



REDUCING  
HOUSING  
INEQUALITIES



## Case study report: Stavanger

**An extract from Deliverable 5.1, ‘Case study reports on green transition initiatives and their impact on housing inequalities,’ of the ReHousIn project**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 City/Town profile, challenges around just (housing and ecological) transition

Stavanger is the administrative centre of Rogaland County and the fourth most populous municipality in Norway, with an estimated 151,602 inhabitants in January 2026 (Municipality of Stavanger, 2026), which represents a growth of about 7,000 people since January 2020 (Statistics Norway, 2026a). Drivers of this growth include net in-migration, particularly of labour migrants (especially connected to the oil and gas industry – the backbone of Stavanger’s economic growth), students, and refugees. As of 2025, 21,4% of the population in Stavanger has an immigrant background, representing an increase of 7,5 percentage points since 2010 (Municipality of Stavanger, 2025b). Together with neighbouring Sandnes, Sola, and Randaberg, it forms the Stavanger–Sandnes conurbation, the third largest urban region in Norway, with 239,055 residents in 2024 (Statistics Norway, 2025a). This regional setting is important because major housing developments are concentrated along the corridor connecting Stavanger and Sandnes (*Bybånd*-urban belt), where urban growth is tightly linked to densification and transport infrastructure projects.

Fig 1. Location of case study city: Stavanger. Made by author



Stavanger's strong population growth has translated into increasing housing market pressure, and by 2025 the city ranked second only to Oslo in terms of housing affordability challenges, as measured by the nurse index (see appendix 5.2). In the first half of 2025, housing prices rose by 12.2%, outpacing Bergen (+8.1%), Oslo (+5.8%), and Trondheim (+4.8%) (Eiendom Norge, 2025). This marks a sharp contrast with a decade ago, when the downturn in the oil industry in 2014 triggered a significant decline in housing prices (Municipality of Stavanger, n.d.).

Rental costs show a similar upward trend. The average monthly rent for a two-room dwelling in Stavanger reached 11,400 NOK (about 970 euros) in 2025, compared to 8,740 NOK (about 743 euros) in 2020 (Statistics Norway, 2026b). Although these figures remain slightly below the national average (11,790 NOK per month for a two-room flat in 2025), the rapid rise illustrates the city's affordability challenges (Johannessen Litland and Sættem, 2026).

As of 2025, about 19.2% of Stavanger's population rents their home—either on the private market or in municipal housing—showing a slight increase from 18.6% in 2016. The remaining 80.8% are homeowners (Municipality of Stavanger, 2025a). The increase in market-rate rentals and persistent housing debt levels mirror broader Norwegian tendencies highlighted in Cavicchia et al. (2024). Beyond affordability, concerns related to housing quality and liveability have become more prominent. Small dwelling sizes, limited access to green spaces and the predominance of compact apartments in new developments, which are often poorly suited to the needs of young families wishing to remain within the city, are emerging issues.

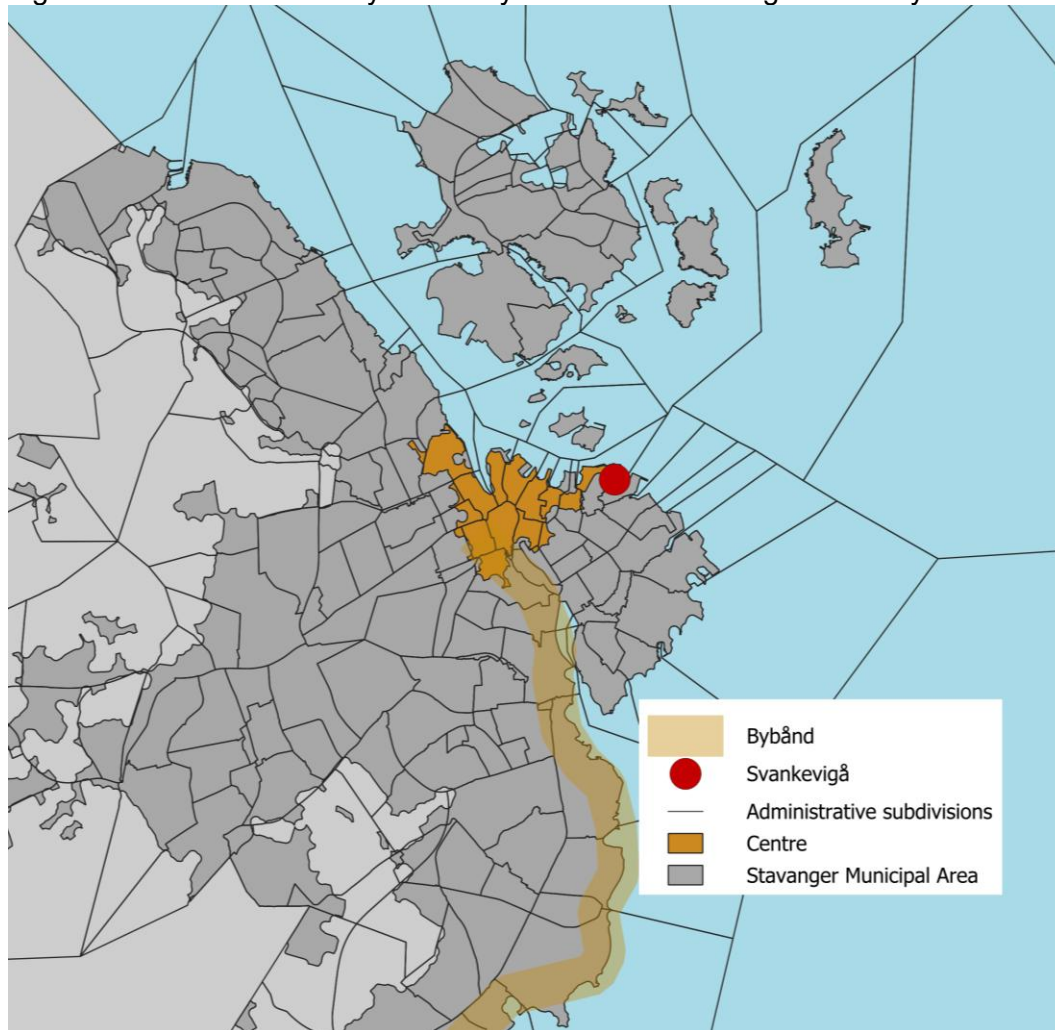
Environmental and climate policies form an important backdrop to these housing dynamics, but they are also associated with a number of challenges. Densification, which is the main strategy explored in this case, while central to Stavanger's strategy for reducing car dependency has intensified tensions around housing quality, housing accessibility and quality to green spaces, especially concerning their size and spatial distribution. Although municipal planning documents emphasise "densification with quality", ensuring that higher densities translate into liveable neighbourhoods has proven difficult in practice, particularly along the *Bybånd*-Urban Belt (Municipality of Stavanger, 2018, 2024).

Housing policy responses are articulated in Stavanger's social housing thematic plan (Boligsosial temaplan 2022–2025), which positions housing as a core pillar of welfare and aims to reduce social inequalities by ensuring access to adequate and affordable homes. The plan highlights four main areas: improving neighborhood quality where municipal housing is concentrated; reducing homelessness and reliance on temporary accommodation; expanding and diversifying the supply of municipal housing to meet rising demand, particularly for families and people with special needs; and supporting pathways from renting to ownership to improve turnover and affordability. Despite annual allocations for new housing, the plan notes that growth in the municipal housing stock has been minimal (5.2% as of 2023), waitlists remain long, and affordability challenges persist, especially for larger family units. The strategy combines operational measures such as counseling and housing allocation with long-term policy, financing, and governance efforts, and will be revised in 2026 to align with new national legislation.

## 1.2 Green Transition Interventions in Stavanger: Bybånd (city belt) and Svankevigå

Over the past two decades, Stavanger has progressively aligned its urban development strategy with national and regional climate objectives, placing densification at the core of its green transition agenda. Two initiatives—the Bybånd (urban belt) and the redevelopment of Svankevigå—illustrate both the ambitions and contradictions of this approach (Fig. 2).

