

Citizens shaping the city's long-term vision

City of Oldenburg

INTRODUCTION

Since 2024, the City of Oldenburg has been running a **citywide participation process** to help shape its **ISEK, the Integrated Urban Development Concept**, a **strategic planning document** guiding the city's development up to 2035, within a longer-term vision reaching to 2050. The process runs until around 2026.

The city opened it up to everyone: residents, local organisations, businesses, political actors, and other groups across Oldenburg. Through a mix of events, workshops, and online participation, the city **collects ideas, needs, and visions for Oldenburg's future**, and feeds them directly into the ongoing development of the concept.

The goal is to build a **broadly supported vision for the city**, together with concrete measures for sustainable, livable, and resilient urban development.



GERMANY

MANDATE

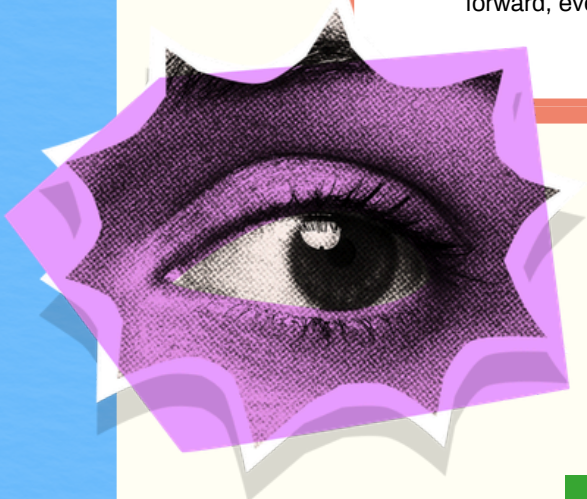
The **City Council of Oldenburg** set the process in motion, through a **council resolution** instructing the city administration to prepare the ISEK. The **city administration** coordinates the work itself, with support from **external planning offices**.

Participation sits at the centre of how ISEK gets built. The city documents every contribution from residents and other groups, and **feeds it directly into how action areas and concrete measures take shape**.

ISEK itself is an **informal planning instrument**, so its outcomes carry **no legal weight**. Even so, it functions as a real strategic framework: it **guides political decisions and shapes urban development planning** going forward, even without binding force.

ENGAGEMENT LEVEL

- ☐ Inform
- ☒ **Consult**
- ☐ Involve
- ☐ Collaborate
- ☐ Empower



RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Oldenburg uses a mix of formats to reach as many people as possible: public events, dialogue formats, thematic workshops, and digital participation.

One example is **Moin Oldenburg 2035**, a "future market" where residents could bring their own ideas and perspectives on urban development. The city also ran an **online participation platform**, letting the public comment on and rate ISEK's focus topics.

Beyond these open formats, the city **specifically targeted certain groups:** young people, seniors, and representatives from business and civil society.

PROCESS DESIGN

ISEK unfolds over **several years**.

It started with **Future 2050**, a long-term vision for the city, which now serves as the foundation for the more concrete ISEK 2035. From there, the process moves into defining action areas and spatial priorities, dividing the city into action zones and focus areas, each with its own set of concrete measures.

Participation runs alongside every step of this process. **Different formats** give residents a way to share their perspective, and discuss future topics together, as the plan develops.

The **city administration** organises the whole process, working together with **external planning and participation offices**.

FOLLOW-UP

The participation formats generate a **steady stream of ideas, suggestions, and evaluations on urban development topics**. The city **documents and analyses** all of this, and **feeds it into the ongoing planning process**, particularly into how action areas take shape and how concrete measures for each focus zone get defined.

Beyond feeding into the plan itself, the participation formats also **build transparency**, and bring the public into the process at an early stage, rather than presenting them with a finished plan.

The participation process doesn't stop here either. It continues into the next project phases, as the city works out measures for specific urban areas in more detail.

RESOURCES

The city administration coordinates ISEK's development, with support from external planning and specialist offices. Because the concept touches so many aspects of urban development, several municipal departments are involved.

STRENGTHS

- Combines **different participation formats**, both online and on site.
- Brings in a **genuinely diverse range of perspectives** from across the urban community.
- Keeps the process **transparent**, through **continuous communication**.

CHALLENGES

- **Managing different expectations** about how much influence participation actually has.
- **Reaching every population group equally.**

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Build participation into planning processes early**, rather than adding it on afterward.
- Use **different formats** to reach different target groups.
- **Communicate clearly and transparently** about the actual scope of citizens' influence.



Interreg
North Sea



Co-funded by
the European Union

Speak Up