Breda National Park City Decision Report

14 May 2025

APPLICATION APPROVED

The Breda National Park City campaign submitted their portfolio in support of their application to become the first National Park City in the Netherlands on 8th November 2023.

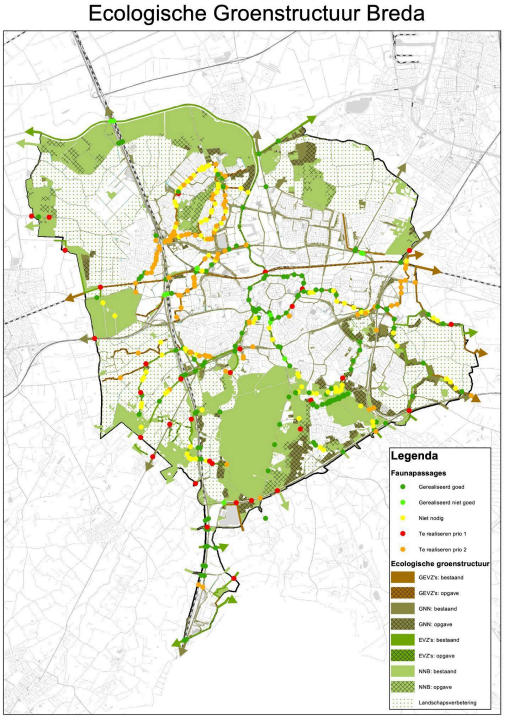
An in depth peer review process took place, and an in-person visit conducted over 20th to 23rd May 2024. At the request of the Breda National Park City campaign additional time was requested in order to establish a sustainable future model for Breda National Park City, and additional updates were submitted on 10th April 2025 for final peer review.

The National Park City Foundation, in conjunction with representatives of Salzburg Global, and World Urban Parks met to discuss this application on 12th May 2025.

We are pleased to be able to award Breda the status of a National Park City, and look forward to Breda playing a full role in the National Park City movement. Congratulations!

This decision has subsequently been ratified by the Board of the National Park City Foundation via unanimous vote.

Ecologische Groenstructuur Breda



Why Breda is ready to be a National Park City

Dan Raven-Ellisson, Founder of the National Park City movement summarises why Breda will make an exemplary National Park City.

Breda has all the ingredients of a highly impactful National Park City. The city boasts a strong community of people, projects, and organisations working to make the city better for people and nature. Initiatives range from re-naturing of the River Mark running through the city centre to nature-friendly food-growing cooperatives. There are efforts by one of the city's ecologists to enhance the diversity of human gut-biomes and innovative uses of derelict buildings as "nature factories" that contribute to urban biodiversity.

During my visit, I had the chance to explore Breda both with expert guides and independently on foot. Walking through the city, I experienced firsthand the strong culture of maintaining green, blue, and active travel spaces, all interconnected to make it easy for people to move through the city under their own steam. As I wandered, I stumbled upon tiny urban forests, large-scale wildlife street art, and community-driven projects that replaced car parking spaces with mini-parks. These elements show just a small number of ways the city integrates nature into its urban landscape in both creative and practical ways.

While there is much to celebrate, there is potential to involve even more people and expand initiatives that better connect people to more nature - which are the very things a National Park City should help communities to achieve.

I am highly impressed by Breda and the National Park City team. Breda's National Park City journey is led by a highly skilled, enthusiastic and committed team. Together they have a deep understanding of the city, its people and nature, and have ambitious plans to make Breda greener, healthier, wilder and fairer that are totally achievable with the right support and resourcing.

There is so much that current and future National Park City communities can learn from Breda. I cannot wait for that to happen.

Reflections from the Peer Review team

The visit to Breda was fantastic. It was superb to see the range of different projects that are part of the vision for Breda as a National Park City. There were three things that really stood out for me.

The first was the very clear relationship between political and civic leadership and community activities. We saw time and again clarity and alignment between the vision for Breda as a National Park City, the relationship with nature, and projects that were led by and clearly valued by different communities.

The second was the commitment to the relationship with nature as an intergenerational priority. The projects that were being catalyzed and included in the National Park City application were there for all generations, from green play areas to urban farms to intergenerationally managed community allotments.

The third thing was around the relationship between nature and education. We visited schools that had well-established green school grounds, that clearly pre-dated any talk of Breda as National Park City. These were representative of a wide range of different initiatives that showed a strong understanding of the relationship between nature-rich environments and good physical and mental health, social and cognitive skills, community engagement, and climate resilience.

The combined impression of all of these, along with the conservation work we saw, the relationship between the surrounding countryside and the city and many other initiatives was that the people who live in Breda are proud of their city, with good reason and that it must be an excellent place to live.

I am very happy to have been part of the team to welcome Breda into the National Park City family.

