

AN ADVISORY SERVICES PROGRAMME REPORT

European Quarter Brussels, Belgium



Urban Land
Institute

European Quarter Brussels, Belgium

A Strategy for a Revitalised District

15–17 May 2006
An Advisory Services Programme Report

ULI—the Urban Land Institute
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About ULI—the Urban Land Institute

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to

- Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue, and problem solving;
- Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both built and natural environments;
- Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media; and

- Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 38,000 members from 90 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

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About ULI Advisory Services

The goal of ULI's Advisory Services Programme is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programmes, and policies. Since 1947, this programme has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalisation, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organisations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of

financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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Acknowledgements

On behalf of ULI, the panel would like to thank its sponsors, the European Quarter Fund, managed by the King Baudouin Foundation, especially Alain Deneef and Yves Remy who framed the context of the assignment and worked tirelessly to ensure that the panel had all it needed to provide the sponsors—and the city—with practical recommendations. In addition, Bernard Cardon de Lichtbuer and Maria-Laure Roggemans were invaluable resources for the panel and shared their knowledge of the Quartier and the Maelbeek area of the city.

The panel would also like to thank the more than 20 business leaders and government leaders who took the time to meet with the panel and share their thoughts, hopes, and dreams for the Quartier Européen and the Maelbeek.

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Foreword: The Panel's Assignment

The European Quarter of Brussels has been evolving for almost 50 years. With the announcement that strategic European Union (EU) offices would be placed in Brussels came changes—some dramatic—to the Maelbeek area of the city. Quiet residential neighbourhoods were transformed into large office complexes. Infrastructure needed to support thousands of office workers was put in place. A large influx of workers from all over Europe and the world came to this once upscale area of the city.

Although the prestige of having the EU offices locate in the city was welcome, the changes to the urban fabric of the Maelbeek area were not always in the city's best interest. Areas of the city became “ghost towns” at night after the office workers went home. Security concerns resulted in road closures and loss of a friendly pedestrian feel. Intimate gathering places were lost.

Several residential projects are now planned for the area in the hopes of bringing people back to this part of the city; however a real—and, in the panel's opinion, deserved—concern exists that the other services necessary to support the residential community will not be there and the area will not be transformed.

The Panel's Assignment

The European Quarter Fund asked ULI, through its Advisory Services Programme, to recommend ways to encourage and promote a range of uses, especially retail, along the Chaussée d'Etterbeek, the main thoroughfare through the area, and to provide insights on how to better plan the public space in the area. These activities are hoped to transform the European Quarter from a mix of uses that do not complement each other into a community that serves the EU, the city, and most important, the residents of Brussels. The panel came up with a strategy for creating a vibrant

community in the European Quarter. Specifically, the panel was asked to provide input for managing the retail functions of the real estate development along the Chaussée d'Etterbeek between the Square Marie-Louise and the Place Jourdan.

The ULI Process

Prior to coming to Brussels, each of the panellists received and reviewed briefing materials prepared by the foundation. The panel also received additional briefings by the sponsoring organisation, followed by a tour of the European Quarter. The panel met with community leaders and business owners, whose knowledge of and passion for Brussels were as inspirational as they were informative. This input, as well as the panellists' best professional judgment, helped the panel prepare its findings and recommendations, which were presented on 18 May 2006 to the sponsor and its invited guests. This report is a summary of those findings and recommendations and reflects the panel's presentation.

Key Recommendations

The following are the key recommendations developed by the panel. They are detailed within this report.

- *Create a vision.* All great plans begin with a strong vision. The panel sets forth recommendations on how to create a strong vision for the Chaussée d'Etterbeek and the European Quarter—and what this vision could potentially look like—so that all interests are represented. Four neighbourhood sections are described—the Café District, the Quartier du Parc, Downtown Europe, and Quartier Marie-Louise. These neighbourhoods are all strung together by the Chaussée d'Etterbeek like pearls on a necklace.
- *Create a destination.* For the European Quarter to become a place where people want to live,

work, and enjoy recreation, the area must be thought of as a destination, not just a mixture of small places. Creating a destination requires a vision for the area that is in keeping with the various agendas for the area. Improved and integrated mobility along the Chaussée d'Etterbeek is critical to creating this destination.