Fig 2. Location of case study areas: Bybånd and Svankevigå. Made by author



The Bybånd concept emerged in the early 2000s as a regional strategy to concentrate growth along the Stavanger–Sandnes axis, linking land-use planning with investments in public transport. From the 2010s onward, the strategy has been operationalised through transit-oriented development around railway stations (Paradis, Jåttåvågen) and high-capacity bus corridors, alongside stricter limits on outward urban expansion. Key projects such as Jåttåvågen exemplify this shift: former industrial and agricultural areas are being transformed into high-density mixed-use districts, with the explicit aim of reducing car dependency, protecting surrounding farmland, and improving infrastructure efficiency. While environmentally progressive, these interventions have struggled to deliver affordable housing,

with new developments largely catering to higher-income groups—highlighting a tension between climate-friendly urbanism and social inclusion.

Fig 3. Development along the Bybånd. Picture: Rebecca Cavicchia



Svankevigå represents a more recent and contested phase of Stavanger’s densification agenda. Since the late 2010s, growing pressure to redevelop centrally located waterfront sites has intensified. The 2023 rezoning plan marks a turning point, proposing the replacement of low-rent, culturally vibrant industrial spaces with dense residential blocks. Framed as a sustainable inner-city regeneration project, the initiative has raised concerns about displacement, loss of informal social infrastructure, and gentrification.

Fig 4. The industrial character of Svankevigå. Picture: Rebecca Cavicchia



Table 1. Key data on case study area of Stavanger.

	<b>Bybånd</b>	<b>Svankevigå</b>
Neighborhood characteristics (general social type, economic activities, density, etc.)	Linear urban corridor (approx. 9 km); mixed residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural land; increasing density near public transport nodes	Small inner-city waterfront area; former industrial sheds; low built density; strong cultural and community-based uses; low-rent spaces
Duration	Strategy: early 2000s–present. Implementation: 2010s–present. Key areas of development: Jåttåvågen, Paradis, Hillevåg (ongoing)	Strategy: late 2010s–present. Implementation: 2023–present. Key element: rezoning and demolition plan
Funding	Public funding (Bymiljøpakken), about 30million NOK (until 2033) for the transport infrastructure. Private funding (developers) for housing development	Private devs (OBOS, Nordr); Stavanger Municipality (planning authority)
Actor constellation	Stavanger and Sandnes Municipality, RFK, NTP, developers	Stavanger Municipality, private devs, cultural actors, civic groups, NEB-STAR
Aims and objectives	TOD; densification near PT; reduce car dependency; regional growth management	Inner-city densification; new housing; activated waterfront; improved connectivity
Specific physical measures	High-density mixed-use development.; rail + Bus; cycling lanes; station-area hubs	Demolition of sheds; 5–8 storey blocks; ≈100 dwellings; new pedestrian route; partial land infill; green area in between the buildings.
Accompanying housing policy/regulatory measures	Zoning for high density	Standard zoning; no protection for low-rent cultural uses
Key social tensions or/and benefits between greening and housing	Benefit: climate-friendly mobility. Tension: high prices, family housing gap, construction disruption	Benefit: central housing supply, redevelopment of industrial area. Tensions: displacement, gentrification, loss of cultural/social infrastructures

## 2 Methods

The qualitative material is based on 15 semi-structured interviews (see interviewee list in Appendix 2) conducted between May and October 2025. All interviews lasted between one hour and one and a half hours, enabling in-depth discussion of planning strategies, governance arrangements, and their social and spatial implications. In particular, the interviews focused on local perceptions of green transition and densification initiatives, their interactions with housing inequalities (affordability, displacement, access, and security), and the tensions or synergies between environmental objectives and social outcomes.

Interviews were conducted primarily online via Microsoft Teams (14 interviews) and recorded using the platform's built-in recording function, which generated automatic transcripts. One interview was conducted in person and recorded using an iPhone, with transcription generated automatically. Interviewees included urban planners, private developers, municipal practitioners, representatives of civil society and activist groups, and expert researchers. Participants were selected through a purposive sampling strategy, based on their relevance to the Bybånd and Svankevigå case studies identified through desk research, and subsequently expanded through a snowball sampling approach.

All interviews were conducted in English. Transcripts were reviewed and polished using an AI-based transcription support tool approved by SIKT—the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research, which provides national guidance on secure and ethically compliant use of digital research tools.

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. All participants received information about the project's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained prior to each interview. Interview data were stored securely and handled in accordance with institutional and national data protection guidelines. Transcripts were anonymised during processing, and identifying details were removed or generalised in the reporting of results.

Additional qualitative methods included two walking tours conducted during fieldwork: one in Svankevigå with two representatives of a local activist group, and one along the Bybånd corridor in late October. These were used for situated observation and informal elicitation.

Interview transcripts and field notes were coded and analysed using NVivo, following a thematic qualitative analysis approach. Background research included strategic planning documents, laws and regulations, municipal and consultant reports, media coverage, academic literature, and grey literature related to densification, green transition policies, and housing inequalities.

An important limitation concerns the composition of the Bybånd interview sample, which consists primarily of practitioners, planners, architects, and decision-makers. Attempts to recruit resident participants were not successful. This partly reflects broader contextual conditions: in Norway — and particularly in smaller urban contexts — there is generally a limited tradition of organized urban activism and resident-based mobilization around planning and development projects. From this perspective, the Svankevigå case documented in this

report represents a relatively rare and distinctive example of local activist engagement. Nevertheless, the absence of direct resident interviews means that the empirical narrative of Bybånd is more strongly grounded in institutional and professional perspectives, while residents' experiences and reactions are captured only indirectly through stakeholder accounts, activist contributions, and documentary sources.

### **3 Civic Perceptions of Densification strategies in Case Study Areas: Bybånd and Svankevigå**

The following sections present the results of the interview analysis through a set of thematic lenses applied to both the Bybånd and Svankevigå cases, as relevant examples of densification strategies and ambitions in Stavanger. The analysis is structured to first capture how each theme emerges at the level of the broader city strategy of Bybånd, and subsequently how it materialises in the more localized and contested context of Svankevigå. While Bybånd is discussed primarily through the perspectives of municipal planners, architects, and policy-oriented actors, Svankevigå is analysed by a higher diversity of interviewees like local activists, residents, researchers, a municipal planner and the project developer. This difference in interviewee composition influences how issues such as social impacts, participation, power relations, and political mobilisation are articulated and will be further discussed in Section 4.

#### **3.1 (Civic perceptions of) precedents and implementation**

This section first outlines the Bybånd strategy as a broader framework for transit-oriented densification in the Stavanger–Sandnes region, before turning to Svankevigå as an inner-city redevelopment case that reflects multiple tensions in Stavanger's urban transformation agenda

Rather than a single project, Bybånd is consistently framed as a long-term spatial strategy aimed at restructuring urban growth along the main public transport corridor between Stavanger and the neighboring municipality of Sandnes.

Fig 5. Area under development along the Bybånd. Picture: Rebecca Cavicchia



Municipal representatives describe Bybånd as a response to multiple, overlapping policy goals: primarily reducing car dependency, but also concentrating growth in already built-up areas, protecting agricultural and natural land, and supporting a compact city structure around rail and bus infrastructure. **Densification along the Bybånd is closely linked to ideas such as the 10-minute city, transit-oriented development, and climate mitigation through reduced transport emissions (ST4, ST1).** Implementation, however, is described as structurally constrained. Most land within the Bybånd is privately owned and fragmented, limiting the municipality's capacity to steer outcomes (especially concerning housing) beyond regulatory frameworks and negotiated incentives (ST4, ST6).

"We do not own a big development area, but we own the framework and the strategy of how we want it to develop. We are not the whole solution; we have to work together with private developers to get what we want." *ST4 – Planner working with community and strategic planning*

Several interviewees working with strategic planning emphasise that transformation projects along the Bybånd are capital-intensive, slow, and risky, particularly compared to greenfield development, with infrastructure costs and environmental upgrades ultimately feeding into higher housing prices, as developers are often responsible not only for housing but also for local infrastructures and green areas (ST6, ST8). Concerns about affordability, accessibility, and uneven access to green amenities are acknowledged, but often framed as systemic challenges rather than project-specific responsibilities.

“It’s clear there are dilemmas: prices go up after transformation, and infrastructure/green upgrades go into the final price. In some periods, the difference between old and new housing was almost 50%. In Jåttåvågen, prices are high because you have to recreate nature and build all the infrastructure. It’s different from building on greenfield land.” S6 – *Planner*

Svankevigå enters the narrative as a specific site within Stavanger’s overall densification strategies. It is a small former industrial waterfront area located immediately east of Stavanger’s city centre, between the historic bathing site of Badedammen and the residential neighbourhoods of Storhaug. Over the past 15–20 years, it has been the subject of repeated redevelopment attempts, pauses, and reactivations, making it a particularly illustrative case of how inner-city densification and green transition ambitions intersect with locally embedded social and cultural practices.