Dominic Regester, Salzburg Global

Almost ten years ago, residents and entrepreneurs were asked what kind of city they would like Breda to become. Their answers — welcoming, borderless and green — became the guiding principles on which the city has since developed. Breda's ambition to become the first National Park City in the Netherlands is a promise made by the city — its residents, entrepreneurs and the municipality — in continuing a bold vision: to create a biodiverse urban environment where everyone is encouraged to make space for nature. Schoolyards are being transformed into tiny forests, neighbourhood communities are being organised by various groups, art projects are celebrating nature, and urban farming is flourishing.

Over the past seven years, I have been fortunate enough to witness the development of Breda's green vision. It all began with a passionate speech by Paul Depla — the Mayor of the city — during a presentation about the National Park City idea back in 2019. While working on the first green and blue (urban nature) map of the city, it became even clearer that Breda's ambitions aligned closely with the National Park City philosophy. The site visit in 2024 demonstrated the commitment and effort invested in achieving this status.

Breda's strong bottom-up movement is being catalysed by hundreds of individuals — entrepreneurs, gardeners, ecologists, students and artists — who are literally rolling up their sleeves every day, passionately working to make the city greener and more beautiful. Their vision is strongly supported by the local government. Breda aims to become a future-proof city, with the municipality investing in nature and its water systems, and connecting urban nature to the surrounding countryside. Initiatives such as the creation of green roofs and façades, the removal of paving, and the encouragement of greener gardens are being actively promoted. A greener, healthier and wilder Breda is the shared goal of both the engaged civic groups and the municipality. The vision of Breda National Park City will inspire others to follow.

Ioana Bris, Nature Desks

Nature is at the core of Breda's identity. It's woven into the fabric of the city and so accompanying them on the National Park City journey has felt a very natural next step. It was a privilege to be part of the assessment team visiting the diverse examples of how Breda's citizens celebrate, protect and come together around nature. From 'tiny forests' used by school children for outdoor learning and local residents as places of refuge, to community-managed foraging trails linking neighbourhoods together. Healthy food production is a clear priority. There is a thriving urban farm co-operative operating on a circularity model and communal gardens growing vegetables in less privileged areas that also serve to bring people together and provide an informal support function.

I was extremely impressed by the commitment and innovative spirit shown by municipal staff and projects, community groups and driven individuals. Highlights included otter 'boulevards' and wildlife 'hotels' planned right through the heart of the city, ongoing depaving work with residents replacing concrete outside their homes with wildlife friendly planting, vibrant pocket parks, a welcoming city farm park and a beautifully calming tree-based art installation at the city cemetery.

Residents of Breda are rightly proud of their nature and green spaces. Becoming a National Park City, the second in Europe, will help bring the large array of initiatives going on across the city closer together and will build mutually beneficial ties with cities across the world. The energy and publicity that comes with joining the movement will be sure to reach more residents across Breda, unlocking the multiple benefits of engaging with nature for even more people. Congratulations to Breda and welcome to the National Park City family!

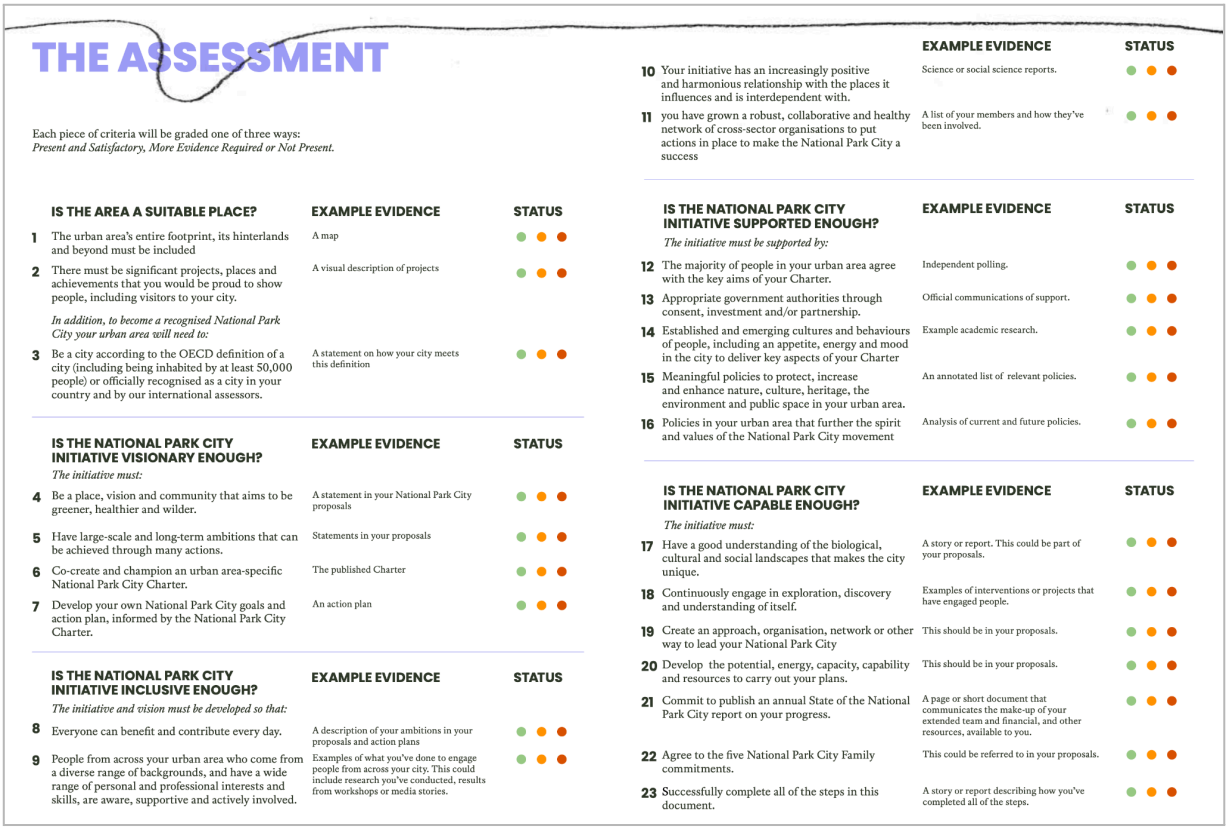
Lucy Livesley, National Park City Foundation

