



# INCLUDE

***Härnösand is growing***

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## 1.1 General Information

- Title of the Good Practice: Härnösand is growing
- Region / City / Municipality: Härnösand municipality
- Country: Sweden
- Contact Organisation: Härnösand municipality
- Contact Person & Role: Patrik Petterson, GIS developer
- Email / Website: <https://mittharnosand.se/harnosand-vaxer/harnosand-vaxer-ytan>
- Date of Implementation: (Ongoing 2024 -)

## 1.2 Summary of Härnösand is growing

“Härnösand is growing” make urban planning more inclusive and transparent by providing an accessible space where residents can easily understand and interact with urban planning information. In this example, a dedicated section was established in the public library to visualize upcoming projects and detailed development plans in a clear and engaging way. The approach combines a physical meeting point with digital innovation, using interactive 3D maps and visualizations that transform technical planning documents into user-friendly and visually appealing content.

The 3D map allows residents to virtually explore their neighborhood, view project proposals from different perspectives, and better understand the scale and impact of planned developments. This significantly reduces complexity and makes planning processes more transparent and easier for everyone to follow.

As a result, the initiative has led to broader citizen involvement, more constructive dialogue, and increased trust between the municipality and the community. People feel empowered to contribute ideas and engage in shaping their local environment, creating a stronger sense of shared responsibility. This practice offers a practical and replicable model for municipalities seeking to enhance democratic participation and to foster inclusive urban development.

## 1.3 Context and Challenges Addressed

- What territorial challenge or opportunity did the region face?

The region faces the territorial challenge of making complex urban planning processes and detailed development plans understandable to a broad audience. Traditional planning documents and maps were difficult for residents to interpret, creating a barrier to participation and limiting constructive dialogue between citizens and the municipality. This lack of accessibility risked reducing trust in decision-making and weakening democratic engagement.

- Why was digital innovation relevant in this context?

Digital innovation was essential because traditional planning documents and 2D maps in paper are often difficult for residents to interpret, creating barriers to understanding and participation. By introducing interactive tools and 3D visualizations, complex information could be translated into clear, intuitive formats that everyone can access. This not only improved transparency but also made the planning process engaging, fostering dialogue and collaboration between the municipality and the community. Digital solutions allowed residents to explore projects from different perspectives, understand their impact, and feel empowered to contribute, which is key for inclusive and democratic urban development

- What specific community or stakeholder needs were identified?

The identified needs were to make urban planning more understandable for all residents, with a special focus on reaching young people who are usually harder to engage. Citizens needed clear and visual information about projects and their impact. At the same time, politicians required better tools to fully understand what they are deciding on, and planners needed effective ways to present complex plans and involve the community early. Overall, the goal was to create an inclusive, digital solution that supports informed decisions, transparent communication, and meaningful participation, particularly among youth.

## 1.4 Objectives

- Youth empowerment
- Participatory planning

## 1.5 Description of the Practice

### 1.5.1 Activities Implemented

- Creation of a dedicated space in the public library to present ongoing and planned projects in an open and inviting environment.
- Development of digital tools, including interactive 3D maps and visualizations, to translate complex plans into user-friendly and engaging formats.
- Participatory engagement, offering opportunities for residents—especially young people—to explore plans, ask questions, and share feedback.
- Collaboration with planners and decision-makers to ensure that the tools provided relevant and accurate information, supporting both

political decision-making and practical planning work.

- Testing and adaptation of methods based on feedback from users to improve accessibility and impact.

### 1.5.2 Stakeholders Involved

- Local/regional authorities
- Civil society organisations
- Youth organisations
- Businesses / SMEs
- Universities / research centres
- Digital innovation hubs
- Other (please, name): citizens, residents

### 1.5.3 Resources Used

- Human resources

The practice relied on a multidisciplinary internal working group supported by the municipal science park, Technichus. Internally, the team included urban planners, a GIS developer, a youth democracy developer, and library staff. This diverse expertise ensured that the solution combined technical innovation, participatory methods, and accessible communication for different target groups.

- Technical resources

The implementation required a set of digital and hardware tools, including touchscreens and computers for interactive displays, 3D visualization software to create realistic and engaging models, and BrightSign players to manage and deliver digital content in the library space. These resources enabled the creation of an innovative and user-friendly environment for visualizing detailed plans and upcoming projects.

- Funding sources (EU, national, regional, private sector)

The practice was financed through a combination of European and internal funding. It received support from *URBACT Metacity* and *Interreg Aurora – Innovation in Urban Planning*, complemented by internal municipal resources. This mix of external and local funding ensured both the development of innovative digital solutions and their integration into everyday planning processes.