“This is an area where there’s a lot of street art, graffiti. It’s where you’ll see rubbish on the ground, you know, plants growing through the cement. It’s a little bit grungy, it’s rustic and that is what many people like about the area.” S10- *Researcher*

The redevelopment of Svankevigå was described by interviewees as the outcome of a long and incremental process in which broader urban strategies, private land ownership, and local socio-economic conditions gradually intersected (ST10; ST14; ST11). Historically used for maritime and industrial activities, the area lost much of its original function over time and rather than being fully transformed, existing buildings were reused in ad hoc ways, shaping a physically fragmented but vibrant urban environment.

“But along Svankevigå it was this stage for alternative music performances. There was a small workshop for fixing bikes and quite a large woodworking workshop that is open for everyone, almost as a social project for people that might be disabled or didn’t have work. They could come there and do carpentry during daytime. Yes, it was very nice.” ST12 – *Local Activist*

From the municipal perspective, the site came to be seen as part of a wider strategy to reuse centrally located former industrial land and to strengthen Stavanger’s city centre through densification (ST14). Concentrating new housing in inner-city locations was framed as environmentally beneficial, given proximity to public transport, services, and walkable destinations, and as a way to reinforce the city centre as a social and cultural anchor. Within this logic, Svankevigå was interpreted as an underused site with potential to accommodate new housing while contributing to broader sustainability objectives.

Development plans for Svankevigå existed well before the recent public debate. Interviewees noted that the land had been acquired by a private developer in the mid-2000s and that zoning plans allowing residential development were already in place by the early 2010s (ST11; ST10). However, implementation stalled following a sharp downturn in Stavanger’s housing market

linked to the oil price crisis in 2015, which made apartment sales unviable (ST11; ST12). As a result, redevelopment was postponed for several years.

“So, they tried to sell these in the market, and they had 100 dwellings, but they sold only one. That was in 2015 when we also had that economic crisis with oil prices, so there were several reasons for that. But the framework for this plan was inherited into the next plan. And this 2010 plan proposed tearing down everything, create a totally new area, forget about history, in a way. And they inherited it and made a new plan that was still proposing to tear down everything, and this plan was approved in the building council as a first-time improvement and then you have the public hearing. And then it started, you know, with those two buildings there. What OBOS had done was to rent these buildings out very cheaply to have activity in the area, and then the people that rented it liked it that much that they wanted to stay. So, it's a difficult situation.” *ST14 - Architect*

In the last decade, the existing buildings were rented out at low cost (also as part of an area-based development program), enabling a range of cultural, social, and community-oriented activities to emerge (ST10; ST12). A carpentry workshop (*Storhaug Snekkeforening*), performance spaces in the cultural center RIMI-IMIR, a bicycle repair place, and saunas took advantage of the flexible and inexpensive premises. Interviewees consistently emphasised that these uses transformed Svankevigå into a socially inclusive, active and vibrant urban environment. The area was described as a “melting pot” that brought together artists, migrants, students, and people with limited economic resources alongside more established users (ST12; ST15). Over time, these activities generated strong place attachment and everyday use, turning the area into a valued meeting place rather than a vacant redevelopment site. Against this background, Svankevigå came to be perceived as one of the few remaining inner-city spaces in Stavanger offering openness, diversity, and inclusiveness.

Fig 6. One of the buildings that will be demolished to make space for the OBOS densification plan in Svankevigå. Picture: Rebecca Cavicchia



When redevelopment plans were revived in the early 2020s, these accumulated meanings became central to public debate. Developer representatives framed the new proposal as bringing quality to the area being more open and greener than earlier plans, emphasizing public access and improved connections (ST11). Researchers and civil society actors, however, described the proposal in more concrete and critical terms, focusing on the planned demolition of key buildings, partial infilling of the inlet, and the construction of approximately 90–100 apartments. In their view, the project places insufficient emphasis on the quality of the built environment and provides limited consideration of basic services and shared functions needed to support community life and social interaction (ST10; ST12).

Land ownership<sup>1</sup> emerged as a decisive factor shaping how these tensions unfolded. Interviewees across roles emphasised that the site had long been privately owned, limiting the municipality's capacity to intervene beyond regulatory planning instruments (ST11; ST14).

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<sup>1</sup> Norwegian municipalities generally control little land, and in this case owned only a very small portion of the site, offering limited leverage in negotiations

As the planning process advanced, opposition intensified and the project became subject to political debate, public hearings, and multiple revisions (ST13; ST15). Civil society actors described repeated cycles of proposal, contestation, and adjustment, with disagreements centring on the loss of existing social and cultural uses, development scale, and waterfront transformation (ST13; ST15). At the time of the interviews, implementation remained uncertain and strongly dependent on market conditions, with construction contingent on the pre-sale of 50% of the planned dwellings (ST11; ST12).

### 3.2 (Civic perceptions of) participation and governance (procedural)

While both Bybånd and Svankevigå are subject to statutory participation requirements under the Norwegian Planning and Building Act, the meaning, reach, and perceived effectiveness of participation differ substantially between the two cases, reflecting differences in scale and actor composition, but also in the typology of interviewees.

Within the Bybånd framework, participation is primarily described by municipal planners, strategic advisors, and coordinators as a structured and iterative process aimed at informing planning decisions and building broader legitimacy for densification. Interviewees working at the municipal level emphasise workshops, surveys, and targeted engagement strategies as key tools for civic inclusion, particularly in relation to public space and neighbourhood-level interventions. A city centre coordinator describes how large public workshops were organised during 2018 to gather residents' input on the design and programming of a new green park "Lervigpark" located in a new densification area in Stavanger East (ST9). These processes generated substantial feedback, but also revealed participation biases, with older residents overrepresented and families or working-age households less visible. In response, the municipality experimented with alternative formats, including smaller, network-based meetings ("gjestebud"), designed to reach "silent voices" who typically do not attend formal workshops (ST9). **From this perspective, participation is framed as an evolving practice, requiring constant adaptation and institutional learning.** Municipal planners involved in Bybånd also acknowledge **limits to participation, particularly regarding communication and alignment across political and administrative levels.** One interviewee reflects on the difficulty of ensuring that planners, administrators, and politicians share the same priorities, noting that disagreements at higher levels can undermine both participation outcomes and public trust (ST3). Here, participation is understood less as direct co-decision and more as a mechanism for gathering knowledge and offering input on smaller aspects of project design and implementation.

"We had a big workshop where we invited all the citizens in that area to ask them what they want for the park, and we got a lot of inputs there, but we also saw that many of the participants were elder people, so they were people who had time to come and give us inputs. So, we didn't see any families there. That's why we decided to apply an organisation that's called (\*unintelligible), a Norwegian organisation to help us have more workshops for including the "silent" voices. And then we designed a participation process for those people who usually don't show up for those workshops. So, we used some of the networks in the area. We have an organisation in that area that is sort of connecting all these small

organisations, so we used them. And then we invited some of the inhabitants to what we call “gjestebud” in Norwegian, where you just invite some of your friends or your neighbours and then you discuss some themes related to the park, and what you want from the park.”

*ST9 - Planner*

From a more critical standpoint, a housing justice researcher highlights that while participation is legally mandated, its effectiveness depends on how inclusive it is in practice. Underrepresented groups—such as immigrants or low-income households—are formally included but often harder to reach, requiring proactive and resource-intensive engagement strategies (ST5). In the Bybånd context, participation is thus portrayed as institutionally anchored but uneven, with a stronger focus on consultation and information than on shared decision-making.

In Svankevigå, participation is described as reactive, conflict-driven, and closely intertwined with political mobilisation. Several interviewees recount how civic inclusion in Svankevigå extended well beyond the immediate neighbourhood, reflecting strong emotional and symbolic attachment to the area. A researcher involved in the case describes how residents were supported in organising a petition that gathered around 600 signatures, indicating a level of engagement that surpassed formal participation channels (ST10). At the same time, this broad engagement was uneven: while online activity and written contributions were extensive, sustained attendance at meetings proved more difficult (ST10). **Local activists express deep scepticism about the quality and purpose of formal participation processes.** Participation is frequently described as procedural rather than substantive, fulfilling legal requirements without granting real influence. One activist explicitly refers to a politician’s statement that “*participation is not co-decision*”, emphasising that participation is advisory and carries no legal power (ST12). This distinction is central to how participation is perceived in Svankevigå: as an obligation imposed by law rather than a genuine opportunity to shape outcomes.

