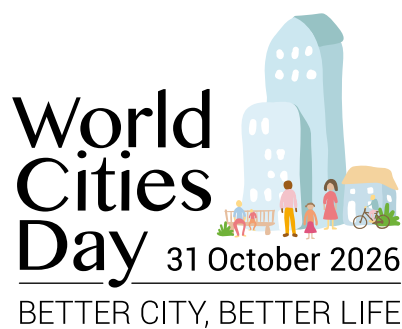




Regenerating the City: Adequate Housing for All

— Fuzhou, China —

CONCEPT NOTE

Thematic-Forum 1:

Urban Planning for Regeneration: Governance, Frameworks and Delivery for Adequate Housing

DATE: 1st November 2026

TIME: 9:30-11:15 Beijing Time

TITLE: Regenerating Cities for Adequate Housing:
Planning and Delivery Frameworks

Background

Cities are at the forefront of many of the world's most pressing and interconnected challenges. As of 2025, an estimated 57.8 % of the global population lived in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2026), a figure projected to rise to nearly 70% by 2050 (United Nations Statistics Division, 2022). At the same time up to 3.4 billion people around the world lack access to adequate housing with over 1.1 billion living in informal settlements and slums (UN-Habitat, 2026). Accommodating this growth and ensuring access to affordable and adequate housing will require cities to deliver significantly more housing while ensuring that urban expansion supports inclusive, resilient and sustainable development.

Urban growth has increasingly been characterised by outward expansion. Analysis from a sample of 781 cities across 123 countries confirms that, since 2000, urban land consumption has consistently outpaced population growth (UN-Habitat, 2026). Although the rate of expansion has slowed in recent years, urban sprawl remains the dominant pattern of development. Between 2000 and 2025, built-up growth beyond existing urban boundaries occurred at an average rate around six times greater than infill development within established urban areas.

This expansion is driven primarily by the need for housing. Evidence from 110 cities shows that residential development accounts for approximately 82% of all built-up urban land. Low-rise, single-family housing alone occupies nearly 70% of urban space, while multi-family housing accounts for only 5% (UN-Habitat, 2026). By comparison, non-residential uses comprise around 18% of built-up land, with unplanned low-rise housing and row housing accounting for 4% and 3% respectively.

While this pattern of development has helped accommodate growing urban populations over the short-term, it has generated significant social, economic and environmental costs. Urban sprawl consumes agricultural land and natural ecosystems, increases greenhouse gas emissions, reinforces dependence on private vehicles and raises the cost of providing infrastructure and public services. New peripheral neighbourhoods are frequently disconnected from employment opportunities, public transport, schools, healthcare, public spaces and other essential services. In 2022 just half the world's population had convenient access to public transport (United Nations Statistics Division, 2022). As a result, cities face growing spatial inequalities while local governments struggle with the financial burden of servicing increasingly dispersed urban areas.

Against this backdrop, urban regeneration is emerging as a critical strategy for addressing housing needs while promoting more compact and sustainable urban growth. By investing in existing urban areas, regeneration enables cities to accommodate population growth through neighbourhood upgrading, densification, adaptive reuse, brownfield redevelopment, housing renewal and infrastructure investment. Rather than expanding outward, regeneration makes more efficient use of existing land, infrastructure and public services while reconnecting communities to employment, amenities and opportunities.

This approach aligns with emerging planning concepts centred on proximity, such as the 15-minute city, which promotes compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods where residents can access housing, employment, education, healthcare, public transport and everyday services within a short walk or cycle (Chaire ETI, 2025). Delivering this vision requires renewed investment in existing urban areas, particularly neighbourhoods that are underutilised, poorly serviced or experiencing decline, to create higher-density, mixed-use communities that are well connected, liveable and resilient.

Session Overview

This thematic forum will examine how urban regeneration can help cities respond to growing housing demand while reducing the economic, environmental and social costs of urban sprawl. It will explore the planning approaches, governance arrangements and delivery frameworks needed to support neighbourhood upgrading, brownfield redevelopment, adaptive reuse and appropriate densification within existing urban areas. In doing so, the discussion will consider how regeneration can contribute to affordable housing, climate resilience, and the creation of inclusive, connected and liveable communities.

Discussions will focus on the following:

Opening Keynote: Housing Cities within Existing Boundaries *(from urban expansion to regeneration, rethinking the planning paradigm in the context of adequate housing)*

Panel 1: Unlocking Urban Regeneration: Planning and Land-use Frameworks for Adequate Housing *(How can planning systems support regeneration over expansion? Examining the planning, land-use and housing policy frameworks needed to unlock regeneration within existing urban areas, support compact growth, and integrate housing with transport, infrastructure and public services.)*

Panel 2: Practice Exchange: Governance and Partnerships for Delivering Regeneration *(From plans to implementation – exploring the governance arrangements, and partnerships required to coordinate regeneration across sectors and exchange ideas on densification models, proximity planning and land policy tools which enable regeneration at scale across contexts)*

Objectives

- Highlight the value of densification for well-planned urban growth. regeneration for well-planned densification.
- Examine how urban regeneration can expand access to adequate, affordable and well-located housing while reducing the environmental, social and economic costs of urban sprawl.
- Explore the planning, policy and governance frameworks needed to deliver housing through neighbourhood upgrading, brownfield redevelopment, adaptive reuse and well-planned densification within existing urban areas.
- Identify the institutional, financing and delivery mechanisms that enable cities to increase housing supply while ensuring regeneration remains inclusive, climate-resilient and connected to jobs, services and public infrastructure.
- Share international experiences and lessons on integrating urban regeneration into wider housing, land-use, transport and urban development strategies.

Guiding Questions

1. How can urban regeneration deliver access to adequate and affordable housing while reducing reliance on outward urban expansion?
2. What planning and land-use policies are needed to unlock land, increase housing supply and support inclusive regeneration within existing urban areas?
3. How can regeneration better integrate housing with transport, public space, and employment opportunities to create compact, connected and liveable neighbourhoods?
4. What governance arrangements, institutional models and partnerships best enable cities to deliver housing-led urban regeneration at scale while protecting affordability and preventing displacement?