

TRANSFORMING THE HISTORIC CENTRE THROUGH DE-MINERALISATION AND GREENING

Bordeaux Grandeur Nature - **Bordeaux, France**

1. DESCRIPTION

Bordeaux Nature Size is a municipal programme launched in 2020. Still ongoing, it aims to adapt the historic centre – which is currently very hard-surfaced – to the challenges of climate change, making it cooler, more inclusive and more resilient. The programme is structured around key pillars: preserving existing nature, planting wherever possible, developing nature accessible to all neighbourhoods, and transforming public spaces by reducing the space allocated to cars in favour of soft mobility and more people-friendly uses.

2. CONTEXT THAT MOTIVATED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRACTICE

The programme responds to the need to adapt Bordeaux to the effects of climate change, particularly the fight against urban heat islands exacerbated by the high level of paving in public spaces. The dominance of the car limited opportunities for greening and the friendly use of the street. The aim was therefore to rethink public spaces as places for living, resting and intergenerational interaction, reconciling climate adaptation with the enhancement of the heritage environment.

3. APPROACH/METHOD

- A cross-cutting, overarching programme involving several municipal departments and Bordeaux Métropole according to their areas of responsibility (green spaces, roads, mobility, urban agriculture), with political oversight provided by the deputy mayor in charge of public spaces and mobility.
- Citizen participation at three levels: Information (pre-works meeting); consultation (gathering of views and adjustments) and long-term dialogue via the Urban Nature Committee
- Tactical urbanism to trial developments (traffic plans, one-way systems, etc.) before making them permanent.
- Innovative specific projects, including the development of ‘playful schoolyards’: technical assessment + workshops with children, parents and the educational community to co-design green schoolyards.
- Simple measures to encourage citizen ownership, including the granting of permits to plant greenery and the occasional opening of schoolyards to the public.
- Timeline: launch in 2020, gradual and ongoing implementation.



Microforest, Billaudel Plot - Copyright © R. Escher

4. EXPECTED/IMMEDIATE/MEASURABLE EFFECTS

Expected effects

- Reduction of heat islands and improvement in thermal comfort.
- Gradual transformation of a heritage-rich, mineral-dominated city into a greener city, without opposing the conservation of the built environment against adaptation.
- Life quality improvement through the creation of more inclusive and intergenerational public spaces.

Immediate effects observed

- Rebalancing of street use in favour of soft mobility.
- Gradual reappropriation of public and school spaces (more inclusive, less gendered playgrounds, occasionally open to the public).
- Deployment of 'opportunistic' greening in urban micro-spaces.

Measurable results

- 16% reduction in pollution between 2020 and 2024 (measuring station on the boulevards).
- 10% increase in pedestrian use (average based on a weekly sample, 2022–2025 period).
- 43% increase in cyclists between 2019 and 2024.
- Since 2020:
 - Around 60,000 trees planted
 - 13 new parks and gardens created or delivered
 - Nearly 80 heat islands addressed
 - 25 hectares of nature added (green spaces and widespread greening)

5. KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Greening can become a key driver for transforming a historic centre.
- Citizen participation strengthens ownership and acceptance of the transformations.
- Tactical urbanism allows decisions to be tested, adjusted and secured in sensitive contexts.
- Adapting a heritage city to climate change does not mean pitting it against conservation but rather evolving its use and comfort.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION :

<https://www.bordeaux.fr/bordeaux-grandeur-nature>

