



## DECLARATION OF COMMITMENTS FOR PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK MEMBERS

There is a rising demand for more liveable, better organized public spaces in Nairobi and other urban areas in Kenya. While it is generally accepted that great public spaces are the essential component of any successful, prosperous city, this topic has taken a back seat in actions of public authorities in Nairobi. While a number of localized interventions to improve and maintain public spaces are being implemented by non-state actors in neighbourhoods across Nairobi, their impact remains constrained due to the lack of collaboration among them, which limits available resources, expertise and influence of each initiative. We are convinced that the time has come to join our efforts to ensure a city-wide impact of our placemaking initiatives.

We are a network of public space enthusiasts committed to creating better public spaces in Nairobi. We are individuals and organizations coming from all backgrounds, from builders to designers, from experts to citizens. We are passionate about creating amazing places, improving neighbourhoods and changing perceptions about the role of public spaces in our lives.

Our mission is to enable all Nairobians to access clean, safe, healthy, inclusive, vibrant and connected public spaces, in order to improve the quality of life in our city.

This document presents key values and principles related to public spaces shared by all of us. We define public spaces as all areas designated by applicable law as open and accessible to the general public whether for free or for a fee. Public spaces may comprise streets, pathways, squares, parks, gardens, water bodies and riparian land.

We believe these values are essential given the context of life in Nairobi, where there is high population growth, rapid urbanization and growing income inequalities. This understanding and these values constitute the framework for our actions.

### THE PUBLIC SPACES WE WANT

**The public spaces we want create a vibrant social life,** by providing places where people can meet, talk and interact. They bring communities together and create social cohesion in the city. They provide essential conditions for living in dignity. They shape a sense of belonging, of pride and cultural identity. In many ways, we shape our public spaces and they then shape us.

**The public spaces we want have positive economic impacts.** They are productive spaces, creating value for the local economy by attracting people, recreation, cultural integration, businesses, investments and job opportunities. In the global competition between cities, they present a great marketing tool.

**The public spaces we want contribute to healthy living.** They provide the opportunity for children to play, for people to exercise and enjoy a comfortable calming environment reducing stress. They increase access to vital services such as clean safe water, improved sanitation and proper waste management. Last but not least, the green public spaces strengthen the resilience of the city against environmental risks as they improve air quality, act as a drainage system, cooling corridors, wind shelter and a solar temperature moderator. They renew our links to nature and revitalise our humanity. Consequently, they improve public health.

**The public spaces we want improve safety.** By creating a vibrant city life with eyes on the street, at all times of the day, they make people feel safer and reduce insecurity. By sharing the space harmoniously among all users, they are pedestrian friendly, and encourage walking and cycling. They reduce vulnerability to flooding and natural disasters.



## PRINCIPLES WE PROMOTE

### **Adequate public spaces for all**

A great public place makes everyone feel welcome. We are committed to making public spaces accessible to everyone, regardless of gender, age, ethnic and cultural origins and social belonging. Particularly, we want to provide the most vulnerable groups with tools to improve their lives. We believe that there is not a faster or cheaper way to improve the quality of life for communities than to improve the public spaces they interact with. We also believe that streets should be designed not only for cars but mainly for people.

### **Diversity of functions and productivity of public spaces**

A great place is active and productive. We are committed to spur a diversity of activities - social, economic and cultural - to maximize the positive impact of every place in people's lives. Public places are economic and social drivers, and as such they are great engines for development and social cohesion. We are dedicated to promoting multiple uses of public spaces to maximize their utility and relevance in line with different needs and expectations and to seek for a harmonious cohabitation of all public space users – both in physical terms at one time of the day as well as at different times of the day and the year.

### **Holistic and Integrated approach**

We build places to build communities. An integrated approach addresses different aspects of public spaces. It looks at everything from restoration to management and maintenance. Creating public spaces is not only about a great physical design, it is first and foremost about mobilizing the local community to own the space so they can protect it and maintain it. It is about developing viable business models on usage and maintenance in a way that creates virtuous cycles of social and economic benefits. The community must have a vested interest in maintaining the place. All these issues are to be addressed simultaneously. The conception of a public space should come with a plan for future maintenance to ensure quality and sustainability of over time.

### **Participatory approach and community ownership**

We believe in the power of citizens to shape their city together. Placemaking is about creating places that are suited to each community but also about empowering the residents and developing their capacities to define and implement what they desire. We are committed to involving the broadest range of stakeholders (residents, civic groups, private entities, public authorities etc.) to collectively work on the planning, design and management of public spaces. Informal actors should be considered as fully-fledged citizens and be part of the process as well. We also encourage the full participation of users of the space in regards to its restoration and maintenance to ensure the sustainability of public spaces.

### **City-wide approach**

We believe in connecting localized initiatives to ensure their city-wide impact. A healthy, walkable and sustainable city can only be achieved through a well-connected network of public spaces, implying the need for collaboration of all public space stakeholders in the city. In addition to bringing pride to each neighbourhood, great public spaces reinforce both the identity of the city and the Nairobi « brand » in the international context. We are committed to supporting and promoting coherent strategies, frameworks and policies to enable good practice on public spaces.

## ACTIONS

**Experience and knowledge sharing:** Together, we will leverage our expertise, networks and resources to improve public spaces in the city. Sharing tested solutions on public space making with other network members will enable localized success stories to spread over Nairobi and maximize their positive impact on the entire city.

**Awareness raising and advocacy:** We will raise awareness about the importance of well-managed vibrant public space networks for inclusive, equitable and liveable cities. We aim to inform the general public about the positive impacts great public spaces have on them. In parallel, we will attempt to demonstrate the



benefits of public spaces to private and public sectors, both of which should affirm their responsibility to invest in improvement of public spaces. We will advocate for policies and legislation that give prominence to public spaces while allowing communities to be co-managers with public authorities in management of public spaces.

**Collaboration:** We will seek to improve the use and access to public spaces by conducting joint activities, engaging communities and assisting them in adapting existing solutions to their context through design-thinking, and advocating with policy makers to enable a coordinated city-wide approach to placemaking. Joint activities, carried out together by at least some of network members, will additionally enable building of clarity and solidarity around shared values.

There is an abundance of open spaces, let's make them great public places together!

## HOW IT WORKS

The network is a collaborative platform enabling knowledge, resource-sharing, ideas-exchange, inspiration, generation of innovative solutions, advocacy, research and direct action to achieve urban renewal through public space restoration and management.

Members of the network are independent organizations and individuals, united by the shared values defined in this declaration. We commit to these values, which form the common ground for our actions.

We also commit:

- To define a plan of actions to be carried out together,
- To learn from each other, to freely share our knowledge and expertise to achieve our common objectives and build a collective culture,
- To contribute to the elaboration and implementation of research-informed solutions,
- To set up a structure to coordinate our activities,
- To promote the values of the network in our respective activities
- To agree on a set of obligations which shall define the give and take between the network and its members

The relationship between members of the network is based on independence, mutual trust, transparency and democratic decision making. Each network member shall retain their separate and distinct identity but we remain bound as one by our common shared values.

By appending my signature to this document, I commit myself and/or organization to the values set out in this manifesto and never to act in a way that undermine these values and the core beliefs of the organization.

## SIGNATURE