“The Fjord City”
- The Plans for Urban Development of The Waterfront

“The Fjord City” is the overall strategy towards urban development of parts of the waterfront in Oslo. While decisions of renewal/urban renewal of some of the areas (Bjørvika, Rådhusplassen, Vestbanen, Aker Brygge) was made by the City Council several years ago, the overall strategy was adopted by the City Council in 2000.

The strategy includes urban renewal of a string of waterfront properties in the heart of the city, in order to create better connections between the City Centre and the fjord, providing unique physical surroundings for living and leisure. The City has started a most adventurous urban renewal project.

Most of the transformation areas are, or have been, harbour, main roads or other traffic purposes, some of them are also earlier industrial sites. They will be released for new urban development in the years to come.

The Planning and Building Authority are in charge of the planning process, whilst the daily planning activities are taken care of by The Waterfront Planning Office. The Office co-operates closely with municipal and governmental bodies, land-owners, large property development companies, as well as leading Norwegian and European architects, in order to plan and carry through the visions, ideas and projects.

The Waterfront Planning Office describes the aims for the waterfront: “We are thinking in an overall vision. We want to open up the waterfront areas for recreational, cultural, residential and commercial use, with emphasis on public access, public and private transport and sustainable development. In size, these areas are comparable to projects in Hamburg, Gothenburg, Stockholm and Copenhagen. Some of the waterfront areas are unique with their close proximity to the City Centre and to the main infrastructural provisions.”

The 225 hectares development areas included in the strategy are divided into 14 project areas: Frognerstranda, Filipstad, Tjuvholmen, Aker Brygge, Vestbanen, Rådhusplassen, Akershusstranda, Vippetangen/Revierhavna, Bjørvika, Loenga, Kongshavn, Sjursøya, Ormsund/Bekkelaget and the sea-area. They stretch over more than 12 kilometres of mostly south- and westfaced waterfront areas.

Some major construction projects are being carried out, the new National Opera house in Bjørvika being one. Stortingets (The Parliament’s) decision to build a new, monumental National Opera house in Bjørvika, one of the waterfront areas, set scope and pace to the waterfront renewal. Other projects are in the planning phase, among them a lot of new office-projects, thousands of new dwellings, and the construction of The Museum of Culture of the University of Oslo.
The local plans for the areas of Bjørvika and Tjuvholmen are approved and the areas thus ready for development and construction. Together these individual projects will create a string of new enterprises, housing provision and cultural activities from the east to the west side of the city centre, and will open up the sea front and provide for new and improved living conditions for the city’s inhabitants.

Below follows a short presentation of some of the major development projects:

**Bjørvika** has a unique position between the sea and the City’s public transport centre (main railway station, airport connection, trams, local and remote bus lines, main underground station). Local plans approved by the City Council stipulate roughly the building of close to 1 million square meter of residential and commercial space on the 69.6 hectares of land. The new National Opera house is under construction. A design competition for another large site (200 000 square meter building space) are accomplished. Construction will start late 2004. During the autumn of 2004, an architectural competition for the urban design of 7 open spaces, the commons, will be carried out, in cooperation between architects, landscape architects and artists. The building of the under-water main road tunnel, a premise for completing the local plans, has started. The development of the entire Bjørvika area according to the plans are calculated to require investments of NOK 50 billions over the 15-20 years to come.

**Tjuvholmen** is the product of a special project competition, in which main investors and developers were invited to create a vision for the peninsula-shaped quay area, including planning concept, budget estimates and costs of construction. The winner should take full responsibility for the execution of the project. The winning project contains a 9 daa public park, public access to approx. 2000 meters of quay, 1200 flats, a hotel, an art museum, a multi-media centre, shops, restaurants and office spaces and a viewing tower (all totalling over 100 000 square meters of building space), calculated to cost close to NOK 1 billion. The project’s developers expect residents to start moving in by 2007, and all work is to be completed by 2011.

The old Railway Station buildings of Vestbanen will be preserved, while the closed-down railway track area will be redeveloped. The building complex shall contain The Nobel Peace Centre, as well as the new main Public Library of the City of Oslo. Statsbygg, which is planning and selling the site, has carried through a design competition including a central cultural building (30 000 square meters) featuring the library, cinemas, an art museum and possibly a dance studio, flanked by buildings for residential and commercial use (45 000 square meters). The project includes several attractive public spaces. Statsbygg expects to sell off the entire project and its properties to a developer by the end of 2004.

The harbour area Sjursøya is the centre for the import and distribution of petroleum and dry bulk goods. Large storage facilities for petroleum are built in the close hill Ekebergåsen. Sjursøya will be developed with new facilities for handling of wet and dry bulk, and for serving as the temporary new highly efficient container terminal. The first phase of the container terminal is to be finished in 2006, and the whole terminal will be completed in 2008. Handling of containers will then be transferred from Filipstad and Ormsund to the new terminal, as necessary steps before carrying out urban development of these two areas.