London, Adelaide, and Chattanooga National Park Cities on site visit to Bredia in October 2024

The Journey Book Process

To become a National Park City, cities follow and interpret the 10 steps set out in the National Park City Journey Book, in a way that reflects the particular qualities, values, and ambitions of that place and landscape.

Once a city campaign has registered its interest in becoming a National Park City, it begins its journey working through the steps at its own pace, towards the submission of its portfolio of evidence which sets out the city's case for why it should be a National Park City against 23 assessed criteria.



THE ASSESSMENT

Each piece of criteria will be graded one of three ways:
Present and Satisfactory, More Evidence Required or Not Present.

	IS THE AREA A SUITABLE PLACE?	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
1	The urban area's entire footprint, its hinterlands and beyond must be included	A map	
2	There must be significant projects, places and achievements that you would be proud to show people, including visitors to your city.	A visual description of projects	
	In addition, to become a recognised National Park City your urban area will need to:		
3	Be a city according to the OECD definition of a city (including being inhabited by at least 50,000 people) or officially recognised as a city in your country and by our international assessors.	A statement on how your city meets this definition	

	IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE VISIONARY ENOUGH?	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
	The initiative must:		
4	Be a place, vision and community that aims to be greener, healthier and wilder.	A statement in your National Park City proposals	
5	Have large-scale and long-term ambitions that can be achieved through many actions.	Statements in your proposals	
6	Co-create and champion an urban area-specific National Park City Charter.	The published Charter	
7	Develop your own National Park City goals and action plan, informed by the National Park City Charter.	An action plan	

	IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE INCLUSIVE ENOUGH?	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
	The initiative and vision must be developed so that:		
8	Everyone can benefit and contribute every day.	A description of your ambitions in your proposals and action plans	
9	People from across your urban area who come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and have a wide range of personal and professional interests and skills, are aware, supportive and actively involved.	Examples of what you've done to engage people from across your city. This could include research you've conducted, results from workshops or media stories.	
10	Your initiative has an increasingly positive and harmonious relationship with the places it influences and is interdependent with.	Science or social science reports.	
11	you have grown a robust, collaborative and healthy network of cross-sector organisations to put actions in place to make the National Park City a success	A list of your members and how they've been involved.	

	IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE SUPPORTED ENOUGH?	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
	The initiative must be supported by:		
12	The majority of people in your urban area agree with the key aims of your Charter.	Independent polling.	
13	Appropriate government authorities through consent, investment and/or partnership.	Official communications of support.	
14	Established and emerging cultures and behaviours of people, including an appetite, energy and mood in the city to deliver key aspects of your Charter	Example academic research.	
15	Meaningful policies to protect, increase and enhance nature, culture, heritage, the environment and public space in your urban area.	An annotated list of relevant policies.	
16	Policies in your urban area that further the spirit and values of the National Park City movement	Analysis of current and future policies.	

	IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE CAPABLE ENOUGH?	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
	The initiative must:		
17	Have a good understanding of the biological, cultural and social landscapes that makes the city unique.	A story or report. This could be part of your proposals.	
18	Continuously engage in exploration, discovery and understanding of itself.	Examples of interventions or projects that have engaged people.	
19	Create an approach, organisation, network or other way to lead your National Park City	This should be in your proposals.	
20	Develop the potential, energy, capacity, capability and resources to carry out your plans.	This should be in your proposals.	
21	Commit to publish an annual State of the National Park City report on your progress.	A page or short document that communicates the make-up of your extended team and financial, and other resources, available to you.	
22	Agree to the five National Park City Family commitments.	This could be referred to in your proposals.	
23	Successfully complete all of the steps in this document.	A story or report describing how you've completed all of the steps.	

The assessment process is undertaken by peer review, coordinated by the International Steering Group of the National Park City Foundation (a charity registered in England & Wales. Charity number: 1173267. Registered Office at 1 Therapia Road, London, SE22 0SF).