- *Form a new partnership.* The panel recognised that various—and sometimes competing—agendas exist for the Chaussée and the quarter. The panel proposes that all the players in the quarter form a partnership that will set and guide the vision for the quarter and that they work together to implement the vision, instead of each group working in isolation.

- *Implement the vision.* All good plans remain just that—plans—unless they are implemented. The panel recommends several steps for implementing its vision, including short-, medium-, and long-term actions to be taken. A management structure for implementing the plan that involves all the partners is also proposed.

Challenges and Opportunities

As the panel worked through the assignment, it started by identifying several challenges and opportunities related to the quarter and trying to make this area of the city a vibrant community.

Challenges

The challenges the panel saw are briefly discussed in the following sections.

- *Undeveloped environment for living in the European Quarter.* The panel noted that several development opportunities had existed to bring “community” back to this area, but they were not used to their fullest potential.
- *Little integration of Brussels and the EC—physically, environmentally, socially, and culturally.* The panel believes that the European Commission (EC) and its thousands of workers and visitors are not fully integrated into the city. The EC is a visitor, not a member of the community, and this separateness needs to change.
- *Competing agendas.* Because a number of entities are involved with the regeneration of the study area, the emergence of competing agendas is natural. The challenge is to ensure that the agendas, while different, are complementary.
- *Development led by demand and not by a plan.* In the past, development projects, especially office projects, have been executed because the EC or an organisation supporting the EC has needed more office space. These buildings were not built with a strategy in mind, and the absence of a plan has led to a disconnected development pattern.
- *Erosion of civic identity and image in the European Quarter.* The European Quarter is no longer the quiet neighbourhood it had been more than 50 years ago and is not just the area where all the EC offices are. People do not identify the European Quarter as someplace special or unique in a positive way.
- *Depopulation and loss of retail in the European Quarter.* As the neighbourhood has been eroded by the building of office space, neighbourhood retail to serve what few residents remain has also decreased.
- *Security concerns.* The panel realises that having so many EU buildings in an area raises security concerns. This reality needs to be incorporated into any planning in the European Quarter as a whole.

Opportunities

Along with the challenges that the panel found, it saw opportunities for redeveloping the area’s image.

- *Encourage the emerging partnership among the players.* As discussed later in this report, several organisations are involved with the redevelopment of the European Quarter and along the Chaussée d’Etterbeek. The time has come to accelerate these emerging partnerships and capitalise on the strengths each player brings to the project.
- *Leverage the city’s power, assets, and aspirations in the partnerships with the EC to reverse negative trends.* The panel feels that the planners for this “new” area of town have the opportunity to leverage their authority for planning within the European Quarter to invite the EC into the planning process and help reverse the negative trends that have been occurring in the district.
- *Create entertaining, people-oriented, and human-scale places to live, shop, and play as a counterpoint to the grand spaces of the European Quarter.* The panel sees this area of the city as a people-oriented district that can meet the needs of the EC while creating a vibrant place to live, work, and play.

Setting the Scene

To be able to understand what is possible in the European Quarter, the panel needed to briefly look at what has happened over the last 50 years. These two photos show how much the once-residential district has been changed, in essence eroded, by the construction of office buildings to support the EC.

What was once a quiet collection of neighbourhoods is now a cut-up office district with little connectivity. The EU infrastructure has been inserted with little consideration for how it fits in with the existing neighbourhoods, streets, or development pattern, as shown in the photographs on the facing page. However, the panel believes that the role of the EU in Brussels is changing, as the panel has illustrated in Figure 1.

Given this background, the panel developed the following vision statement for the European Quarter and hopes that it is adopted by the planners of this area:

Consolidating and showcasing the capital of Europe through a public/private initiative that delivers a superb built environment and transit connections that enrich the environment for living, working, and visiting in the European Quarter

Characteristics of the Panel's Vision for the European Quarter

With this vision statement in mind, the panel developed a plan for what it sees the European Quarter looking like in 2026, which includes the following characteristics.

Embrace the Role of Brussels as the Capital of Europe

In 2008, Brussels will observe 50 years as the EU capital. The panel believes that from 2008 on, Brussels should consider itself *the* capital of Europe. No one else can claim this title, and little chance probably exists of the EU's moving all its

infrastructure out of Brussels. The city needs to embrace this role and celebrate it.

