

NICHES+ Champion City Burgos

Good practice documentation: Neighbourhood Accessibility Planning



Neighbourhood Accessibility Planning in Burgos

The **City of Burgos** in northern Spain has been very active in recent years in improving the accessibility of the city centre for pedestrians and cyclists. In the context of Neighbourhood Accessibility Planning (NAP), Burgos can present a recent activity in one of the oldest neighbourhoods of the town. The focus was to **increase the vertical accessibility, improve the quality of public space and give better orientation**. The following summary is presented as a good practice case to other cities that are working on similar issues.

Area concerned and main challenges

The area is inside an area with restricted access for motorised transport and is approximately 0.5 sq km in size. It is located in the oldest part of the historic city centre.



View of planning area

All photos in this document courtesy of City of Burgos

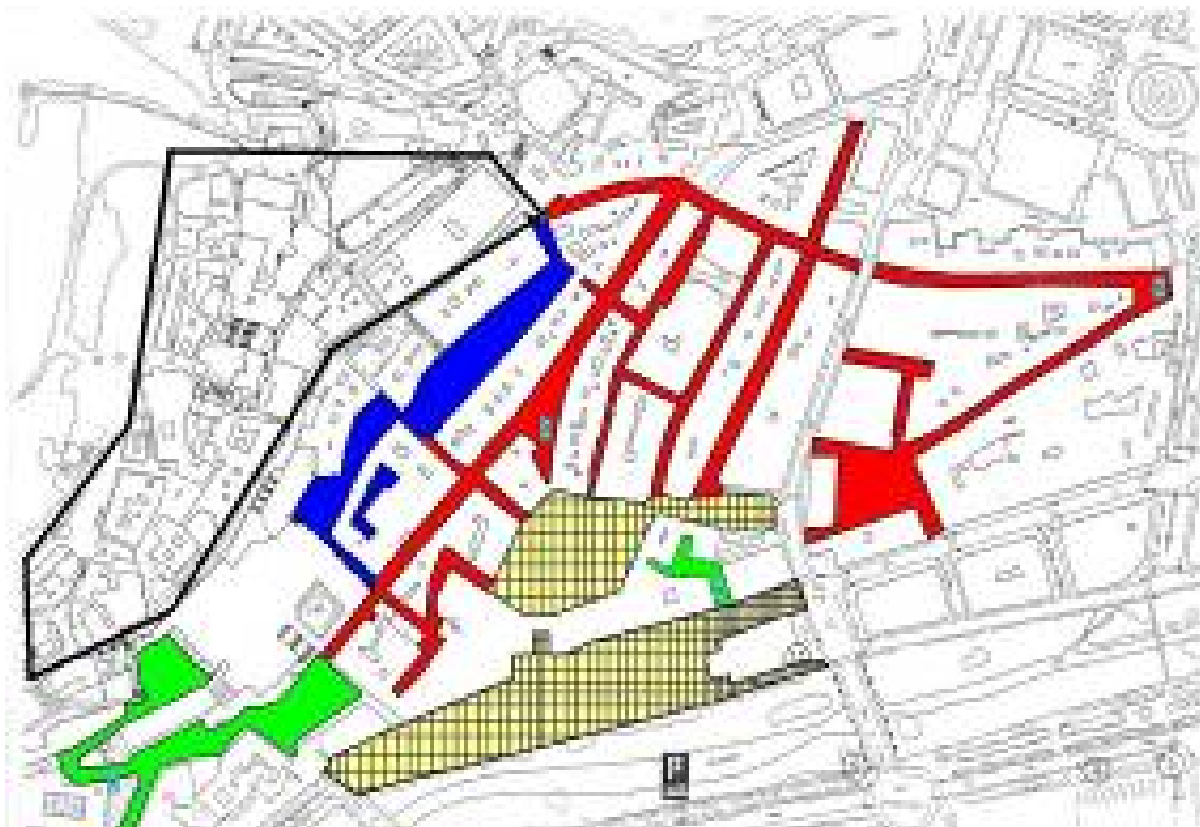
A survey showed that many people decided to move to other areas during recent years and currently no more than 1,500 persons are living in the neighbourhood, mainly older people and students. The area is crossed by the pilgrims' way "Camino de Santiago".

