

Guideline for promoting densification in municipal development planning



City and other municipal planners are called upon to take a careful approach to space allocation. This is reflected in their conscious efforts to prioritize municipal densification. With the support of EBP, the Canton of Thurgau has now drafted a guideline that enables municipalities to take account of densification at an earlier planning stage, namely, in the context of drafting their municipal development plans.

Densification as a long-term process

Settlement densification has taken on greater significance since the first revision of the Swiss Spatial Planning Act in 2014. In the wake of this legislative change, municipalities throughout Switzerland face a challenging task with long-term implications. This task centers on the actual achievement of stated densification goals, a process that will not only continue to take time, but will also require additional staffing and financial resources. Here, it warrants pointing out that the task includes addressing complex substantive issues, especially given the fact that densification is not restricted to structural measures alone.

Development of a practical guideline

Building upon earlier instructions issued in 2017, the guideline helps municipalities to incorporate the notion of densification into their development plans. In particular, the guideline offers practical assistance when it comes to realizing the projects that appear in cantonal development plans with an eye to densification.

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Accounting for densification in municipal development planning

The guideline includes an overview for each of the development plan's sections that relate to densification, including settlement, transportation, infrastructure and landscape. These topic overviews serve as a checklist that the municipalities can use to draft or revise their development plans in light of the new emphasis on densification. By referring to the guideline's various densification topics, the municipalities can decide which aspects of densification warrant special attention. For instance, in addition to the future density and usage of settlement space, consideration is to be given to greenways and undeveloped space, future development space and social issues. The guideline's individual chapters offer helpful in-depth discussions and instructions relating to possible contents, conclusions and measures.

Case studies as a source of inspiration

Selected excerpts from existing municipal development plans serve as case studies that demonstrate how municipalities can best approach various aspects of densification.

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