Use the Opportunity to Create the Human Face of the EU

In the past, the city has merely tolerated the EU and its offices and infrastructure. The time has come to showcase and celebrate the role Brussels plays in the EU and use it to the city's advantage. The panel believes the city can be the public showcase for Europe as well as attract at least one private iconic development, such as a tower office or mixed-use building.

Activate and Connect Existing Public Spaces

Currently, the few public spaces that remain in the district are isolated and unconnected. In order to re-create a vibrant district that will allow and invite people to move through the district, these public spaces—parks, squares, train stations, and the like—need to be brought back to life and made welcoming to people who work in and visit the district.

Capture the Vision with a Clear Brand

A clear vision for the district needs to be developed. The panel has proposed some suggestions; perhaps others may be more in keeping with what city and local officials would like. The point is that the city needs to have an agreed-upon vision for the district as well as a strategic plan for implementation, including roles and responsibilities of the various players and options for funding.

Achieve a Critical Mass of Retail and Residential Development

Without residential and the retail to attract residents and office workers, the district will continue to be a “dead space” after working hours and on weekends. People need a reason, other than work, to come to the district and make it a vibrant destination.



European Quarter 1950 (far left). The area originally had distinct street patterns and connected neighbourhoods.



European Quarter 1997 (left). With the construction of office infrastructure for the EU, several neighbourhoods were removed and the connections were lost.

Build on the Quarter's Position as a Strategic Cross Road

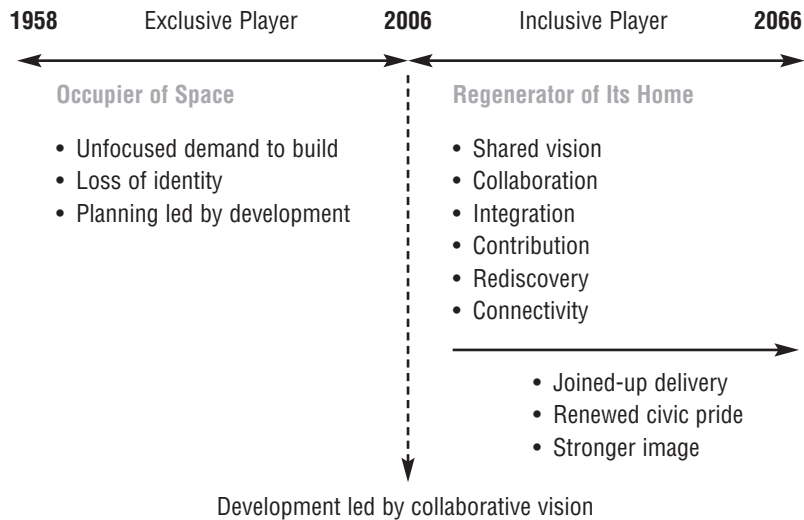
The city in general and this district in particular are at a cross road that will help define the role of the district and the city in the EU. The time has come to capitalise on this position in the city and the European Community.

Create the Destination

For the European Quarter to become a place where people want to live, work, and play, its recreation as a destination is important. The following are principles for achieving this new sense of place.

- *Integrate the European Quarter into Brussels.* Do not view the EU and the EC as an entity to deal with. The European Quarter should be a critical part of the city, just as other districts in the city are.
- *Capture and brand a strong vision.* Every successful city or district of a city has an established brand that started with a strong vision. Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., the Left Bank in Paris, and SoHo in New York City are examples of this branding.
- *Align all agendas.* This part of the city evokes varied needs and desires, and all the players need to continue to work together to create a strong and vibrant district meeting all those needs.
- *Establish a 2026 organisational framework and create a public/private business plan.* For anything to move forward in the district, a description is needed of who will do what to meet the brand goals for the district as well as a business plan for both the public and private sectors. This plan will be the roadmap for meeting the goals.
- *Fill in the missing pieces and bring life with retail.* Retail is the one use that will bring life to

Figure 1
Changing Role of the European Community



the district and that can fill in those areas that are now empty. It will attract residential development as well as provide office workers with a reason to stay in the district after the workday is done.

- *Provide integrated mobility.* People need to be able to move along the Chaussée d’Etterbeek, not just in a car but on foot, on bicycle, and on public transport. The plans for this corridor must provide for multiple transportation modes.
- *Find an ongoing champion.* Every successful regeneration project has a champion—someone or a small group who is willing to ensure that the plan comes to fruition. This person or small group has the political power and will to get things done and keep the project moving forward.

