



# > The Neighborhood Houses Manifesto

Turin's Neighborhood Houses are open and public places; social and cultural laboratories in which collective thoughts and experiences are expressed; spaces that initiate experiences of participation, involvement, and self-organization.

These spaces are the result of **innovative urban regeneration policies** developed since the late 1990s thanks to the stimuli of European institutions and an attitude of the City to experiment and implement ideas and projects with citizen input. In 2007, the first Case del Quartiere was born in a suburban area of the city: Cascina Roccafranca. In the years that followed, new experiences were developed in other neighborhoods, through different paths and histories but with a common basis: spaces for public use redeveloped, thanks to the collaboration between public institutions, banking foundations, social enterprises, associations and citizens, places that became spaces for the population. Since May 2012, the **City of Turin**, together with **Compagnia San Paolo**, has invited the managing entities of the Houses to gather around a table with the purpose of coordinating their activities through the consolidation of a network to pool knowledge, experience and projects. The desire to build a direction of the Neighborhood Houses Network, became a concrete possibility in April 2014, with the "**Di Casa in Casa**" project winning the first prize (worth 100,000 euros) of the **national Call for Culture "Che Fare2"**. In February 2017, the social promotion association grouping Houses was founded to tell, support and foster the Neighborhood Houses model nationally and internationally.

To date, there are 8 Neighborhood Houses, each in a different neighborhood covering almost the entire city area: **Cascina Roccafranca (Mirafiori Nord)**, **San Salvario Neighborhood House**, **Bagni Pubblici di via Agliè (Barriera di Milano)**, **Hub Cecchi Point (Aurora)**, **the House in the Park (Mirafiori Sud)**, **+SpazioQuattro (San Donato)**, **Barrito (Nizza Millefonti)**, and **Vallette Neighborhood House**.

The "**Manifesto of the Neighborhood Houses of Turin**" is a product of this journey, a document that brings together in 10 points the elements that characterize these spaces.

The Manifesto is a working tool that allows the Houses to internally confront what they have accomplished to date and to chart a path to grow and develop in the years to come; at the same time, it is a useful tool to spread the experience to regional, national and European levels and contribute to a cultural policy where citizens are the protagonists of social action and territories are the local recourse.

## 1. Places Open to All Citizens

The Houses are organized to welcome, through intercultural activities, all citizens from toddlers to the elderly, without discrimination of gender, nationality, social background and religious affiliation.

**The Houses strive to meet different needs**, with specific attention to the different social and cultural levels of people; the Houses promote popular initiatives by taking care of the quality of proposals and combining culture with sociability.

**The Houses do not refer to an ideology** with references to symbols, flags and movements, but respect different cultural orientations. The Houses identify with universal values such as freedom of expression, the right to participate in collective and political life, equality among people, social justice, the spirit of solidarity and respect for human rights.

## 2. Spaces for Active Participation

**The Houses promote participation in the social and cultural life of the Neighborhood** through different forms of active citizenship and volunteerism.

The Houses are places where new ways of doing welfare are researched and experimented with, developing networks of proximity, the search for collective solutions to common needs.

**The Houses are spaces capable of welcoming and supporting:**

- the individual person, enhancing their skills and supporting getting directly involved;
- informal groups that develop common interests, fostering their emergence, growth and autonomy;
- associations, groups of associations, entities and institutions, strengthening their identity and mission.

## 3. Places that are accessible, welcoming and generative of encounters

Houses are welcoming, cared for, attractive and first and foremost accessible.

**Accessibility is:**

- **economic:** the Houses offer many free activities and charge popular and low prices;
- **organizational:** the Houses are organized in a "light" way, allowing free access to facilities, direct contact with operators and the possibility of getting information in a simple and non-bureaucratic way;
- **cultural:** the Houses have an open, non-ideologically aligned vision, respectful of different democratic political orientations, cultural and gender diversity.

The Houses are **places of everyday life**, allowing people to **feel at home**, in an open social dimension, where **it is possible to "stay"** by socializing and **where one can "do"** by participating in activities or becoming the promoters of projects and initiatives.

The Houses intentionally foster relationships between people, knowledge, meeting and confrontation between the realities that operate there, between the projects that are carried out, between different ideas, and create the conditions for synergies and collaborations to arise.