“There was one politician that said: ‘*medvirkning* (participation) is not *medbestemmelse* (co-decision)’. So, with “*medvirkning*” you have no legal rights, it's only advisory. So, the entrepreneurs or the real estate developers don't necessarily take these processes or the critique seriously.” *ST12 – Local Activist*

The technical complexity and volume of planning documents further contribute to perceptions of exclusion. **Activists describe participation as time-consuming, emotionally draining, and linguistically inaccessible, arguing that professional planning language effectively monopolises opportunities for influence** (ST12). The result, according to one of the interviewees, is not empowerment but frustration and fatigue, with participation processes leaving people “depressed afterwards” rather than included (ST12).

“Yes, there was a very large common meeting with politicians from most of the parties in Stavanger. Well, there were several lectures, and representatives of the neighbours and the carpentry workshop. And the argumentation was so good that the politicians decided to preserve the building where there was the factory. Yeah, they wanted to preserve the

carpentry workshop and the bicycle workshop. And they wanted it to be a place for the municipality. They wanted to buy it. But then a year after, they decided the opposite. So, it was quite a depressing participation project thing because we had a lot of common-sense suggestions... If they wanted to build something, they could build something that will make the neighbourhood better, and preserve this activity that already existed there. But after a while, the politicians didn't want to hear it anymore, so they decided the opposite. They accepted the plan from OBOS." *ST12 -Local Activist*

Municipal representatives acknowledge shortcomings in participation practices in Svankevigå, highlighting that participation efforts were insufficient and often occurred too late in the process, when plans were already largely defined (ST14). From the developer's perspective, participation is framed as an earnest but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to communicate and negotiate within an already approved planning framework. A project manager from OBOS describes early-phase surveys, digital workshops, and information meetings as evidence of good intentions, while also acknowledging that dialogue with tenants and creative actors failed to produce acceptable compromises and escalated into public controversy (ST11).

### 3.3 (Civic perceptions of) (in)equity (distributional)

In the Bybånd case, stakeholder perceptions often frame densification and transit-oriented development in terms of collective urban benefits, even if negative implications were largely discussed (see next sections). Interviewees involved in planning and development frequently emphasise positive expected outcomes, including improved public transport accessibility, increased housing supply, greener neighbourhoods, and more efficient land use (ST6, ST8). Some actors highlight that previously underused or industrial areas are being transformed into housing and green areas that may improve neighbourhood quality and everyday usability (ST9). Even if multiple challenges related to housing accessibility were identified, a municipal planner describes the BYbånd strategy as enabling more people — including families, elderly residents, and younger households — to live in well-connected urban areas, supported by new apartments and upgraded mobility systems, while at the same time the risk is to develop areas with high pollution levels (ST3).

So, I guess if we do the right things, you can have so many nice places for people to live here, and I think this includes the elderly and the young, and children and families, and everybody. So, there was something here about how to point out the best quality areas and maybe start the transformation there instead of always looking at the collective transportation system. So, we have, for instance, a big plan near the collective transportation system, and that's very good, but also near the highway [...] of course, here you will have a lot of pollution, a lot of noise. ST3 – Planner working with community and strategic planning

Interviewees involved in the Svankevigå case articulate a strong and recurring sense of injustice, linked both to the planning process itself and to its distributive outcomes. Perceptions of unfairness are particularly pronounced among local activists and users of the area, who describe redevelopment as a process that systematically marginalises existing communities while privileging economic interests.

A central dimension of perceived injustice relates to participation processes, which -as already mentioned - are not only seen as ineffective, but as actively producing feelings of exclusion and resignation. Rather than offering channels for influence, participation is experienced as exhausting and demoralising, contributing to what interviewees describe as a broader erosion of trust in democratic planning institutions (ST12).

This sense of injustice is also closely tied to perceptions of profit-driven development. Several interviewees frame the Svankevigå project as primarily motivated by financial gain, with limited concern for neighbourhood quality, aesthetics, or existing social life.

And then we got this thing from OBOS that said they wanted to build something, and that they wanted to have this information meeting. So, there were a lot of people that went to this information meeting and so many people were really frustrated by the new plans. But not just this project, people all over the town didn't feel heard and seen. And I felt like the entrepreneurs were just building houses, lots of houses, and they were not balancing with the schools, kindergartens and different kinds of recreational places for other people to be parks and places to socialize. It's always just about building houses, and that's where the money is. ST15 – Local Activist

Perceived injustice is also articulated through experiences of temporal uncertainty and dispossession, particularly among community initiatives and users of the area. Cultural and social actors describe how prolonged vacancy, lack of clear communication, and the absence of concrete alternatives generate insecurity and waste existing social resources. As one interviewee noted, *“it's been standing one year empty* (referring to the two buildings that OBOS will tear down to make a new residential development). *So, we could have been there”* (ST13), while another highlighted how uncertainty undermines long-term engagement: *“all our energy is spent wondering how we can't do something because we don't know how long we're going to stay”* (ST13). This suggests that injustice is not only spatial but also temporal, unfolding through waiting and uncertainty.

Interviewees also emphasise that the groups most affected by these dynamics are those already facing structural vulnerability. Local activists stress that the surrounding area scores low on municipal living-condition indicators and is home to migrants, disabled residents, young people, and elderly residents (ST12). The displacement or marginalisation of these groups is therefore perceived as particularly unjust, as it risks deepening existing inequalities rather than addressing them. While one displaced activity was able to relocate independently to a site very close to the former venue—without support from either the municipality or the developers—the performative arts centre and the carpentry workshop have yet to secure new premises.

*“Yeah, I think that one thing that comes out of all these participation processes I’ve been part of is that people are quite depressed afterwards. You have plans and you have wishes and you have a neighbourhood that you care for, and neither the real estate owners nor developers or politicians care. They want to build it, and they want to build fast, and they want to earn a lot of money, but they don’t care about neighbourhoods and people already living there. So, that’s what we are trying to fight now... Democracy is important.” (ST12)*

At the same time, some interview material also documents **limited distributional gains** achieved through political negotiation. These include **stronger requirements for socially active ground-floor uses and the preservation of selected community amenities such as saunas** (ST14). These outcomes are described as “small victories” that introduce elements of social sustainability into the project, but they are consistently characterised as incremental concessions rather than structural equity safeguards (ST14).

### 3.4 (Civic perceptions of) political mobilization

This section examines how political mobilization unfolds differently at the scale of the Bybånd strategy and in the place-specific case of Svankevigå, highlighting variations in focus, intensity, and modes of engagement.

In the Bybånd context, political mobilization is primarily described as linked to specific, concrete issues rather than as an opposition to the strategy itself. Interviewees working with community and strategic planning refer to recurrent debates and conflicts related to densification, infrastructure, and perceived overdevelopment, particularly in areas undergoing rapid change like the redevelopment of the residential areas of Paradis and Jattåvågen along the Bybånd. However, these dynamics are often framed as debates rather than as organized collective action, and interviewees involved with city development note that concerns about gentrification are more visible in public discourse than in quantitative evidence. Political mobilization around transport infrastructure emerges as one of the clearest examples of city-wide protest. A municipal planner describes large demonstrations against the Bussveien project and road tolls (“bompenger”), including street protests (ST3). In this case, mobilization is not directly linked to housing densification, but it strongly influences the political climate in which Bybånd is implemented.

“I think there has been discussion about this “Bussveien” project, the collective transportation system. And people maybe think it's too expensive, it takes too much space from the gardens and the parking space, for instance. And they would not go by bus, they would drive. Everybody has their own car, everybody will drive where they want. So, that's what they think. And they will not have this “bompenger” (road tolls). Yes, and people hate that, so there have been really big demonstrations a few years ago. They were taking it to the streets and screaming, having this megaphone. And even a political party was founded on the issue of road tolls, and there was a lot of noise connected to that. So, that's the main thing. We have also looked at how different the housing that was already built in the “Bybåndet” is. There were already a lot of detached houses there. So, there is quite a lot built there. I have not heard much noise from them. I think most of them think it's OK that there will be another way of building (more compact). There's been a bit too much of block

apartments in one place called Paradis where you could have a really nice development and now it's 10 blocks. So, people maybe think it's not the way they wanted it to be, but it's not hard discussions." *ST3 - Planner*

Other forms of political engagement at the Bybånd scale appear more institutionalized. For example, a planner describes how political support at the district level played a proactive role in advancing the development of Lervig Park based on citizen input, with politicians endorsing the overall need for green space rather than contesting specific design choices (ST9). Here, political mobilization is channelled through representative institutions rather than through protest or opposition. Political contestation at the Bybånd scale appears sporadic and uneven—visible in large infrastructure debates (e.g. Bussveien, toll roads, Paradis), but less consistently tied to housing or displacement concerns (ST3, ST8).