Forming a New Partnership

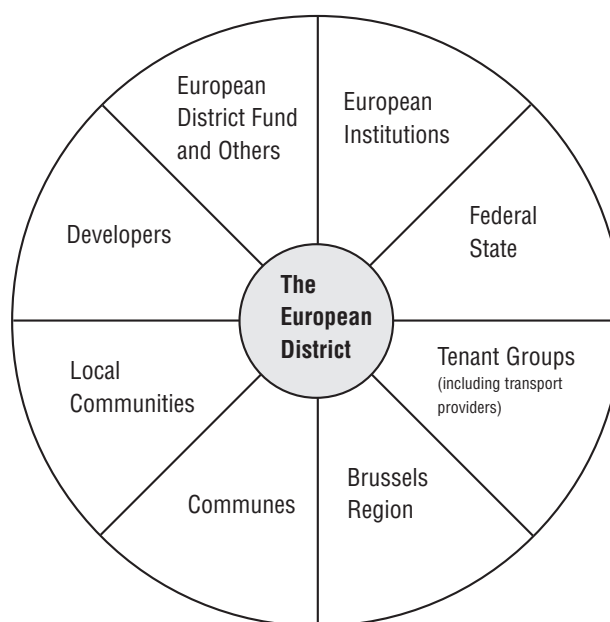
The panel believes now is the time to form a new partnership to realise the regeneration of the European Quarter. This partnership's membership is illustrated in Figure 2.

The following are the objectives of the new partnership:

- Setting the vision for the district;
- Agreeing to the plan and implementation strategy;
- Agreeing on the roles and responsibilities of each partner;
- Closing the technical gaps in policy and permits that currently exist;
- Setting up the management framework;
- Delivering an exemplary public/private partnership within an agenda of mixed-use regeneration worthy of the capital of Europe;
- Developing public realm guidelines; and
- Continually refining the plan.

The partners need to meet on a regular basis and continue to work together to refine their vision and the path for creating a vibrant European Quarter.

Figure 2
A New European District Partnership



Creating the Vision

The panel has developed several recommendations for the sponsors to create the “European Quarter” they desire. Implementation of these recommendations will help build a new destination in Brussels.

Branding and Image Building

The first step, as discussed previously, is to create the brand and image for the district. The following are the key steps when creating an image for a district:

- The vision needs to be clearly understood and agreed to by all partners.
- Branding needs sufficient time to launch in 2008. The panel recommends 2008 because it is the 50th anniversary of the EU.
- Continued belief in the branding of the district as a fantastic opportunity for Brussels and a genuine tourist destination—what is often called a USP (unique selling point)—is imperative.
- Truly integrated public/private partnerships are needed to demonstrate a united approach and help people believe that the vision can be achieved.
- A close working partnership among all primary partners is critical to the success of the redevelopment.

Context Issues

For the regeneration plan to work and for people to accept it, certain “context issues” need to be articulated and put into the plan. The panel believes the following are the key context issues that need to be considered when developing the regeneration plan for the European Quarter:

- The delivery framework needs to show how public spaces work together to establish a unified area.

- Shared spaces between retailers and residential buildings should be used for car parking. This strategy will help minimise the land dedicated to car parking.
- A public art programme should be linked to a European “walk of art” that highlights the artistic achievements—past and present—of all of Europe.
- Lighting schemes should highlight the beautiful architecture in the quarter.
- Opportunity spaces need to be identified and exploited. These areas can draw people to the district who will then be enticed to stay. For example, an observation deck on an iconic building would be a much-used addition to the district. New park connections described earlier will draw people through the district and take them from one area to another. Redundant EC buildings in the quarter can provide opportunities for redevelopment to residential or mixed use and need to be inventoried and evaluated.

Capitalise on Stepping Stones and “Public Rooms”

The panel sees the potential for creating stepping stones throughout the district that will take people from place to place and allow them to enjoy the journey along the way. The “public rooms,” or parks, serve as anchors throughout the district. The plan at top right on the opposite page illustrates one way of achieving this aim.

Create Human-Scale Promenades and Cross Roads

As discussed earlier, this area is a cross road and should be treated as such. This emphasis will help facilitate pedestrian movement through the district and create a sense of place. The second plan on the next page demonstrates this principle.