The peer review process is open, transparent and participatory, undertaken in a collaborative way and fully involving the Breda team, along with representatives of National Park City Foundation, Salzburg Global Seminar, World Urban Parks, and individual representatives from the wider National Park City community and external peers and colleagues.

National Park City status is formally awarded by the National Park City Foundation following a successful portfolio submission, peer review, and in-person visit coordinated by the International Steering Group, and validated by representatives of Salzburg Global Seminar and World Urban Parks.

National Park Cities are not utopias. Like all cities they are messy, complicated, frustrating, and wonderful places in equal measure. Becoming a National Park City is not an award of excellence, rather it is about setting out the shared ambition, power and responsibility that exists within the city to create a place where people and nature are better connected.

The movement is about working together to tackle and overcome many of the complex challenges that cities face. No National Park Cities will ever have a perfect report card.

The purpose of the application and peer review process is to ensure that a candidate National Park City would be a suitable place, visionary, inclusive, supported and capable enough; would share National Park City values, goals, spirit and commitments; and contribute to the integrity of the National Park City vision, family and movement.

There are five stages in the National Park City application process. All nominated National Park Cities must go through this process in order to join the National Park City family and become an officially recognised National Park City.

The Breda National Park City team successfully coordinated the completion of each of these stages on behalf of Breda and its citizens.

Stage 1: Portfolio submission

Submission of a portfolio of evidence that demonstrates that the city is ready to become a National Park City.

Stage 2: Desk review

The assessment team will complete an initial desk review to ensure all documents are in place.

Stage 3: Peer review

Peers from established and emerging National Park Cities, as well as experts from the National Park City Foundation, World Urban Parks and Salzburg Global Seminar will review the initial application and provide feedback on where additional activity or evidence might be required against 23 National Park City criteria.

Stage 4: In-person visit and independent research

Representatives of the Peer Review team will visit the city to meet with community groups, members of the city government, civil society, and ordinary citizens. This will be supported with independent research to check the validity of the application and gather additional evidence, along with monitoring the media and social media.

Stage 5: Invitation

Following stages 1-4 being completed successfully, the National Park City Foundation in partnership with World Urban Parks and Salzburg Global Seminar will formally invite the City to agree to the National Park City commitments, join the family and become an established National Park City.

Assessing Breda's application

The 23 assessment criteria from the Journey Book cover five areas of enquiry, each of which are listed in the summary report below. We're not looking for perfect scores across the application. We want to hear about the ambitions, plans and progress of each candidate National Park City. Each peer reviewer will look at the overall approach each city is taking and will make an informed judgement on whether each urban area is ready to become a full National Park City.

Across the application portfolio, peer interviews and independent research, the assessment team will want to have seen enough evidence to be confident that the 'right mix' of criteria were sufficiently met.

To aid this process each of the peer review team scored each of the assessment criteria as either:

Green	Evidence is present and satisfactory – Score 1
Orange	More evidence or activity is required – Score 0.5
Red	No evidence or Significant Concerns – Score 0

The scoring process was used to support conversations and decide where more evidence or activity may be required. It was also used to identify areas of concern.

Following the submission of Breda National Park City's response to the Journey Book the peer review group completed two rounds of scoring against the assessed criteria to make recommendations for Breda's readiness to become a National Park City.

The peer review met as a group on the 26th April 2024 to discuss their consolidated scoring, and completed a second round of scoring on 22nd April 2025 following the submission of additional evidence from Breda.

Of the initial 20 criteria assessed from the Journey Book:

- 19 were assessed as Present and Satisfactory
- 1 were assessed as More Evidence Required

The only Criteria assessed as needing 'More Evidence is Required' was "12. The majority of people in your urban area agree with the key aims of your Charter", however the peer review group was overwhelmingly satisfied that there is sufficient long term support for Breda National Park City, and more evidence required in this case recognises that further polling data will be released in due course as the campaign continues to build and enhance city wide support over time.

The unanimous view of the peer review group was that following the in-person visit which took place 20th to 23rd May 2024, and with additional evidence provided Breda is ready to become a National Park City.

Comments and Recommendations by Criteria

IS THE AREA A SUITABLE PLACE?

1. The urban area's entire footprint, its hinterlands and beyond must be included	**Present and Satisfactory**
2. There must be significant projects, places and achievements that you would be proud to show people, including visitors to your city	**Present and Satisfactory**
3. Be a city according to the OECD definition of a city (including being inhabited by at least 50,000 people) or officially recognised as a city in your country and by our international assessors.	**Present and Satisfactory**

IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE VISIONARY ENOUGH?

4. Be a place, vision and community that aims to be greener, healthier and wilder.	**Present and Satisfactory**
5. Have large-scale and long-term ambitions that can be achieved through many actions.	**Present and Satisfactory**
6. Co-create and champion an urban area-specific National Park City Charter.	**Present and Satisfactory**
7. Develop your own National Park City goals and action plan, informed by the National Park City Charter.	**Present and Satisfactory**

IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INCLUSIVE ENOUGH?

