In Sweden, a pilot programme is helping residents to redesign their streets, with a focus on hyper-local needs and community cohesion.

Spotted: As neighbourhoods around the world have become more localised during the coronavirus pandemic lock-down, a new vision has emerged of a city that is centred around people, instead of cars. The “15-minute city” concept envisions urban areas decentralised, in order to allow residents to meet their daily needs with a 15-minute walk or bike ride from their homes. The concept has been trialled in cities like Paris and Barcelona, and now a variation is being pursued on a national scale in Sweden.

Sweden’s plan is being piloted by national innovation body Vinnova, alongside design thinktank ArkDes, and focuses on even smaller areas. Dubbed the “one-minute city”, the pilot initiative “Street Moves” urges local communities to redesign the layout of their individual streets to focus on “the space outside [their] front door — and that of [their] neighbours adjacent and opposite.”

The project uses workshops, consultations and design solutions to help residents to control how much space is used for parking and other public uses. The project has developed a kit of modular street furniture, designed to fit in a standard parking space, which can be configured to provide seating, planters, bike racks, children’s play spaces or electric car charging stations. Residents can choose how many units they want and how to configure them to suit their streets’ needs. For example, streets near transit stops might install more bike parking, while streets with cafés might prefer seating options.

Each of the “parklets” is intended to be easily-adaptable, allowing residents to change the configuration as their needs change. Kieran Long, director of Arkdes, says that “The most important things about these prototypes we’ve made is that they could all be the wrong thing.” He adds that the real function of the parklets is, “to allow us to have a conversation about the future of streets.
The coronavirus pandemic has added new momentum to a trend that was already well underway – reconfiguring urban spaces to be more responsive to pedestrians, rather than vehicles. Springwise has covered a number of initiatives that seek to build innovative neighbourhoods. These include ideas such as a regenerate housing ecosystem and the transformation of parking garages into community gardens.

Written By: Lisa Magloff

Explore more: Architecture & Design Innovations

18th January 2021
Website: arkdes.se/en
Contact: arkdes.se/en/about-us/contact-us

Takeaway:

During the pandemic lockdowns, people and nature began to reclaim the streets, with many vehicles out of action. Now, more and more people are seeing what could be possible if cities were reconfigured to make cycling and walking to local amenities more commonplace. At the same time, movements such as the BLM protests in 2020 have focused people’s attention on how planning and policy decisions can have far-reaching effects on access. The Street Moves project represents a first step in giving residents more control over their immediate surroundings, and in mitigating issues involving social cohesion, climate adaptation and local democracy. It is intended as a starting point for change.