The panel sees the Chaussée d'Etterbeek redefined as the Vallée de l'Europe and becoming the human link between Europe and Brussels. It is a green link between the public spaces to the north (Square Marie-Louise) and the south (Square Forti dei Marmi). To achieve this redefinition, the traffic must be tamed by narrowing the street and converting it to two-way traffic. This scheme will result in reinforcing four neighbourhoods of Chaussée d'Etterbeek: Quartier Marie-Louise, Downtown Europe, Quartier du Parc, and Café District.

The Vallée de l'Europe will create “stepping stones” along the Chaussée and support two anchors for Downtown Europe: the Showcase of Europe and an iconic tower—both discussed in greater detail later in this report. Public infrastructure investment will be needed to create the environment for retail and residential, and public guidelines will have to be put in place to shape underused buildings for residential, retail, restaurants, and services. The panel also recommends that the appropriate entities explore the possibility of opening the stream to create a water feature along the valley.

Several negatives must be overcome along the Chaussée. For example, the dark and unwelcoming train station entrance, the fast-moving traffic, and the poorly maintained open space and drab architecture do not make the future Vallée de l'Europe. New design guidelines and standards for redevelopment along the Chaussée can be used to change this image.

Creating the Environment

The success of the district will depend on creating the right environment. It is more than retail services, transport, and infrastructure: the entire district must be viewed as a unit. “Tout ensemble” is important. The proper environment is one that is designed for people and reinforces pedestrian itineraries. The stepping stones that draw people through that were discussed earlier in the report will help create the proper environment. They will create an environment that will allow for continuous activity at a human scale. As the retail is developed, the storefronts need to be developed



The panel believes that building stepping stones along the Chaussée is critical to creating a strong destination in this area.



Human-scale promenades along the proposed Vallée de l'Europe and the Promenade des Parcs will draw people to and through the revitalised district.

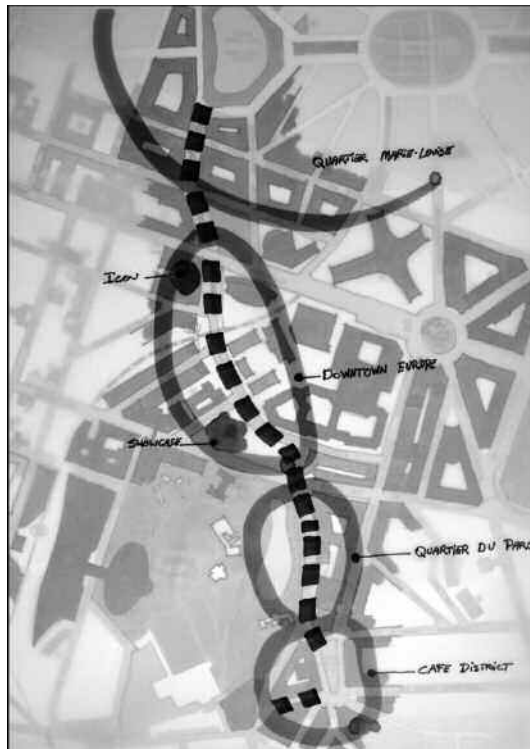
in such a way that they are inviting and draw people in.

Design Review

One way to control how the district will look is to institute enforceable design standards. Although design standards exist, the panel believes they should be strengthened and design review incorporated as part of the development approval process. Continuity of the pedestrian experience along the streets in the district is an important point to emphasize. The panel believes that encouraging design of spaces suitable for retail is also important, including access for services and utilities and large window displays. Varied store sizes will help achieve an interesting street front.

The panel recommends that the ground floors of new buildings be built with flexible designs to accommodate retail: a four-meter minimum height will achieve this goal. As part of the master plan, two pedestrian promenades where retail nodes

The panel proposes four distinct neighbourhoods: Quartier Marie-Louise, Downtown Europe, Quartier du Parc, and the Café District.



are developed will help meet the desire for a vibrant community. The panel also feels that additional retail, if supported by the market, can be encouraged on adjacent streets, and design standards should allow for that. Creating a design guideline document for public spaces is also critical.

Revitalise Four Distinct Neighbourhood Segments

The panel identified four distinct neighbourhood segments in the European Quarter: Downtown Europe, Quartier Marie-Louise, Quartier du Parc, and Café District, as illustrated above. The following describes what the panel sees for each of these neighbourhood segments. The currently planned projects, although not described in great detail, are expected to fit into the panel's vision.