8. Everyone can benefit and contribute every day.	**Present and Satisfactory**
9. People from across your urban area who come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and have a wide range of personal and professional interests and skills, are aware, supportive and actively involved.	**Present and Satisfactory**
10. Your initiative has an increasingly positive and harmonious relationship with the places it influences and is interdependent with.	**Present and Satisfactory**

11. You have grown a robust, collaborative and healthy network of cross-sector organisations to put actions in place to make the National Park City a success.	**Present and Satisfactory**

IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE SUPPORTED ENOUGH?

12. The majority of people in your urban area agree with the key aims of your Charter.	**More Evidence Required**
13.Appropriate government authorities through consent, investment and/or partnership.	**Present and Satisfactory**
14. Established and emerging cultures and behaviours of people, including an appetite, energy and mood in the city to deliver key aspects of your Charter.	**Present and Satisfactory**
15. Meaningful policies to protect, increase and enhance nature, culture, heritage, the environment and public space in your urban area.	**Present and Satisfactory**
16. Policies in your urban area that further the spirit and values of the National Park City movement.	**Present and Satisfactory**

IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE CAPABLE ENOUGH?

17. Have a good understanding of the biological, cultural and social landscapes that makes the city unique.	**Present and Satisfactory**
18. Continuously engage in exploration, discovery and understanding of itself.	**Present and Satisfactory**
19. Create an approach, organisation, network or other way to lead your National Park City.	**Present and Satisfactory**
20. Develop the potential, energy, capacity, capability and resources to carry out your plans.	**Present and Satisfactory**
21. Commit to publish an annual State of the National Park City report on your progress.	**Present and Satisfactory**
22. Agree to the five National Park City Family commitments.	**Present and Satisfactory**
23. Successfully complete all of the steps in the Journey Book.	**Present and Satisfactory**

Why Breda can be a National Park City

The following part of this report explains why the assessment team approved Breda's application to become a National Park City.

This is not an attempt to replicate or repeat all evidence that has been submitted and should be read alongside Breda's application. Later sections of the report address challenges and recommendations.

Numbers in brackets at the end of sentences that include a "c" refer to relevant criteria being met (e.g. c1). Numbers in brackets that include a "p" refer to specific pages within Breda's application (e.g. p5).

Breda National Park City is a suitable place

The assessment team unanimously agreed that Breda is a suitable place to be a National Park City.

Breda presents a compelling case to become a National Park City, thanks to its long-standing commitment to integrating nature into urban life. The city began this journey years ago with the creation of its first Urban Nature Map in collaboration with Urban Good. This map was not only a way to visualize Breda's green assets but also a public declaration of its ambition to become a "City in a Park." Since then, the city has built on this foundation with a growing portfolio of projects, initiatives, and partnerships that reflect a deep and evolving relationship between nature, people, and place.

What sets Breda apart is the richness and variety of its green initiatives. These include community farming, edible walking routes, Tiny Forests, green schoolyards, and nature reserves. Bottom-up initiatives such as Struikroven (bush robbery) and the NK Tegelwippen (National Unhardening Championship) have gained traction and become part of everyday urban culture. Co-created spaces, neighbourhood deals, and plant swap nurseries further demonstrate how Breda empowers residents to shape their green environment. These efforts not only improve biodiversity but also foster social connection and civic pride.

Breda's approach extends well beyond the city centre. It incorporates the villages within the municipality and even engages with willing communities just outside its official borders. Connections with regional projects like the Van Gogh National Park and land acquisition in surrounding areas underscore Breda's commitment to a broader landscape vision. Though there is room to clarify geographical boundaries and the city's socio-economic makeup, the inclusive and flexible approach to defining the "City in a Park" area is a strength rather than a limitation.

Finally, Breda shows a strong sense of adaptability and innovation. The city embraces new ideas and integrates them effectively into local life, demonstrating both leadership and humility. With a population of around 180,000, Breda is a small-to-mid-sized city with the scale, ambition, and community engagement needed to thrive as a National Park City. It's

clear vision, wide-ranging projects, and active citizen participation make it a model for others to follow.

Breda National Park City is visionary

The assessment team unanimously agreed that the plans for Breda National Park City are visionary.

Breda's vision to become a National Park City is both bold and deeply rooted. Long before green and healthy cities became a national policy focus, Breda was already imagining itself as a "City in a Park." The early adoption of such a metaphor reflects genuine belief and commitment from the city's leaders. This vision represents a meaningful, long-term ambition supported by years of action and passion.

The city's goal to become one of the most nature-rich cities in Europe by 2030 sets a high bar. Breda has already made impressive progress through initiatives like unhardening projects, community greening, schoolyard transformations, and a strong focus on youth engagement. There's a clear desire to be greener, healthier, and wilder—and to do so in collaboration with citizens, local partners, and regional networks.

The existing action plan provides a solid foundation, and it will continue to benefit from more concrete, measurable targets and links to the broader National Park City charter. While much of the early work has been municipality-led, Breda is actively building a wider network of ambassadors and community leaders, which will be key for long-term success.