In contrast, Svankevigå is characterised by intensive, place-based political mobilization. Mobilization here emerges as a response to a concrete and perceivedly irreversible threat: the redevelopment of a site that hosted long-standing social, cultural, and community-oriented activities.

Several interviewees describe how mobilisation began once residents and users of the area received the development plans proposed by OBOS. Neighbours organised meetings, coordinated critique, and submitted collective statements during the public hearing process (ST12). A researcher involved in the case highlights the formation and role of *Bevar Svankevigå* (Protect Svankevigå), an organisation dedicated to preserving key buildings and activities, including the carpentry workshop and the cultural centre RIMI/IMIR (ST10). According to this interviewee, Svankevigå stands out as one of the few places in Stavanger where redevelopment triggered a “big public outcry” and sustained mobilisation starting from approximately 2020, during COVID-19 pandemics (ST10). Political mobilization in Svankevigå extended beyond formal participation channels. Interviewees refer to petitions signed by dozens—and in some cases hundreds—of people, public meetings attended by politicians from multiple parties, and sustained media engagement (ST10, ST14). While some mobilisation focused on opposing the developer, frustration was also directed at the municipality, particularly regarding its earlier decision not to purchase the property and protect existing activities (ST10).

Importantly, mobilization in Svankevigå also took the form of neighbourhood advocacy. Local activists did not only oppose the redevelopment, but also engaged with planning rules and governance structures, scrutinising dispensations related to building height, volume, and land use, and developing alternative proposals. One such proposal involved municipal acquisition of one of the two buildings to be demolished (the Dokken building) and collaborative development with local initiatives, prepared together with the city architect and submitted to the municipality (ST10). Activists describe these efforts as an engagement with institutional procedures rather than outright rejection of them (ST15).

### 3.5 (Civic perceptions of) socio-ecological impacts/benefits (positive)

This section maps how interviewees describe the intended and perceived positive socio-ecological outcomes of densification, contrasting the strategic framing of Bybånd in terms of accessibility, public space, and green infrastructure with the more contingent and negotiated benefits described in Svankevigå.

Interviewees working with strategic planning in both Stavanger and the nearby municipality of Sandnes describe Bybånd as a project with explicit ambitions for positive social outcomes. Across these interviews, Bybånd is associated with improved accessibility, enhanced public spaces, and the creation of more liveable, connected neighbourhoods. Densification along transport corridors is seen as a way to support everyday mobility, reduce car dependency, and create conditions for more inclusive urban life, particularly for groups such as the elderly, young people, and families (ST1, ST3). Several interviewees among planners and strategic plan coordinators emphasise that Bybånd has been accompanied by deliberate efforts to integrate green infrastructure and public spaces into redevelopment processes. New parks, upgraded streets, and nature-based solutions are described as contributing not only to environmental goals but also to social well-being, health, and opportunities for everyday interaction (ST1, ST9). In this framing, formerly underused or industrial areas are transformed into mixed-use environments combining housing, green spaces, and improved public amenities, thereby increasing the overall attractiveness of the city and expanding access to urban qualities for a larger population (ST3, ST9).

*“The one side is that this is a really good thing. You will have a fantastic transportation system; you will come near to it. There will be a lot of apartments here that will give a lot of people the possibility to live in a new apartment, and I guess there will be quite a lot of people living in these apartments.”* ST3 – Planner working with community and strategic planning

At the same time, some of the interviewed planners acknowledge that these positive social impacts are not evenly distributed and may come with side effects, such as rising housing prices and changing neighbourhood demographics. While green areas and improved public spaces are widely seen as beneficial, they are also recognised as factors that can increase attractiveness and property values, potentially contributing to exclusionary dynamics over time (ST9). Furthermore, issues related to open construction sites, construction disruption issues, lack of attractiveness and neighborhood quality were discussed.

Svankevigå is described as a more contested and ambivalent case, where positive social impacts are perceived as limited, negotiated, and largely reactive. From a municipal perspective, political debate around Svankevigå led to concrete, though modest, adjustments in the plan. These included requirements for more socially oriented ground-floor uses rather than parking, which one interviewee described as *“the tiny victory that came out of this whole process”* (ST14). Similarly, the decision to retain certain existing amenities—such as the saunas in the area—is framed by a municipal planner as another incremental gain resulting

from mobilisation and negotiation rather than from the original development vision (ST14). These elements are perceived as potentially contributing to everyday social life and maintaining some continuity with previous uses of the area. However, they are consistently described as exceptions, rather than as indicators of a socially driven redevelopment logic.

From the developer’s perspective, the transformation of a former industrial area into housing is seen as a way to improve the city centre and respond to housing demand, contributing to urban renewal and increased activity (ST11). From the perspective of the local cycling-business, densification can create new economic opportunities at the micro scale as increased density combined with reduced parking is expected to generate more cyclists and customers (ST13).

*“Now I can look at it differently, because if there comes a lot of apartments with no parking places, there’s going to be more bicycles and more customers for me. So, if I look at it from a business perspective, of course there will be more activity.”* ST13- Local activist and business owner

At the same time, interviewees stress that Svankevigå previously functioned as a socially open and diverse space, hosting a wide range of users and informal activities. While redevelopment is expected to make the area more “polished,” some interviewees acknowledge that formalisation may also stabilise certain functions and improve accessibility, provided that space remains for diverse social groups (ST15). These reflections suggest that positive social impacts are not entirely absent.

### **3.6 (Civic perceptions of) socio-ecological impacts/harms (negative)**

In this section we outline perceived negative consequences of densification in the two cases, focusing on how affordability pressures, liveability trade-offs, and socio-spatial exclusion are discussed as systemic risks in the Bybånd context and as immediate and concrete losses in Svankevigå.

From the perspective of municipal planners and strategic advisors, Bybånd is increasingly associated with tensions between densification goals and housing affordability. Some of the interviewed planners note that although the compact-city model is intended to reduce sprawl and improve sustainability, rising housing costs in central areas are pushing households to relocate to neighbouring municipalities. As one municipal advisor involved in the social dimension of the planning strategy observed, people move out of Stavanger in search of affordable housing, resulting in patterns of city spreading that contradict the original intent of densification (ST1).

“...we also have this social part where we experience that people move from Stavanger city to neighboring municipalities, because of more affordable housing in Sandnes or Sola, and then you have this city spreading, not as we planned. And we also have this city area that is a common work area and transport area, but it’s different municipalities. Stavanger

is the biggest one, and you have Sandnes, Sola, and Randaberg, and different policies in the other municipalities. That's where we're not working together, but in some parts against each other. It's making it difficult for us to achieve our goals. We also see differences in house pricing in the city centre of Stavanger and in more dense areas that are cheaper. And so, it's more difficult for people who don't have much money to decide where they are going to live and buy a house. This way you get an area with notable social and economic differences." *ST1 - Advisor and project manager for community planning*

Interviewees also highlight spatial inequities in how densification benefits are distributed. Areas with higher concentrations of low-income households are described as having fewer new green areas and lower environmental quality, while investments in green infrastructure and public space tend to concentrate in redevelopment zones associated with Bybånd (ST1, ST4). This creates a situation in which sustainability improvements risk becoming selective, reinforcing rather than reducing socio-spatial inequalities. A recurring concern raised by the interviewees involved with city planning as advisors and architects is that new – high environmental standards - housing produced through densification is often too expensive to fulfil its intended social function. Interviewees describe how infrastructure costs, land values, and design standards translate into high sales prices, making it difficult for families, young people, or lower-income households to access housing in central areas (ST4, ST6, ST7). Even strategies aimed at encouraging downsizing—such as moving older residents from villas into apartments—are described as problematic, since new apartments are often more expensive than existing homes, limiting mobility within the housing system (ST4, ST8). Several interviewees also point to quality-of-life trade-offs linked to Bybånd-related development. Housing located close to transport corridors may benefit from accessibility, but is also exposed to noise, pollution, and limited green space, raising questions about liveability, especially for families with children (ST3, ST4).