## 1.6 Thematic Categorisation (Tick all that apply)

### A. Digital Technologies

- Digital platforms for participation
- Open data solutions
- Digital twins / GIS / mapping tools
- AI supported
- Immersive tech (VR/AR) for community engagement
- Gamification
- Other (please, name)

### B. Co Creation Methodologies

- Digital platforms for participation
- Participatory design
- Living labs
- Citizen assemblies
- Hackathons
- Digital consultation tools
- Collaborative prototyping
- Other (please, name)

### C. Youth / Minority Groups Engagement

- Digi Tailored outreach to youth tal platforms for participation
- Inclusion of minority or marginalized communities
- Capacity-building for underrepresented groups
- Mentorship or ambassador programmes
- Co creation activities specifically targeting these groups
- Other (please, name)

## 1.7 Results and Impact

### 1.7.1 Qualitative Results

The initiative has significantly improved territorial governance by making urban planning processes more transparent, understandable, and inclusive.

Through the use of interactive 3D maps and visual tools, complex planning documents were translated into formats that residents could easily interpret. This reduced barriers to participation and allowed citizens, especially young people, who are often harder to engage, to take a more active role in shaping their local environment.

The practice also empowered decision-makers and planners by providing them with better tools for communication and visualization, ensuring that political decisions are made with a clearer understanding of the implications. Regular interaction in the dedicated library space fostered dialogue between residents, planners, and politicians, strengthening trust and accountability in the planning process.

Overall, the initiative created an inclusive platform that bridges the gap between technical planning and community needs, leading to more collaborative and informed urban development.

## 1.8 Innovation and Added Value

- What is innovative about the approach or technology?

The innovative dimension of this practice lies in combining a physical, highly accessible public space with cutting-edge digital tools to make urban planning transparent, understandable, and engaging for all. By integrating

interactive touchscreens, 3D visualization software, and BrightSign players within a library setting, the approach transforms technical planning documents into dynamic and visually immersive experiences. This allows residents to explore planned projects intuitively rather than interpreting static 2D drawings and text-heavy documents.

- How does it differ from traditional community engagement?

This approach differs from traditional community engagement by transforming complex and bureaucratic planning documents into clear, visual, and interactive formats. Conventional engagement often relies on static 2D maps, technical reports, and formal language, which are difficult for most residents to interpret and therefore limit meaningful participation.

In contrast, this practice uses interactive 3D visualizations, digital displays, and an accessible public space to make planning content intuitive and engaging. Instead of reading dense texts and interpreting technical maps, citizens can easily explore upcoming projects and understand their impact. This shift from passive information sharing to active exploration significantly lowers barriers to participation, making it easier for everyone, including young people and those without technical knowledge to engage in urban planning.

- What elements could inspire replication by other EU regions?

- Accessible physical location: Placing the engagement point in a public and familiar space, such as a library, lowers thresholds for participation.
- Use of digital visualization tools: Interactive 3D maps and visual content make complex planning information easy to understand and appealing to diverse audiences.
- Focus on hard-to-reach groups: Actively designing the solution to involve young people and other underrepresented groups ensures inclusiveness.
- Scalable and adaptable concept: The model can be implemented at different scales and customized to fit local contexts and resources.

## 1.9 Lessons Learned

- What worked well?

One of the key success factors was providing a physical and easily accessible space in a well-frequented public location, such as the library. This lowered the threshold for participation and created a welcoming environment for citizens who might not normally engage with urban planning.

Collaboration across different municipal functions also proved highly effective. By involving urban planners, GIS developers, youth engagement specialists, and library staff, the practice combined technical expertise with strong community outreach. This interdisciplinary approach ensured that the solution was both technically innovative and socially inclusive.

- What challenges were encountered?

One significant challenge arose when transitioning from a project-based initiative to an integrated, long-term practice. While the concept worked well during the project phase, it became more difficult to establish a systematic and continuous process for updating and displaying new projects. Much of the effort depended on a few motivated individuals rather than being embedded in a structured workflow across the organization.

Another challenge was the lack of a clear and easy mechanism for citizens to provide feedback. While the current setup successfully makes urban plans accessible and understandable, opportunities for residents to express opinions or contribute ideas remain limited. Developing an interactive feedback function, either on-site or digitally is identified as an important next step to ensure true two-way communication and stronger participatory planning.

- What would you do differently?

A key improvement would be to anchor the practice more broadly across the organization to ensure continuity and commitment beyond individual efforts. This would involve clearly communicating its value, particularly its link to strengthening democracy and improving transparency in decision-making.

We would also emphasize how early citizen dialogue can shorten planning processes by reducing misunderstandings and conflicts later on. Therefore, starting engagement at an earlier stage of projects would be a priority, making participation a proactive rather than reactive element in urban planning. By integrating these steps, the model could become more systematic, sustainable, and impactful over the long term.