Co-creation has been a part of the process, but the city can continue to strengthen its approach by ensuring wider representation and deeper inclusion—particularly in engaging diverse communities and outlining how everyone can contribute to this shared vision.

Overall, Breda's ambition is visionary, authentic, and full of potential. With continued development of its action plan, clearer metrics for success, and expanded stakeholder involvement, Breda is well-positioned to not only become a National Park City, but to lead by example for others across Europe.

Breda National Park City is inclusive enough

The assessment team unanimously agreed that the plans for Breda to become a National Park City were inclusive enough.

Breda's National Park City initiative is making solid progress in building a collaborative and inclusive network, with early signs of a growing, cross-sector movement. The foundation for a strong support system is clearly in place, as evidenced by the involvement of community groups, educational institutions, municipal departments, and environmental organisations. Named partners such as the Urban Living Lab, Libreon school network, IVN Nature Education,

and Wolfslaar Environmental Education Center illustrate a strong grounding in education and civic engagement. The ambassador group, comprising representatives from green organisations across Breda, reinforces this collaborative spirit and helps carry the vision into communities.

What's promising is that the city isn't operating in isolation—there's ongoing cooperation between public and community sectors, and early partnerships demonstrate a shared commitment to Breda's green transformation. This collaboration gives the initiative authenticity and local traction. Moreover, initiatives like the Pukplein Foundation and the Buas hospitality training garden show how social and environmental missions are being interwoven.

There is still room for the network to become more diverse and resilient. While some businesses are involved—such as Natuurhuisje and other 'green' companies—engagement from commercial partners more broadly remains limited. It's unclear whether many of them see themselves as part of the Breda National Park City movement. Broadening collaboration to include a wider range of commercial, cultural, religious, and sporting organisations would add depth and societal reach, helping the initiative grow beyond traditional environmental circles.

Ultimately, the strength of such a network isn't measured solely by the number of participants, but by the depth of their involvement and the creative, problem-solving energy they bring. Breda has made a strong start, and with continued outreach to underrepresented sectors and communities, the network will become a powerful and inclusive engine for positive urban change.

Breda National Park City is supported

The assessment team unanimously agreed that the plans for Breda to become a National Park City were supported enough.

The Breda National Park City initiative appears to enjoy a solid foundation of institutional support and a growing network of community-driven activities, though some questions remain about the breadth and representativeness of public backing. One of the clearest strengths lies in the municipality's deep commitment to greening the city. The initiative has been led and supported hand in hand with the city government from the start, and over time this transitioned into broader based community leadership supported by government - who provide policy support, finance, expertise and positive energy.

The vision for Breda as a National Park City has been embraced in policy for several years, positioning the city as an early adopter of environmental transformation. This top-down commitment is backed by practical measures, including incentives for individuals and businesses to contribute to greener spaces, innovative mechanisms like neighbourhood

deals, and cross-cutting strategies such as the Green Compass and the Brabant Nature Network.

Initial evidence of widespread, independent public support for the specific branding of Breda as a National Park City was less clear and we were pleased to see the additional support of 716 people having signed the charter, and a poll due conducted via the City's Digipanel to assess awareness and support is expected back in May 2025.

Much of the early visible support was collected at green-themed events and markets, which may bias the sample toward already-engaged residents. This suggests a need for broader outreach, especially to groups not already participating in green initiatives, including industrial sectors and farming communities.

On the other hand, the wide array of grassroots and institutional initiatives showcased over the past two years reflect a strong appetite for the values embedded in the National Park City charter. These projects cover diverse aspects of urban greening and environmental engagement, suggesting that the city is moving in alignment with the charter's goals, whether or not residents are explicitly using the "National Park City" label.

In sum, while polling data could be more robust and representative, the strong municipal leadership, deep policy integration, and rich diversity of green initiatives together make a persuasive case that Breda has sufficient momentum and foundational support to move forward as a National Park City.

Breda National Park City is capable

The assessment team unanimously agreed that Breda is capable of becoming a National Park City.

The Breda National Park City initiative demonstrates a high level of capability, thanks to its well-structured foundations, strong municipal partnership, and growing community infrastructure. The Breda National Park City Foundation, developed in collaboration with the municipality, provides a clear organisational base. It benefits from an evolving network of partners, supporters, and ambassadors, and shows foresight in planning for professionalisation and long-term financial sustainability. While the exact size and resources of the implementation team could be clearer, the initiative has laid out a solid action plan with defined roles, governance structures, and strategies for engagement, suggesting they are equipped to lead the transition effectively.

Scientifically, the project reflects a good understanding of the ecological landscape, evidenced through maps, studies, and biodiversity-driven initiatives like Tiny Forests. The urban nature map and the reverse-side content in particular indicate depth of ecological knowledge. There is always room for improvement in communicating this understanding in ways accessible to a broader audience, and in backing descriptive narratives with scientific

data, particularly around biodiversity outcomes. The emerging 'Municipality Ecology Plan' could fill this gap, and its integration into the National Park City action plan will be crucial.