In Svankevigå, interviewees emphasise direct experiences of exclusion and loss of sense of place. A central concern relates to housing affordability, as new apartments are likely to be expensive due to location, land values, effectively limiting access to wealthier households (ST10, ST11, ST12). This fuels perceptions that redevelopment will reinforce exclusion rather than alleviate it. The project is thus interpreted not as neutral urban transformation, but as part of a wider process of gentrification described as *“a destructive project that is excluding a lot of people that live in the area or perhaps could have lived there if it was cheaper. So, I think this project is part of the gentrification in this area.”* (ST12).

Displacement emerges as a key theme. Interviewees describe how cultural initiatives and community-based activities—such as the carpentry workshop, bicycle repair shop, and the RIMI/IMIR cultural space—were required to leave, often with short notice and without viable alternatives (ST10, ST11, ST12, ST13, ST15). For local activists, this is framed not only as the loss of individual tenants, but as the removal of social infrastructure that supported everyday interaction, inclusion, and low-cost activities. A researcher involved in the case highlights how the redevelopment eliminated spaces that enabled community-building and well-being, particularly for people with limited financial resources (ST10).

“And we also complained about the gentrification because this alternative stage, bicycle workshop and carpentry workshop had to move. They weren’t given an alternative, and they couldn’t afford it to rent in this new building because it’s probably quite expensive, I think.” *ST12 – Local Activist*

Interviewees also raise concerns about the quality of the built environment that is being produced. Local activists describe nearby green areas associated with dense housing as poorly designed and underused, due to wind exposure, lack of sunlight, and limited functionality (ST12). Others argue that the project provides only minimal green space and lacks essential social infrastructure such as kindergartens, informal meeting places, and spaces for non-commercial social life (ST15).

You have these many apartments, it should be this much green area and stuff. And now they had to build 10 apartments less, and they were really not happy about it because that’s less income. And more of this green area, but the green area is still on a bare minimum. I think there’s still not enough green area, and there are no kindergartens. So, if you don’t have kindergartens in the area that could handle the kids, some extra kids, and there’s no place for the elderly people to be, and there’s not many socializing places, if you don’t want to go to a bar or go to a fancy restaurant, but if you want to go to a place just to socialize and meet other people, there’s nothing like that in the area, so that’s what they took away. But you also have all this other social infrastructure that is not in place. It’s not a good place for kids; collective transport is not that good. There are not too many buses going there. The schools are not that good. The primary and elementary schools there are packed. And they’re just going to build more and more, and they don’t have a plan. *ST15 – Local Activist*

Combined with low parking provision and limited public transport options for families, this leads interviewees to expect that the area will primarily attract older or wealthier residents, reinforcing demographic homogeneity (ST15). Finally, several interviewees frame Svankevigå as part of a broader pattern of gentrification in eastern Stavanger, characterised by rapid transformation, rising prices, and the gradual displacement of low-income residents and informal activities (ST10, ST12, ST13).

### **3.7 (Civic perceptions of) tensions and power dynamics between stakeholders/actors**

Here we investigate how power relations are perceived and explained, showing how Bybånd-related tensions are often described in institutional and structural terms, whereas in Svankevigå they are portrayed in relation to land ownership, political decisions, and affective experiences of uneven development.

In the Bybånd case, power dynamics are primarily articulated through institutional and professional lenses. Municipal planners and strategic advisors tend to describe tensions as systemic challenges embedded in the planning system, rather than as conflicts between identifiable actors. From this perspective, private sector influence is understood as a consequence of the Norwegian housing system, which is dominated by the private market and offers limited legal instruments for enforcing social objectives such as affordability (ST14). Architects and planners working within or alongside municipal institutions further emphasise the fragmented nature of development control, noting that when development is driven by privately owned plots, the municipality's ability to pursue comprehensive, city-wide objectives is constrained (ST7). Power asymmetries are thus framed as an outcome of project-based development and limited regulatory reach, rather than as deliberate dominance by individual developers.

“When it's private developers developing their own area, you don't see the city as a whole. It's very project based and not much like a comprehensive overview. We try to have comprehensive development, but often it gets small because developers only focus on their own land.” *ST7 – Architect in Sandnes Municipality*

This framing is also reflected in how professional actors discuss negotiation and incentives. Interviewees involved in urban development highlight contractual arrangements and value-capture mechanisms as the main tools available to public authorities, implicitly accepting that social outcomes must be bargained for rather than guaranteed (ST6). Within this interview material, tensions appear technocratic and normalised as part of contemporary urban governance.

In the Svankevigå case interviewees offer a more experiential and conflict-oriented portrayal of power dynamics. Local activists frame private sector influence as rooted in land ownership and reinforced by political decisions that limited public control over the site. The municipality's earlier sale of the land is repeatedly cited as a pivotal moment that shifted power decisively toward the developer and constrained later political options (ST10, ST13). From this standpoint, tensions are not simply structural, but the result of identifiable planning choices with long-term consequences. Political decision-making itself is described as inconsistent and difficult to trust. Activists recount how politicians initially supported preserving buildings and activities in Svankevigå, through an area based development initiative (områdesatsning) and including discussions about municipal acquisition, before later approving the developer's plan (ST12).

“I think it's the government who lacks planning because they sold it very, very cheaply like 10-15 years ago or even more, a long time ago. And they have got 100 million to spend on “områdesatsning” (area based development). And they give money to the carpenters, to RIMI/IMIR in the black building. They put out so much money and when the project is over, it's like there's nothing... They shouldn't sell it out first and then give a lot of money to different kinds of actors like the carpenters or the artists. And when it's over, it's over. It's not sustainable. So, when they take it up to government level to try to buy it back, then the price is probably four or five times as high. It's a lack of planning from the government from the

start, I would say. Because I know when the area is for sale and the developer comes and buys it, of course their plan is to build something there.” *ST 13 – Local Activist*

Because many interviewees in this case were directly affected by these decisions, power dynamics are described in affective terms—through frustration, disillusionment, and perceptions of democratic failure. A researcher involved in the case highlights how redevelopment was justified through a storyline portraying the area as degraded and unsafe, with the developer positioned as the agent of improvement (ST10). Activists, in turn, interpret this narrative as a strategic tool that legitimised displacement and marginalised existing social practices (ST15).

### 3.8 (Civic perceptions of) innovative governance mechanisms

At the scale of Bybånd, a key mechanism discussed is the deliberate concentration of development in already built-up areas, combined with the withdrawal of planned housing from peripheral or greenfield locations. One municipal planning advisor describes this approach as “*planvask*”, a process through which land previously designated for housing is removed from the municipal plan and returned to nature, allowing densification efforts to be focused in central and well-served areas (ST1). This represents a proactive attempt to align land-use planning with long-term environmental and climate goals. In parallel, interviewees involved in municipal planning acknowledge ongoing efforts to strengthen legal and policy instruments for housing security and affordability, though these are widely described as less mature than environmental tools. Municipal representatives point to new legal requirements<sup>[10]</sup>, within the Social Housing Act, obliging municipalities to develop comprehensive overviews of housing needs, including groups struggling to access homeownership (ST1). This instrument is framed as enabling better coordination between social housing policy and sustainability planning, even if their practical impact remains limited at present (ST4).

“We have strategies for affordable housing, but at the next level we don’t have many (regulative) tools.” *ST1 – Planner in Stavanger Municipality*

One innovative example highlighted by interviewees is the former municipal land development company Sandnes Tomteselskap, established by the municipality of Sandnes (neighbouring Stavanger, along the Bybånd corridor). The agency pursued a strategy of proactive land acquisition to enable the construction and sale of housing at prices roughly 20% below prevailing market levels (ST 2). The affordability gains were made possible because the company primarily purchased lower-cost greenfield sites and then developed them for residential use. However, this model also represented its main limitation: since projects were concentrated on greenfield land, they did not align with the municipality’s broader densification strategy and goals of compact urban development. As planning priorities increasingly shifted toward inner-city densification—where land prices are substantially higher and acquisition

costs less manageable—the model became financially unviable, and the agency was ultimately discontinued.

“We’ve never built homes ourselves — we’ve always been land developers, selling ready-to-build plots to developers who construct and sell the houses. In recent years, there’s more focus on densification near rail and bus routes, which is more complex, capital-intensive, and risky. That’s something the private sector is better equipped to handle.