## 1.10 Transferability and Scalability

- Which aspects can be replicated elsewhere?

Several aspects of this practice are highly transferable and can be adapted by other municipalities or regions. The combination of a physical meeting point in an accessible location, such as a library, with digital visualization tools provides a simple yet effective model for making complex planning information understandable. This approach is scalable: starting with basic digital displays and expanding to advanced features such as interactive 3D maps, depending on local resources and needs.

The principle of combining early citizen engagement with innovative communication tools can be applied in both urban and rural contexts. Additionally, the structured collaboration between planners, communication staff, and youth engagement specialists offers a replicable method for inclusive governance. Finally, the flexibility to integrate feedback mechanisms means that other regions can build on the concept to suit their digital infrastructure and participatory goals.

- What conditions (resources, policy environment, partnerships) are needed for transfer?

- **Resources:** Access to basic digital technology such as screens, computers, and visualization software is essential. A suitable physical space such as a library or community hub should also be available to ensure accessibility.
- **Human Capacity:** A multidisciplinary team including urban planners, GIS or visualization specialists, and community engagement staff is required to combine technical expertise with participatory methods.
- **Policy Environment:** A clear political and organizational commitment to transparency, citizen participation, and democratic innovation is necessary, along with strategies that support early engagement in planning processes.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration with local science parks, universities, or technology providers can provide technical support and foster innovation. Strong cooperation between municipal departments and decision-makers is critical for anchoring the initiative in regular workflows.

## 1.11 Links and Supporting Materials

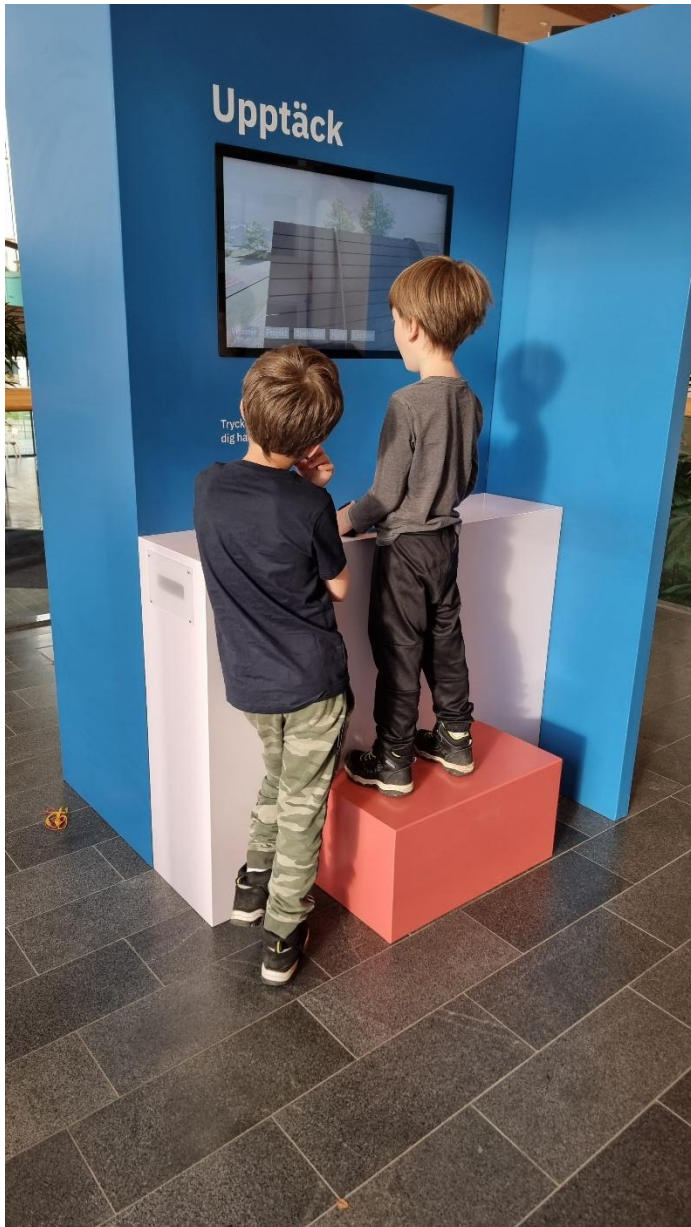
Website

-<https://mittharnosand.se/en/harnosand-evolves/harnosand-vaxer---rummet>

-<https://urban.arcgis.com/?id=b4fb202ba2394f979b39540efae7d1f5>

- Video - <https://youtu.be/pWNO5itRe7>





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