Social capability is another key factor. The project team has shown passion for community outreach and education, with local champions, youth engagement, and the concept of 'circles' fostering broader involvement. Yet, while several successful projects are highlighted, there is less clarity on how underserved or hard-to-reach communities, along with residents in the urban core, are being engaged. More data on social and economic conditions across Breda, and ongoing monitoring of public involvement, would enhance the initiative's inclusivity and resilience.

Overall, the Breda National Park City movement is highly capable, with strong institutional support, clear structures, and genuine momentum. Strengthening ecological communication, social inclusivity, and long-term financial planning will further solidify its readiness.

Breda National Park City is willing to commit

Now that Breda has completed all steps of the Journey Book, they will commit to preparing a State of the National Park City report each year, and upholding the five National Park City Family commitments:

1. To be inspired and guided by the Universal Charter of National Park Cities, to contribute to its future development and uphold the spirit and values of the movement.
2. To act as a member of the National Park City Family, sharing learning, practices, ideas and resources with people in other National Park Cities.
3. To join in with joint National Park City campaigns and projects, where appropriate.
4. To support emerging and established National Park Cities in their journeys.
5. To share annual updates and experiences on your progress with the public and members of the National Park City Family

The final step required to complete the process and become a National Park City will be to proceed to official launch and celebrate the achievement (c23). Congratulations, Breda is ready to start its full journey as a National Park City.

Key Recommendations for the future

Following the peer review visit in May 2024 the review team made four main recommendations:

1. Agree how you wish to position Breda National Park City in relation to City in a Park and other city-wide initiatives.

2. Invite individuals, groups and organisations to contribute towards the Breda National Park City vision. This might include being open to reshaping your charter and action plan. It will also be an opportunity to grow and strengthen your relationships.

3. Secure additional human, financial and other resources by forming partnerships with those that participate.

4. Take actions that increase awareness and support for Breda National Park City. Use this to both recruit support for your ambitions and for your poll.

Following the submission of additional evidence by April 2025, the review team was content that the positioning and Website & Branding with the formal adoption of Breda National Park City name, along with an expanded network of partners have clearly clarified this position.

The updated Inclusive vision, along with Breda National Park City Charter, and Breda National Park City Campaign should substantially help grow and strengthen relationships within the city, however there remain questions over the depth of declared support across the city, and this will form one of our key recommendations going forward.

As of April 8, 2025, 716 people have signed the charter, and a poll conducted via the City's Digipanel to assess awareness and support is expected back in May 2025.

The numerous steps that have been taken to secure additional resources and partnerships includes the new Business Plan, Qualitative and Quantitative goals, Community Roles and Actions, details on Organisation, Multi-Year Budget, Founding and Helping Partners.

With these recommendations in mind and recognising the excellent evidence already presented, the peer review team feels Breda will be an exemplary National Park City. These are areas that the Breda National Park City may wish to monitor and report on in the future.

- **Broad based support:** Pending survey results being gathered this will be a key area for Breda National Park City to continue to work on in the future, to demonstrate broad based, city wide diverse and vocal support from all parts of the Breda community.
- **Charter Presentation:** The presentation of Charter of Breda National Park City would benefit from being better presented inline with how the Universal Charter and other cities present their commitments.
- **Everyone everyday:** Continue to enhance and improve the diversity, equity, inclusion, and representation of participants and ways of getting involved for all members of Breda's community – especially in reaching new members of the public not yet involved.

- **Sharing progress against plans and goals:** As the relationship between Breda national Park City, Gemeente Breda, and other partners who come on board evolves, be sure to share this progress and how your plans develop against the qualitative and quantitative goals you have set.

In conclusion

The assessment team is delighted to confirm that Breda is ready to become the world's fourth National Park City and the first in the Netherlands.

We are excited to see how becoming a National Park City will support the ambition of Breda and its people, and we look forward to seeing what our movement and community can achieve together in the future.

Report prepared by Mark Cridge, Executive Director of the National Park City Foundation, along with the International Steering Group, and Peer Review Team.

14 May 2025

The Universal Charter for National Park Cities

To become a National Park City each place must determine its own Charter inspired by the Universal Charter for National Park Cities.

OUR VISION IS TO MAKE CITIES WHERE PEOPLE, PLACES AND NATURE ARE BETTER CONNECTED.

Let's make National Park Cities that are rich with nature and where everyone benefits from exploring, playing and learning outdoors. Cities where we all enjoy high quality public and green spaces, where the air is clean to breathe and it's a pleasure to swim in their waters. Together we can make cities greener, healthier, fairer and more harmonious places to live. *Why not?*

A National Park City is a shared vision and journey for a better life.
Everyone in a National Park City is able to benefit and contribute everyday.

It is a large-scale and long-term vision that is achievable through many actions. Much is already happening but by working, learning, sharing and acting together, across communities and governments, we can achieve even more.