There are manifold **challenges** in this area:

- It is located on a hillside that connects the lower part of the historic city centre with the castle, which is located on a hill above the city. **Vertical accessibility** is a real challenge. Many stairs and steep inclinations pose difficulties especially for older people and people with reduced mobility.
- **Parking** is uncontrolled and disorganised, with cars occupying a lot of public space. There is high parking pressure due to scarce space. There is no existing parking management plan. Burgos City Council tried to build an underground car park to relieve the situation, but the regional government declined the application due to archaeological remains in the area concerned.

- The new Caja de Burgos art museum is very well integrated in the neighbourhood but **signage** on this and other points of interest has been lacking and therefore some attractions have been difficult to find for tourists.
- There are no **shops and businesses** in the area, which requires the inhabitants to go to the lower part of town to get their groceries and other products. Due to the difficult accessibility of the area, this is especially a problem for the **older people**.

The aim of Neighbourhood Accessibility Planning activities in the quarter is to increase the **quality of life** for all inhabitants. In particular, vulnerable groups, such as older people, are expected to benefit from the measures.



Planning area in the upper part of the historic city centre (marked by black line)

"One of the most important issues is to interact with the stakeholders. For the people living in the planning area we must be the architects but also their psychologists, their friends and their supporters for the sensitive topic of accessibility."

Berta Carpintero, Architect, Director of the Historic Centre Rehabilitation Office, Burgos City Council

Planning area – Previous Activities



Impressions from the planning area

Previous activities

Burgos started the planning process by addressing the problems of **urban renewal** in the neighbourhood via a **survey among the residents**. The Council, with the help of the Regional Government, created the **ARCH office**, where architects and urban planners work on solutions for the area. The office is led by architect Berta Carpintero. ARCH was created to work on tailored solutions together with the people living in the area. The office has implemented many surveys to develop a sound understanding of the needs and concerns of the people who live in the neighbourhood. ARCH also did district excursions with inhabitants

to better understand the challenges. The Council aims to rehabilitate the area and to achieve a better quality of life for the residents.

The surveys and work with the residents in the first step focused on improving the **housing situation**. The second step that concerns **neighbourhood accessibility planning** was initiated in 2009 and further developed in 2010.

Description of measures

A range of measures has been or will be developed to address the challenges in the neighbourhood. The **target group** are all inhabitants of the area, especially older people that struggle with the difficult vertical accessibility. Also tourists that visit the area and the museum are targeted with the measures (e.g. signage).

Improving the vertical accessibility

As mentioned one of the main problems in the neighbourhood is the steep inclination, which poses challenges especially for older and mobility impaired people. There are **four different levels** that need to be connected. The lowest point is the cathedral, the highest the castle, which is located on top of a hill. The work to improve the vertical accessibility needs to respect the historic environment of the neighbourhood. The following measures are included in the **package to improve the vertical accessibility**:

- Connection **from Cathedral to first level**: an elevator will be incorporated within a building that it owned by the municipality.
- Connection **from first level to residential area stretching along the hill**: an elevator at the “Albergue de peregrinos” (pilgrim’s home) has already been built. It is well integrated into the built environment and well used by the citizens.



Elevator that connects first to second level, right picture upper access

Measures – Vertical Accessibility

- Connection from **second level to areas further up the hill**: this difference in elevation will be addressed by the implementation of a ramp and an escalator as illustrated below. This measure has recently been implemented.



Escalator for connecting second to third level

- Connection from **third level to castle** (36m altitude): the access to the castle is mainly used by tourists. The access could be facilitated by escalators and/or a funicular. This measure is on hold till funding becomes available. The priority was to increase first the accessibility of the lower levels, where the residents live.
- **Complementary measures**: handrails along difficult walking routes, better pavements and removal of barriers from the pathways.