## 4. Everyone's Spaces but No One's Exclusive Seat

The Houses are open and hospitable places that welcome numerous organizations by giving them a space for activities and meetings with the care that an exclusive use of the same does not prevail.

**The rooms and spaces are organized and structured to meet the different needs of the users.**

**The activities of the various groups take place in freedom and autonomy**, contributing as a whole to the overall planning of the Houses and the construction of a community identity.

## 5. Containers of Multiple Projects

**The Houses are containers, conceived and organized, capable of collecting and enhancing a mix of cultural, artistic, social and recreational activities and initiatives, information and advice desks, paid courses, free workshops, family services, shows, conferences, exhibitions.**

The Houses accompany and support individuals who intend to promote projects and events within them, **providing skills, spaces, ideas and resources** so that these can be carried out in an adequate and satisfactory manner and with an increasing level of autonomy and self-organization.

**The Houses are a point of artistic and cultural training and promotion**, as they recognize creativity and craft expression as a powerful tool for generating community and the future.

The Houses find their strength in the elements that unite and diversify them, such as the specificity that arises from individual histories, territories and people.

## 6. The operators: competent Social Craftsmen

The Houses are managed by teams capable of carrying out **planning and organizational functions**, coordinated by responsible figures capable of taking care of the overall direction by activating participatory management models. Each team working for the House **includes skills in different areas: social, relational, cultural, organizational and administrative**. The Houses identify with universal values such as freedom of expression, the right to participate in collective and political life, equality among people, social justice, the spirit of solidarity and respect for human rights are able to welcome, listen, accompany, and motivate citizens to be protagonists in the socio-cultural life of the community.

The operators of the Houses are social artisans, who act and develop their professionalism through

the learning that comes from experience and its analysis, from training courses, from the activation of exchanges and experimentation.

## 7. Intermediate places between the Public and the Private

The Houses are the result of actions of "shared administration" for the regeneration of urban commons, the result of collaboration between Municipal Administration and active citizens. The Houses perform an important public function, being privileged places of citizenship development and social network building, whose actions, guidelines and working methods are shared by the Public Administrations. The Houses are a tool for experimenting and building new "urban welfare".

The Houses are shared spaces where personal needs can be met in a collective way. Where participation and relationships are solicited and where the productivity of doing together is evident.

## 8. Spaces in search of the right balance between economic autonomy and public support

Neighborhood Houses aim to strike a balance between economic self-sustainability and public input.

The Houses exercise entrepreneurial skills in managing their own resources, developing ancillary and functional business activities for the project, and involving citizens in achieving a balanced budget through fundraising and collective contribution initiatives.

However, the Houses are not interested in achieving complete economic self-sustainability, which would entail the risk of falling into market economic logic and distorting the popular and social vocation of the project. For these reasons and because of the public function that the Houses perform, support from public and private entities in financing part of the services that respond to the rights of equality and equal opportunity is indispensable.

## 9. Places rooted in the Territory

The Houses are part of the Territory in which they are born and determined. The Houses develop, within themselves and with the realities with which they meet, whether profit or non-profit, the capacity to generate bridges, compare thoughts and methods, activate new synergies.

They create the appropriate environment to build relationships and social ties; privileging the activation of networks through doing together, the development of common projects, the relationship between people, groups and projects in a simple and immediate way. With a view to broadening its action to the whole territory, the Houses seek collaboration with the realities and structures present in the neighborhood in a design perspective of "diffuse House", capable of expressing itself beyond its own spaces.

## 10. Structures with their own form of Governance

The Houses are managed by various entities rooted in the area: first- and second-level associations, foundations or cooperatives, in some cases the result of a true participatory process that involved numerous local actors in the establishment phase.

The Houses are organizational structures capable of contributing to the redevelopment of the neighborhood by involving the different local realities, enhancing their work, initiatives, and ability to relate to citizens, recognizing all this as an effective "asset" expendable to build in a co-responsible way a local response to improve and develop the territory.

The Houses are management models capable of learning from experience, of constantly verifying the responsiveness of the various initiatives activated, of grasping and analyzing needs and expectations, and of continuously updating their project by adapting it to new needs.