

De Hallen (The Netherlands)

Introduction:

De Hallen project is located at the pristine spot on the bank of Amsterdam canal (Bilderdijk kade) and at walking distance from the Rijksmuseum, the Vondelpark, the Jordaan and the Anne Frank house. The project was also benefited from the bigger renovation project at the surrounding areas with food stalls, restaurants, a cinema, a library and a hotel.

Motivation:

The main reason behind the development of de Hallen project was probably the chance to build individual homes (apartment) at an affordable cost. The projection cost of the project showed that the investment cost was 150% lower than the other competing projects in the area.

Community development process:

In the very early stage of the project, the group received leadership and guidance from a local architect. However, over the development of the project, the group chose another architect and kept an independent status. The first members of the group decided and selected the new member as they were expected to contribute to the development of the project. In total, the group was settled after nine memberships were reached. To help the process, the de Hallen has sought support from professional architect as a facilitator for the project. The group short list the candidates and invited them to present their portfolio. Similar procedures were applied for selecting contractors. The use of a local CSO process facilitator is the main plus point during the selection procedure. It is also because most of the large financial institution was not able to finance CSO project without the presence of facilitator. In the project, the role of facilitator was to steer the planning process. In many cases, the facilitator failed to meet the expectations of the group. This was mainly because the group consisted of diverse professional skills (a lawyer, purchase manager, industrial and interior designer and a building consultant).

Some issues during the development process:

The main issue faced by CSO initiative in Amsterdam area was to deal with the selection process. The land for CSO-buildings was offered by the municipality through a strict selection procedure. The municipality offered five plots for CSO-development, each plot could accommodate the

development of building with 9 to 12 homes. More than 90 groups were invited and participated in the three-steps selection procedure.

- The first step was a random selection. De Hallen was selected together with other 25 groups.
- The second step was the filling of a standard motivation form and risk analysis form. De Hallen project promised to implement a nearly zero energy building and has already established democratic decision procedures. The risk analysis showed that de Hallen project was able to realize the building within time and budget. All members provided an independent income check to prove financial capacity. In addition, de Hallen project promise to use a local CSO-facilitator (De Regie) to support the planning process. Based on the forms submitted, , de Hallen project was selected for the third selection step in which 3 CSO-groups were competing for each of the five available CSO-plots.
- The third selection step was based on the evaluation of the submitted forms, together with two independent interviews with a CSO-representative/participant. The interviews were mainly aimed to verify whether the candidate CSO could fulfil the promises made in the motivation and risk analysis forms. Six weeks after the selection procedure formal acceptance was obtained by approval of a detailed Plan of Action.

During the development, the group has faced some problems and had many discussions on variety issues. In many cases, decision was made unanimously but sometimes vote were used to reach the agreement. Among many obstacles faced by the group, the most difficult problem was the issue related to financial security (*what will be the final investment and whether the individual will be able to finance*). Another issue was very technical such as whether the project would be able to imply an ambition energy concept of using the earth heat with more than 200 m deep pipes in the public land (street) in front of the apartment building.

Critical information/tools for the project:

- A validated TCO (total Cost of Ownership) tool to predict the investment costs in the early development stage
- Decision support for selecting a facilitator, architect and contractor
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Lesson learned:

In general, de Hallen project has learnt that the role of experienced facilitator is critical to the success of the project as it contributes to the stability within the CSO-group (there is always an objective contact person for a first or second opinion). The group expectation should also be communicated at the beginning of the project. In addition, the project has also recognised that the intensive and challenging decision making process contributed to create firmness, solidarity and unity among the participants.