://www.bcn.es/22@bcn/>



Olympic games 1992
source: preview.britannica.co.kr

"Barcelona is absolutely a world class city. From its architecture to its boulevards to its parks, it is a vast, diverse, center of culture and entertainment. It literally pulsates with energy." -Fred Kent (*Project for Public Spaces*)



Las Ramblas source: pps.org



Las Ramblas source: pps.org

Lessons Learned

Open city to waterfront

During the eighties, the city of Barcelona realized the value of their position on the Mediterranean. Until then, they had been dumping contaminants into the sea and making it unusable for the people. Also, there were rail lines that followed the shoreline and made a barrier from the city. They determined to redirect the rail lines and to create six artificial beaches in preparation for the Olympics.

Get your priorities straight

During the incredible revitalization in the eighties, the city prioritized the creation and reconstruction of public amenities. The city worked fast and was able to gain the approval of the community through smart planning.

Sustainable development

The topography in Barcelona has kept the city fairly compact. This has been beneficial for sustainability and has forced planners to look for creative ways to reuse much of the infrastructure. As heavy industry and shipping become less prevalent, the city has taken advantage of industrial sites for development. Right now much of the sea front is being claimed for a new high technology center with an emphasis on open space and parks.

Las Ramblas: One of Barcelona's great Boulevards

In a city known for great public spaces, Las Ramblas could be the greatest of them all. With a variety of cafes, shops, and markets, tourists are presented with endless entertainment. There are a huge number of pedestrians and people-watchers, and enough street performers and artists to attract even the local Catalans. About 1.5 kilometers long, Las Ramblas are really a series of three pedestrian-oriented boulevards that link the city to the waterfront. Its central pedestrian promenade is unique in that it is wide enough to be lined on either side by seating for restaurants, or a flower stand while leaving abundant space to fit hundreds of people. Towering street trees and adequate seating are also pluses.

The street is lined with five-to-seven-story buildings, and the central walkway is, on average, 60 feet wide. The sidewalks are usually less than 10 feet wide, encouraging walking in the center. Pedestrians have precedence while cars are restricted to narrow lanes on either side of the promenade and must accommodate pedestrians at every intersection.

Artists, musicians, and magicians all flock to Las Ramblas to try and awe and amaze those passing by. People are constantly strolling up and down the promenade at any time of day to catch something new and interesting. This is truly a great public space and is full of life and community. The lesson here is to rethink how we prioritize cars and start accommodating the pedestrian. This is what creates community.

Resources

City of Barcelona Urban Planning Site
<http://www.bcn.es/urbanisme/>

Project for Public Spaces
www.pps.org

Current Urban Planning in Barcelona
<http://www.bcn.es/22@bcn/engl/presentacion/>

Barcelona Forum 2004
<http://www.barcelona2004.org/eng/>

Urban Planning field study on Barcelona
<http://geographyfieldwork.com/barcelona.htm>

Maragall, Pasqual and Benach, Nuria and Bohigas, Oriol. Transforming Barcelona. New York: Routledge. 2004.

Frampton, Kenneth and Maragall, Pasqual and Bohigas, Oriol. Barcelona: Spaces and Sculptures. Barcelona. 1987.

Gehl, Jan and Gemzoe, Lars. New City Spaces. Copenhagen. 2001.



source: azuradec.typepad.com/photos/barcelona



Guadi source: crystalcanyons.net