Downtown Europe

This is the densest and most important part of the Chaussée. It provides an opportunity for vertical mixed use and the highest-density residential uses. The panel sees continuous retail frontage in this

area that should be anchored by an iconic mixed-use tower to the north and a mixed-use cultural and entertainment showcase to the south. To achieve this goal, entry points from the metro, train, Rue de la Loi, and Chaussée d'Etterbeek must be enhanced.

The panel believes it will be necessary to narrow the Chaussée and widen the sidewalks. There should be two Chaussée cross roads—grand and formal (at Rue de la Loi) and human-scaled and fun (at Rue Belliard). This change will require special attention under the Rue de la Loi and at the train tracks. Enhancement of pedestrian links to surrounding neighbourhoods is also essential.

Two key projects need to be developed in Downtown Europe: the Cultural Showcase and an iconic tower. The Showcase of European Culture and Entertainment is the living room of Europe: it needs to be accessible, open, fun, and engaging. It should celebrate Brussels as the capital of Europe and provide an entertaining place for residents, tourists, and employees of the EC and other businesses in the area. It should also be a showcase for European culture and entertainment, with European foods, products to buy, performing and visual arts, children's arts, and community meeting places.

The panel envisions this showcase as having constantly changing information and exhibits from all 232 regions of Europe. It should anchor the new pedestrian cross roads of the European Quarter and be an open, transparent, and engaging street presence along the Chaussée and Rue Belliard. The showcase should also be an extension of Parc Léopold with an animated fountain and integrate Parc Jean Rey with the showcase for outdoor activities and dining. This area can combine high-density residential uses with significant retail; however, the viability of this plan must be confirmed by a market study. The showcase is a publicly-owned site and provides a great opportunity for public/private partnership with the EC.

The second anchor for Downtown Europe is the skyline icon. The panel suggests a signature, mixed-use tower at the intersection of the Rue de la Loi and Chaussée d'Etterbeek, perhaps on the current Crowne Plaza site. This iconic tower is an opportunity to link the "upper level" (the EC buildings)

with the “lower level” (Brussels neighbourhoods). The tower should include residential, office, and retail uses.

In general, the panel suggests 5.000 to 10.000 square metres of specialty shopping opportunities that must be linked between levels and have true transit-related retail connections. Physical improvements are needed under the Rue de la Loi and at the train tracks to make this linkage a reality. Wider sidewalks lined with retail kiosks, better lighting, murals, and glass noise barriers are all ways to create a continuous and enjoyable experience for the pedestrians in this area.

Quartier du Parc

This neighbourhood extends Parc Léopold to the east side of the Chaussée. The panel believes it should be intensively landscaped on the east side. It is a possible location for small interactive monuments and memorials for those who have worked to create the idea of a unified Europe. It is important to screen the backs of buildings and parking to make this an inviting place. Few opportunities for retailing exist, except for the property at the north end.

Café District

A thriving café society exists around Place Jourdan, and physical improvements in this area will strengthen businesses. The panel suggests extending improvements along the pedestrian-oriented Chaussée de Vaure, which needs upgrading. It is also important to encourage cafés to spread south to the Forti dei Marmi in line with demand. The panel suggests that an underground car park be put in the Place Jourdan, covered by a park and market.

Quartier Marie-Louise

This elegant residential quarter is undergoing regeneration. The magnificent formal park needs to be brought to a higher standard in the panel's opinion. Limited specialised retail as the market demands could be encouraged in this area. A future opportunity exists to create mixed-use residential/office/retail buildings across from the Crowne Plaza hotel and the Jardin de la Vallée de Maelbeek to help anchor this neighbourhood. The panel believes that physical enhancement will strengthen this residential location.

Types of Retail

Retail will be a critical component of the regenerated European Quarter. However, a complete market assessment is needed to determine the appropriate retail configuration. In the panel's preliminary judgment, a need exists for neighbourhood-serving retail and restaurants throughout the area. The Downtown Europe district has more of a mix of cultural retail, neighbourhood retail, office-serving retail, tourist retail, and transit retail with restaurants as well as quick casual food. In the Café District, the panel believes a mix of cafés, restaurants, bars, and neighbourhood shops is appropriate. In the Quartier Marie-Louise the panel envisions limited specialty retail for restaurants, arts, and antiques. The panel also believes a potential for regional retail is present, which will come out in the market study.

