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Introduction to Urban Planning Laboratories

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What Are Urban Planning Laboratories?

Experimental environments for urban innovation

Integrate research, practice, and community input

Test and prototype urban policies and projects

Why Urban Labs Matter in Modern Planning

- Address complex urban challenges with agile methods
- Encourage participatory and inclusive planning
- Bridge academic theory and practical implementation

Core Functions of UPLs

- Spatial planning support
- Policy experimentation and testing
- Citizen engagement and empowerment
- Capacity building for local institutions

Interdisciplinary Approach

- Urban planning and design
- Public policy and administration
- Data science and digital tools
- Environmental and social sciences

Tools and Techniques Used in Labs

- GIS and spatial data analysis
- Urban simulations and modeling
- Participatory mapping and workshops
- Dashboards and digital twins

Stakeholder Engagement

- Role of students and academic researchers
- Collaboration with city governments
- Engaging citizens and NGOs
- Connecting with startups and tech providers

International Case Studies

- Medellín Urban Lab – social urbanism
- Aspern Smart City Lab – innovation in Vienna
- Urban Lab Brussels – collaborative governance
- Gdynia Urban Lab – Polish community engagement

How to Participate in or Build a UPL

- Join urban innovation projects or internships
- Collaborate on applied research and case studies
- Propose ideas through university-city partnerships
- Participate in living labs or tactical urbanism projects

How to Set Up a UPL

- Identify key urban challenges
- Build partnerships with local actors
- Secure funding and institutional support
- Design participatory methodologies
- Monitor, evaluate, and scale up successful pilots

Academic and Professional Benefits

- Real-world problem-solving experience
- Exposure to interdisciplinary methods
- Opportunities for networking and research
- Pathways to policy, planning, and tech careers

Conclusion

- Urban Labs blend theory and practice in planning
- Key to shaping innovative, inclusive urban futures
- Opportunities for graduate students to engage



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Thank you for your attention!