Handrails along difficult walking routes

High quality public space

Although the historic environment of the neighbourhood already provides a high urban quality, ARCH improved the **quality of certain areas** in the neighbourhood via the following measures:

- **Recuperation of fragmented public space:** a non-historic fence in front of a building was removed to create an easily accessible public space with benches. In another area a well accessible little square with benches was implemented and a new viewpoint to the Cathedral was established (see illustrations below).



Situations before and after measure implementation

Measures – Signage & Car Traffic

- **Better street lighting:** this also has a positive impact on the (perceived) public safety in the neighbourhood.
- **Less intrusive garbage collection system** in the ground to better use public space.

Signage

A new signage system has been introduced in the neighbourhood to **guide the visitor to points of interest** such as the pilgrim's way, the pilgrim's home, churches, the municipal archive, and archaeological remains.

The signage has been integrated into the pavement and fits well with the historic environment.



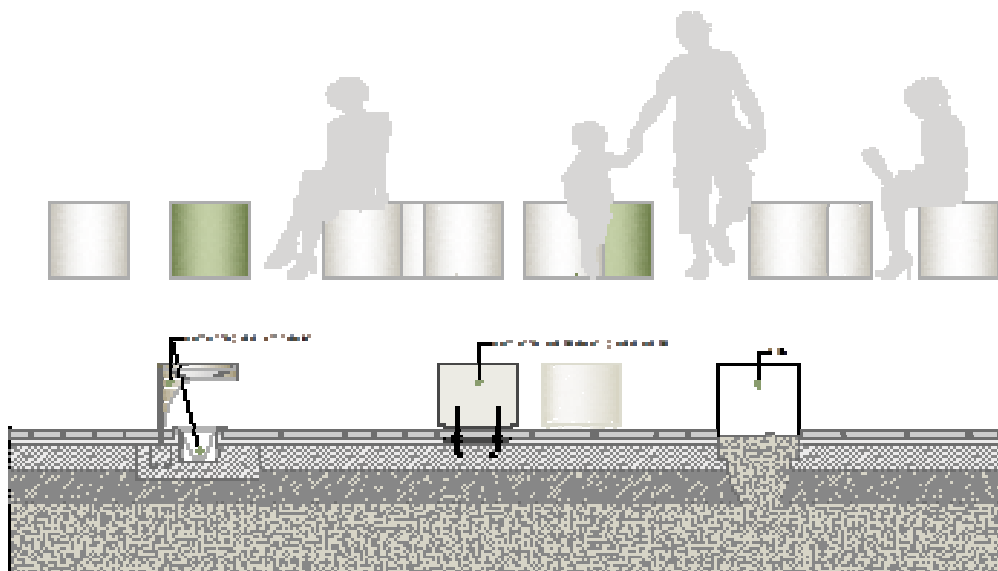
Signage on points of interest

Reducing car traffic in neighbourhood and making remaining traffic less intrusive

A problem is the **invasion of cars** into a neighbourhood that was not designed for cars. Therefore an important part of the NAP activities was to better **regulate the access** of vehicles and to give visible **priority to pedestrians**.

In some sensitive spots **street furniture** will be used, not only to increase the quality of public space, but also to keep out the cars (see illustrations next page).

The busiest street in the neighbourhood with some through traffic is the one that separates the residential area from the castle hill. Currently, cars often drive too fast in this area, which is intimidating for many older residents. To address this problem, measures will be taken to **redesign the street and to better share the space** between pedestrians and cars. Drastic **speed reductions** will be obligatory.