Implementing the Vision

No vision is worth anything without an implementation strategy—a plan for getting it done. This section recommends ways the sponsors and their partners can move from planning and creating visions to realising the vision for the European Quarter.

Three Key Steps

Three steps are involved with implementation: validation with data, creation of the delivery plan, and structuring of the framework that outlines how to “deliver” the vision.

Validation

Validation includes a business plan that shows what the steps are, who will be responsible, and how each will be funded. Validation also involves pooling all knowledge and research on the area to make sure the plan will work and holding a series of workshops to encourage dialogue and exchange among all the players.

Creation of the Delivery Plan

The business plan identifies costs of delivering the vision and allocates financial responsibilities. The delivery plan includes how to formally commission new research that is needed to implement the plan, such as a market study, an environmental impacts assessment, and traffic studies.

Delivery Framework

The delivery framework shows how things will happen. It describes the infrastructure needs to be addressed to prioritise development. Vision and development should drive infrastructure solutions, not the other way around. For example, roads should not be put in place and then development placed on them. The placement of roads should depend on how the development will look according to the vision. As with most urban regeneration projects, the public sector will most likely deliver infrastructure needed for this project.

Short-, Medium-, and Long-Term Actions

All projects, no matter how small or how large, are easier to accomplish if thought of in terms of short-, medium-, and long-term actions. This approach makes the project or projects seem less overwhelming and more “doable.” The following sections describe what the panel believes are the short-, medium-, and long-term actions needed to realise the vision for the European Quarter.

Short-Term Actions

The following are short-term actions that the panel believes can be implemented immediately to achieve the strategy laid out in this report.

Focus on key sites to deliver the vision. It is important to start at critical points within the vision and learn from initial projects and processes. What works and what does not? The panel identifies a public and private project to start the regeneration of the European Quarter. The public project is the Van Maerlant site. The panel believes the public sector should not sell this site because it is the only public chance to affect the quarter. It is also the best opportunity for joint initiative among all the players—the EU, federal representatives, the regions, and the communes. This is the area that will deliver the Showcase of Europe described earlier as well as more than 200 residential units. It is linked to Parc Léopold, an important public space.

A private project that can help deliver the vision is an iconic tower (retail, office, restaurant, city viewing deck) that the panel supports for the Crowne Plaza site and which is described earlier in this report. This site is one option, and other more viable options should also be considered.

Additional short-term actions. The panel believes the sponsors also can take the following short-

term actions to show that things are happening in the area and that change is coming.

- Activate parks with reasons for people to stay and enjoy them by placing kiosks, benches, and entertainment.
- Install public art promoting the story and history of the district that will help attract people and beautify the area.
- Use way finding and signage for the new district, such as brown signs and lighting, as a relatively quick and low-cost action to show an immediate effect.
- Amend the PRAS to allow more retail. The panel heard that the city code limits retail in the district. This fact needs to be investigated and amended as quickly as possible.
- Hold EU-wide design competitions for the two key project sites—the European Showcase and an iconic tower—to help bring attention to them.

Medium-Term Actions

In the medium term, the sponsor and its partners need to begin evaluating the major infrastructure needs for the district. Impact assessments and funding needs should be explored. The pedestrian infrastructure, such as streetscaping, benches, and other things that make the area pedestrian-friendly should be installed and paid for with money from the management organisation (described later in this report).

Another medium-term action item is to explore the possibility of bringing the canal that runs through the “valley” back to the surface as a water feature. Although this action will not be inexpensive, it may in the long term add value to the area. In the medium term, the feasibility of this action can be explored.

Long-Term Actions

Longer-term actions tend to be less concrete and depend on the results of the shorter-term actions. Recommended long-term actions for the European Quarter include allowing building flexibility for future uses to include ground-floor retail as a new downtown neighbourhood emerges. This will help the Chaussée d’Etterbeek become part of a mixed-use urban neighbourhood.