Our old model was mostly based on transforming farmland. We’d make an option agreement with a farmer: if the land could be rezoned, we’d buy it . The only upfront cost was maybe a small sign-on fee, like NOK 100,000 (about 10000 euros), which could be deducted from the final price. If rezoning didn’t succeed, we walked away. But in urban areas, you can’t get those deals. You need to pay market price upfront, so the financial risk is much higher. That’s why the municipality pulled back.” *ST2 – Former employee at Sandnes Tomteselskap*

With regard to housing security and affordability, none of the interviewees identified Svankevigå as a site of innovative social governance. While municipal representatives note that municipalities have the option to purchase apartments or plots at market price to develop social or affordable housing concepts (ST6), this mechanism was not realised in Svankevigå. Instead, the case is repeatedly described as illustrating the limits of existing tools, particularly once land is privately owned and prices have increased. Local actors and researchers point out that environmental and social initiatives supported through public funding lacked long-term security because they were not embedded in firm regulatory frameworks or public ownership arrangements.

### 3.9 (Civic perceptions of) tourism and market pressures

Rather than operating in the background, market dynamics are described as actively constraining densification outcomes, shaping what can be built, at what cost, and for whom—both at the Bybånd scale and in the Svankevigå redevelopment.

At the scale of Bybånd, market pressures are primarily seen as a consequence of the shift away from greenfield development towards densification. Several interviewees involved in strategic planning stress that building in already developed areas—particularly along public transport corridors—is significantly more complex, capital-intensive, and risky than earlier development models (ST2). Municipal planners point out that some planned large-scale housing projects have faced unexpected technical and environmental constraints, such as difficult soil conditions, which substantially increase construction costs and delay implementation. One strategic planning advisor refers to major housing plans that proved difficult to realise because of marshland conditions, illustrating how environmental constraints can quickly translate into financial pressure and uncertainty (ST1). These dynamics can affect not only feasibility but also long-term housing supply targets.

Architects and urban development professionals further describe a paradox at the core of densification. On the one hand, there is broad agreement that avoiding further land take and protecting nature is essential. On the other hand, transformation projects require extensive investments in infrastructure, environmental remediation, and public space, all of which are ultimately reflected in housing prices. As one interviewee explains, “*almost everything we do is transformation... and that’s a paradox and a challenge regarding price*”, particularly for young people trying to enter the housing market (ST6). In several areas, interviewees note that the price difference between new and existing housing has at times approached 50%, underscoring how sustainability-driven development can inadvertently reinforce affordability problems (ST6).

“Now, almost everything we do is transformation, and that's a paradox and a challenge regarding price, because getting these new dwellings accessible for most people, especially young people entering the housing market, is a really big question and difficult to solve. It's a paradox, but we know we have to avoid destroying more nature or agricultural land, so it's a difficult balance”. *ST6 – Municipal planner*

Housing experts and representatives from civil society organisations also situate market pressures within a broader political and institutional context. They point to the erosion of Stavanger’s earlier tradition of social housing (as of 2023 the 5,2% of the total stock is public housing and the rest is market <sup>2</sup>) and the growing reliance on the private rental market, where high rents and low-quality housing create additional strain on municipal budgets and vulnerable households (ST8). While debates about these issues are present in policy documents and public discourse, interviewees describe a sense of fatigue, linked to the lack of effective legislative tools to counteract market dynamics.

In Svankevigå, interviewees focus on how profit-seeking behaviour manifests in concrete planning proposals and repeated attempts to stretch or bypass regulatory requirements. Local activists provide detailed accounts of how the developer sought to maximise buildable area and revenue, for example by significantly reducing the amount of ground-floor space allocated to activities and businesses compared to what was required in the regulation plan (ST13). These attempts are interpreted as indicative of strong financial pressure and an underlying logic of profit maximisation, where social and community-oriented functions are treated as residual. As one activist notes, developers repeatedly “push the line” by proposing solutions that fall far below planning requirements, often expecting to receive dispensations (ST13). As of today, the plan has not been implemented yet and the future of it still seems uncertain.

At the same time, Svankevigå also illustrates how regulatory limits can, in some cases, constrain market pressure. Interviewees highlight that several proposals from the developer

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.kommuneprofilen.no/profil/bygg/BenchBy/bygg\\_bolig\\_kommunal\\_by.aspx](https://www.kommuneprofilen.no/profil/bygg/BenchBy/bygg_bolig_kommunal_by.aspx)

OBOS were rejected because they did not comply with requirements related to activity spaces, land ownership, or environmental fees, and they describe this as an important signal that not all deviations would be accepted (ST13).

Other interviewees involved in the case contextualise these dynamics within the broader economics of urban transformation. As in the Bybånd case, professionals acknowledge that building in central, already developed areas is more expensive than greenfield development, and that these costs inevitably shape project design and pricing (ST6). However, in Svankevigå, these pressures are perceived as having immediate social consequences, particularly for existing users of the area, who experience loss of space, displacement, and rapid change.

*“We don't have much land in Storhaug (district in Stavanger), but there it's clear there are dilemmas: prices go up after transformation, and infrastructure/green upgrades go into the final price. In some periods, the difference between old and new housing was almost 50%. In Jåttåvågen, prices are high because you have to recreate nature and build all the infrastructure. It's different from building on greenfield land.” (ST6)*

### 3.10 Gaps in Perceptions Between Civic Groups and Public Agencies

Gaps in perceptions emerged clearly in the case of Svankevigå, also given the heterogeneity of the interviewees, which included public authority, developers, residents, researchers, and local activists.

A persistent gap concerns how civic groups and public agencies perceive urban transformation processes, particularly regarding participation, social value, and the objectives of redevelopment. Public agencies and planners tend to frame projects such as Svankevigå primarily through strategic lenses of densification, sustainability, and long-term citywide goals. From this perspective, redevelopment is justified as a rational response to environmental targets, transport efficiency, and the reuse of former industrial land, often emphasizing procedural compliance with participation requirements and regulatory frameworks.

*“So, densification around the city center will strengthen it. And the city center is very important. It's the history and it's the identity and everything. And it's also environmentally friendly because all the public transport goes there, and you know, a lot of people can walk there and so forth.” ST14 - Architect, Stavanger municipality*

In contrast, civic groups interpret the same processes through lived experience. For residents and local activists, participation is perceived as largely symbolic rather than empowering, reinforcing feelings of exclusion and powerlessness. Technical language, extensive

documentation, and legally limited forms of involvement are experienced as barriers that privilege institutional and market actors over local knowledge . This fuels a sense that decisions are effectively pre-made, with participation serving more to legitimize outcomes than to shape them

A further divide concerns how “improvement” is framed. While public actors and developers emphasize upgrading, greening, and attractiveness, civic groups stress the loss of existing social infrastructures, informal uses, and inclusivity. They further consider the green provision within the project not as an added value, but as a minimal baseline.. What institutions describe as underused or degraded space is often seen by residents as a rare commons—a “melting pot” that supported cultural production, social mixing, and low-threshold activities. This clash reflects deeper tensions between growth-oriented planning rationales and community-centered understandings of social sustainability, where displacement and homogenization are viewed as costs that are insufficiently acknowledged by public agencies

*“I think it’s a destructive project that is excluding a lot of people that live in the area or perhaps could have lived there if it was cheaper. So, I think this project is part of the gentrification in this area.”*

*(ST12, Local activist, Svankevigå)*

*“So, what they say is that this area used to be very poor, very dirty, very dangerous. And they have come in and they have put in streetlights. They have renovated the buildings which were falling down.”*

*(ST10, Researcher, University of Stavanger)*

*“And this Svankevigå, that was such a melting pot. There was a lot of artists around there and there was a lot of foreigners and different kind of people.”*

*(ST15, Local activist, Bevar Svankevigå)*

## 4 Critical Analysis

This section examines how green transition initiatives intersect with housing inequalities in Stavanger, with particular attention to how these inequalities are framed by different actors, which dimensions of housing inequality are made visible, and which environmental policies are empirically central in this case. Stavanger’s green transition strategy, centred on densification and transit-oriented development, has become a key structuring force in the city’s contemporary housing dynamics. While initiatives such as the Bybånd and the redevelopment of Svankevigå are framed as climate-friendly responses to population growth, mobility needs, and land-use efficiency, the empirical material indicates that they have also contributed to the reproduction and, in some cases, intensification of housing inequalities. In particular, they are associated with reduced housing accessibility, as new units built in densification areas can be **up to 50% more expensive than existing housing**, and with displacement pressures, as

observed in Svankevigå. Together, these outcomes highlight structural tensions between environmental objectives and housing justice.