Measures to prevent car access by using street furniture

Parking for residents

As already mentioned, **parking pressure is high** in the neighbourhood. Offering parking space for the residents is also seen as a requirement to keep younger people and families in the neighbourhood. The improvements of public space for pedestrians and restrictions for cars will also affect the possibility of uncontrolled parking. Due to archaeological remains, a proposal for an underground parking under the castle was rejected by the regional government. Currently the **discussion for a solution** focuses on making available a semi-automatic parking system near to the neighbourhood. There has been no decision yet, but it is clear that a solution needs to be found.

Stakeholders for Implementation



Uncontrolled parking in the neighbourhood

Stakeholders involved in measure implementation

The main actors in the **project team** are:

- ARCH (City Centre Office): responsible for the improvements of the accessibility, plans for vertical accessibility, parking plan, surveys and contact with the stakeholders
- Mobility Department: in charge of the accessibility and the new parking plan
- Fomento (Civil Engineering Department): responsible for the improvements of the area
- Traffic Department: responsible for the parking plan
- Tourism Department: responsible of the signage in the area
- Councillor for Planning and Civil Engineering (“Fomento”): in charge of the plans and the implementation plans of the area
- Councillor for Mobility: also in charge of the future plans of the area

Cooperation partners and outside influencers are:

- Neighbourhood association / Bicycle users association: suggestions as input to process
- Disabled people association: suggestions for improvements
- ONCE (Blind people national association): suggestions for improvements
- Tourism association: suggestions for improvements
- Amigos del Camino de Santiago (St. James Pilgrims Way Association): suggestions for improvements, the Pilgrim’s Way is crossing the area
- Asociación de hostelería (association of hotel sector): suggestions for improvements

- Caja de Burgos (local bank): in charge of the Modern Art Museum, also interested in new signage
- School of Architecture: has been working previously on a parking plan for the neighbourhood (proposed underground parking that was rejected by regional government)
- Chamber of commerce (FEC): suggestions, help in developing the new plan for rehabilitation of the area for local businesses
- Social foundation Lesmes: works in a social area with disabled people, with young people, and potentially with older people in the target area

Budget

The ARCH office has received a budget of **approx. 6 Mio. EUR to execute measures to enhance the accessibility of the area**. This includes funding for the elevators, escalators and the other measures. The additional link to the castle, which is currently on hold, would need another 1.5 Mio. EUR. The council is in charge of the parking plan and the signage. The ARCH office also has some extra budget for the surveys and participatory activities. The council also receives funding from the regional and national level.

Future perspective

Good progress has been made to improve the vertical accessibility via elevators, escalators and other measures as better pavements, high quality public space or signage. This **comprehensive package of measures** will be fully implemented in 2011. Furthermore the cars that are still invading the neighbourhood will disappear with the **redesign of public space and enforcement**.

If funding allows, the **link to the castle** might be improved with escalators and/ or a funicular. The most pressing concern seems to be **finding an adequate solution for residents parking**, which is currently under discussion.

Contact persons in Burgos

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Cities with Similar Challenges

Examples of cities with similar accessibility challenges

Burgos is not the only city that has to address accessibility problems in hilly areas with a historic environment. The **City of Lisbon** for example implemented and plans similar solutions to improve the accessibility to the castle area, mainly directed at tourists. The Burgos project team exchanged with the people in charge in Lisbon.

Another Spanish city that has worked on the problem of vertical accessibility is **Donostia-San Sebastián** in the Basque country. To address this challenge, the city recently introduced escalators and outdoor passenger conveyors. So far, 10 lifts are in use and a further four are under construction (two nearly finished). In addition, six trav-o-lators/escalators are in use.

In hilly **Perugia**, Italy, elevators and escalators have already been used for a while, integrated into a historic environment. The latest innovation is a minimetro with a length of more than 3km that runs on an elevated track.



For further details on how to implement Neighbourhood Accessibility Planning schemes please see the **NICHES+ Guidelines for implementers** (available from www.niches-transport.org).

The more detailed **full version of the Implementation Scenario** for Neighbourhood Accessibility Planning in Artois-Gohelle is also available on the NICHES+ website.

Photo on title page

City of Burgos

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