Incentivising Development

For the study area to undergo regeneration, development will need incentives. Development demand is changing and will continue to change. The 10.000 square metres of office needed in the past is now up to 100.000 square metres. Because the “Brussels Model” has been development-led, not plan-led, trust among the affected parties is eroding. Restrictive retail policies, inflexible developer response, and single-purpose building designs have led to less-than-inspired development in the area. The time has now come to change that situation. A retail policy that reflects the likely demand is needed. Developers need to develop loose-fit buildings that can respond to the market, allowing for retail as the demand comes online. The EC needs to update its Blue Book for development.

Because of the changing land use needs in the district, incentives for converting abandoned EC offices back to residential uses need to be implemented in the European Quarter and designed so they can be applied throughout all of Brussels. This flexibility will allow the sponsor and its partners to prepare for anticipated residential demand as the district is redeveloped.

A Management District for the New European Quarter

To ensure that the plans and vision for the district are actually implemented, the panel recommends the formation of a management district. A management district is a geographically-defined area that offers high-quality management of the area to deliver better-than-normal levels of service and user satisfaction.

The management district is responsible for security, cleaning, maintenance, lighting, landscaping, public art, exhibitions, events programming, and development coordination in the district. The staff take care of all of these aspects.

Participants include all the stakeholders: the EC, the federal government, the relevant communes, and the occupiers. Each of the parties contributes to the operating budget of the district. Occupiers contribute on a square metre or unit basis. Commercial occupiers contribute principal costs.

A management district establishes standards of public space to glue regeneration projects together. It sustains the built standard for the area and overcomes fragmented developer involvement. It provides a unifying force in the regeneration of the district. It also results in more than “normal” levels of public care. It sets the benchmark for the city and creates an exemplary template for the EC to lead with their ongoing Europe-wide regeneration initiative.

Conclusion

The panel was impressed with the efforts to date to begin the planning for redevelopment along the Chaussée d'Etterbeek specifically and the European Quarter in general. It also believes that the time has arrived to put into action what has been in the planning stages. The panel hopes the recommendations in this report will move the sponsors forward in their desires to regenerate the Chaussée d'Etterbeek and the European Quarter into a vibrant neighbourhood that celebrates the entire EU and Brussels' role as the European capital.

The key recommendations that the panel developed are summarized as follows:

- *Create a vision.* All great plans begin with a strong vision. The panel sets forth recommendations on how to create a strong vision for the Chaussée d'Etterbeek and the European Quarter—and what this vision could potentially look like—so that all interests are represented. Four neighbourhood sections are described—the Café District, the Quartier du Parc, Downtown Europe, and the Quartier Marie-Louise. These neighbourhoods are all strung together by the Chaussée d'Etterbeek like pearls on a necklace. The Chaussée d'Etterbeek then becomes the Vallée de l'Europe and the focal point for the district.
- *Create a destination.* For the European Quarter to become a place where people want to live, work, and play, the area must be thought of as a destination, not just a mixture of small places. Creating this destination requires a vision for the area that is in keeping with the various agendas for the area. Improved and integrated mobility along the Chaussée d'Etterbeek is critical to creating this destination.
- *Form a new partnership.* The panel recognised that various—and sometimes competing—agendas exist for the Chaussée and the quarter. The panel proposes that all the players in the quarter form a partnership that will set and guide the vision for the quarter and work together to implement the vision, instead of each group working in isolation.
- *Implement the vision.* All good plans remain just that—plans—unless they are implemented. The panel recommends several steps for implementing its vision, including short-, medium-, and long-term actions to be taken. A management structure for implementing the plan involving all the partners is also proposed.

The panel believes its recommendations have several benefits:

- They put people first, not buildings.
- They make the European Quarter more liveable.
- They create a place where people want to be.
- They set the framework for successful residential retail and services.
- They achieve more-sustainable real estate value.
- They provide the design dividend: higher sales, higher rent, higher sale prices, higher real estate returns.
- They create dialogue between Brussels and the EC.
- They provide an implementation strategy that is market-based as well as enlightened urban policies.
- They are achievable in phases, beginning in the short term.
- They deliver real mixed-use integration.
- They create a prototype strategy that can be extended to other parts of the district over time.
- They take advantage of the great opportunities to build on the presence of the EU and will help brand Brussels as *the* capital of Europe.

The panel encourages the sponsors and the city as a whole to take the steps necessary to gain control of this important part of the city and celebrate its role as the capital of Europe. This result will happen only if the city makes it happen—no one is going to hand it to them.



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