UNIVERSAL CHARTER FOR NATIONAL PARK CITIES*

July 2019

WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER:

1. **LIVES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING**
2. **WILDLIFE, TREES AND FLOWERS**
3. **PLACES, HABITATS, AIR, WATER, SEA & LAND**
4. **TIME OUTDOORS, CULTURE, ART, PLAYING, WALKING, CYCLING AND EATING**
5. **LOCALLY GROWN FOOD AND RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION**
6. **DECISIONS, SHARING, LEARNING AND WORKING TOGETHER**
7. **RELATIONSHIPS WITH NATURE & EACH OTHER**

THIS CHARTER CONFIRMS THAT WE COLLECTIVELY SHARE THE AMBITION, RESPONSIBILITY AND POWER TO DELIVER THESE THINGS AND MORE.

SIGNATURES

By signing this document, I/we pledge to play an active role in making the National Park Cities a success.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL PARK CITY?

What is a National Park City? It's a place, a vision and a city-wide community that is acting together to make life better for people, wildlife and nature. A defining feature is the widespread commitment to act so people, culture and nature work together to provide a better foundation for life.

It is a timely cultural choice, a commitment to a sense of place and way of life that sustains people and nature in cities and beyond.

People and cities around the world can draw from the goals, principles and aspirations of this Universal Charter for National Park Cities. We hope that there will be a strong National Park City Family that works together to fulfil the aspirations of this Universal Charter.

The National Park City Foundation will work with others to publish a regular State of the National Park Cities report to highlight actions and progress being made to support the National Park City vision internationally.

**What if we restored nature wherever we can? * What if everybody could lose themselves in nature without leaving the city * What if we shared more knowledge, ideas, tools and experiences? * What if there were more beautiful sights, smells, sounds and colours in the city? * What if we thought more about those who will be living in the city seven generations from now? * What if there was more celebration and spontaneity? * What if we did more things to care for the people, places and nature we are interdependent with? * What if there was more space for reconciliation? * What if we had more balance and harmony within ourselves, our city and globe?*

Thank you for making this possible

We are very grateful for the support of the many individuals, groups, and organisations, along with the leadership shown by the Municipality of Breda, all of whom have supported and contributed towards Breda becoming the first National Park City in the Netherlands.

From the Municipality of Breda:

- Emmy Nellissen, who was the first explorer to start us on this journey and laid the groundwork for the community and the Foundation.
- Jasmijn Snoek, who took over from Emmy and completed the major task of compiling the portfolio with input from many.
- Martine Kreuger, who helped enormously to further develop the community and ambassador circle, to adjust the communication and profiling and much more.
- Tom Rozendal, who made everything possible by making (financial) resources and support available and was a permanent partner in the process for three years and much more.
- Justin Goetzee, who opened the door to the business community in Breda.
- Former Alderman. Paul de Beer, the architect of the Breda City in a Park vision and the first to challenge the Breda community to go for it..
- Current Aldermen, Jeroen de Bruijn and Peter Bakker, who took on their role in realizing the vision and gained support and commitment from the entire city council.
- And the many others, who supported from their own positions.

From the community and Breda Stad in een Park Foundation:

- Former board members of the Breda Stad in een Park Foundation – Marion Smans, Olga de Kort, Chava Bulthuis, Olga Kroes and Rebecca Joosten – who each made a huge effort in the past three years to keep the process going.
- The current board of the Breda Stad in een Park Foundation – Joost Barendrecht, Joyce Vanderfeesten and Lisenka Schalk – who have taken responsibility for continuing the process and have laid the foundation for a new organisation that can realise the ambitions of a National Park City.
- All those green initiators and residents of Breda, who strengthen the connection with nature and together make the Breda National Park City vision a reality.
- The active ambassadors, who each tell the story in their own way, and in particular André Peters and Peter van Soest, who coordinates this group.
- Wout Zellenrath, who recorded the stories of various pioneers in green.

From partner organisations:

- Anouk Benner and Paul Hogerhuis from Brick by Brick, who helped to take the next step with their support for drawing up a business plan.
- Duncan Buisman, who used his enthusiasm to establish connections with various companies in order to recruit partners.
- Sander Braat from Braat Groenbeleving, who is on his way to becoming the first business partner of Breda National Park City.

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Along with the International Steering Group and peer reviewers:

- Alison Barnes, National Park City / New Forest NPA
- Dominic Regester, Salzburg Global
- Jennifer Dunn, ex-Salzburg Global
- Neil McCarthy, World Urban Parks / Mosaic Insights
- Amber Inman, DEFRA
- Scott Martin, World Urban Parks / City of Chattanooga
- Sheryn Pitman, Adelaide National Park City
- Dom Blackham, Mosaic Insights
- Ingina Shieh, London National Park City
- Victor Beumer, Aveco de Bondt

The board of the National Park City Foundation

- Navdeep Deol, National Park City
- Claire Eagle, National Park City
- David Cope, National Park City
- Tim Webb, National Park City
- Melissa Miners, National Park City
- Emily Brennan, National Park City
- Eilish Kavanagh, National Park City

Along with all the former Trustees, advisors, contributors, makers, and supporters who have contributed to the growth and development of the National Park City movement.