Because in Stavanger densification dominates both policy implementation and interview narratives, it also becomes the main arena in which housing inequalities are discussed and contested. Energy retrofitting and NBS are described mainly as technical components of densification projects—such as green roofs, stormwater management, or energy-efficient buildings—rather than as independent policy domains reshaping housing access or affordability. This empirical focus has important implications: it means that the inequalities observed and articulated are primarily those linked to market-driven redevelopment, rather than to the upgrading of existing housing or climate adaptation of established neighbourhoods.

### *Densification and perceived housing inequalities*

The analysis suggests that densification initiatives in Stavanger have contributed to exacerbate existing housing inequalities, while also creating new tensions, especially in the case of Svankevigå. Furthermore, there are different implications in the two cases as far as different dimensions of housing inequalities are concerned (affordability, displacement and quality). It should be noted that in Stavanger, and in Norway in general, there is a housing system already characterised by high levels of homeownership, rising housing debt, limited municipal housing supply, and strong reliance on private developers. Within this context, densification strategies have tended to favour market-driven outcomes, with limited capacity to ensure affordability, housing diversity, or social inclusion.

In the Bybånd case, there is a general and recurring sense among most of the interviewees involved with planning in both Stavanger and the nearby municipality of Sandnes, that housing inequalities do not currently constitute a major or acute problem within the framework of the Bybånd strategy. While rising housing prices, limited housing diversity, and selective access to new developments are recognised, these issues are often described as emerging or secondary concerns rather than as central challenges of the green transition agenda. Within this narrative, housing outcomes tend to be framed as side effects of a necessary and broadly successful sustainability strategy and are positioned as secondary and structurally constrained, shaped by the dominance of private land ownership, high transformation costs, and limited regulatory instruments for social steering. Overall, the findings suggest that Stavanger's densification strategy operates within a housing system that has limited capacity to produce or expand public or non-market housing provision at a scale that could offset emerging inequalities. The strong reliance on private developers, high land and construction costs, and constrained municipal instruments for social steering reduce the practical scope for affordability-oriented interventions (no affordability programs or renters

Affordability concerns are acknowledged across interviews, yet they are rarely framed as the result of specific planning choices or projects. Instead, rising prices are attributed to the inherent cost of building in already developed areas, where infrastructure investments, environmental remediation, and negotiations with private developers increase financial risk and final housing prices. This framing has an important discursive effect: it relocates responsibility for affordability away from the green transition itself and towards broader market dynamics and national housing structures. As a result, affordability appears as largely

unavoidable side effect of environmentally responsible urban development. Housing quality emerges in the Bybånd narratives as a key site of tension, but again primarily through a professional lens. Planners and architects highlight challenges related to small dwelling sizes, exposure to noise and pollution near transport corridors, limited access to green space in some high-density areas, and construction-related disruption. These issues are framed as design and implementation challenges rather than as expressions of inequality. The notion of “densification with quality” functions as an aspirational principle, even as interviewees involved with municipal planning acknowledge its difficulty in practice. Importantly, several interviews working with the Bybånd strategic development point to uneven distribution of environmental benefits, with green infrastructure and upgraded public spaces concentrated in redevelopment areas, while other neighbourhoods—often with lower-income populations—remain underserved. However, this unevenness does not really emerge as a justice issue within the Bybånd narrative.

In contrast, Svankevigå is narrated as a site where housing inequality is immediate, tangible, and deeply contested. The small scale of the site, its strong historic social and cultural character, and the visibility of redevelopment plans produce a very different discursive landscape, dominated by local activists, residents, users of the area, and engaged researchers. In Svankevigå, affordability is treated as central to the project’s expected effects. Interviewees consistently describe the planned housing as inaccessible to low- and middle-income groups, given its waterfront location and market-oriented development model. Lack of affordability is framed as an exclusionary mechanism that reshapes who can inhabit central urban space, reinforcing patterns of gentrification in eastern Stavanger. Unlike in Bybånd, affordability here is explicitly politicised and explicitly linked to claims about the right to the city. Displacement is also a central narrative through which housing inequality is understood in Svankevigå.

In Svankevigå, local activists describe not only the removal of tenants, but also the dismantling of a dense network of low-rent cultural and social activities that had transformed the area into an inclusive “melting pot”. The loss of these spaces is framed as the loss of social infrastructure—places that enabled participation for groups with limited economic resources, including migrants, young people, and people with disabilities. Displacement is also narrated as a temporal process, characterised by prolonged uncertainty, waiting, and insecurity, which drains energy from community initiatives and undermines long-term engagement. This temporal dimension is largely absent from the Bybånd narratives but is central to how injustice is experienced in Svankevigå. Housing quality in Svankevigå is similarly reframed through a social lens. While developers and municipal representatives emphasise greening, improved access, and regeneration through the transformation of a brownfield, local actors question whether the proposed built environment will support everyday life, diversity, and social interaction. Concerns are raised about wind-exposed and poorly functioning green spaces, lack of kindergartens and informal meeting places, and a general expectation that the area will cater to older or wealthier residents rather than families. Here, quality is not merely about architectural standards, but about the capacity of the neighbourhood to sustain social diversity.

### *Temporality of housing inequalities*

When considering the temporality through which housing inequalities manifest, the two analyzed cases offer two different scenarios. In the Bybånd case, interviewees predominantly describe housing impacts as gradual, and spatially diffuse. Large-scale displacement is rarely articulated as an immediate concern at this scale; instead, inequalities emerge through rising housing prices, limited availability of family-sized dwellings, and increasingly selective access to newly developed areas along public transport corridors. These dynamics are already shaping residential mobility patterns, particularly for households that cannot afford new-build apartments or do not find them suitable in terms of size and liveability. A concrete and present outcome repeatedly highlighted by interviewed planners working with the strategic development of the Bybånd is the outward movement of households from Stavanger to neighbouring municipalities in search of more affordable housing. This process is not framed as displacement in a narrow, but as a form of structural exclusion that nonetheless risk to have significant social and environmental consequences. From a social perspective, it limits who can remain in or access central, well-connected neighbourhoods; from an environmental perspective, it undermines the core objectives of densification by generating longer commuting distances and reinforcing regional patterns of car dependency. Importantly, this form of displacement remains largely invisible within project-level planning and participation processes, precisely because it unfolds incrementally and beyond the immediate boundaries of Bybånd developments.

Several interviewees further emphasise that the most far-reaching consequences of Bybånd-related densification are expected to materialise over time rather than as immediate shocks. These include gradual socio-demographic change, whereby central and transit-accessible areas increasingly cater to smaller, wealthier households, while families and lower-income groups are progressively filtered out. Interviewees also point to the uneven spatial distribution of environmental and public-space investments, with green infrastructure, upgraded streetscapes, and nature-based solutions concentrating in redevelopment zones associated with Bybånd. Unless accompanied by stronger housing policy instruments—such as affordability requirements, diversified housing typologies, or more proactive public land strategies—these patterns risk producing long-term inequalities.

In contrast, in the Svankevigå case, housing inequalities are already acutely felt and articulated through immediate, embodied experiences of loss and exclusion. Here, the impacts of green transition-related redevelopment are not diffuse but immediate and concentrated in a specific place and among identifiable groups. Displacement of tenants and community-based activities, prolonged uncertainty about future use, and the closure of low-rent spaces have had direct and immediate social consequences. Interviewees describe how cultural initiatives, workshops, and informal meeting places were forced to leave, often without clear alternatives, disrupting established social networks and everyday practices.

Beyond spatial exclusion, interviewees in Svankevigå repeatedly emphasise temporal injustice as a central dimension of housing inequality. Long periods of vacancy, shifting redevelopment timelines, and lack of clear communication are described as generating insecurity, emotional strain, and exhaustion among local actors. In this sense, inequality unfolds not only through the eventual outcome of redevelopment, but through the process itself.

While future impacts—such as rising housing prices, further gentrification, and demographic change—are widely anticipated in Svankevigå, the sense of injustice expressed by

interviewees is firmly rooted in present experiences. The loss of affordable space and inclusive environments, combined with perceptions of limited influence over decision-making, contributes to a broader feeling of democratic failure and ultra-dominance of market and investors' dynamics. Compared to Bybånd, where inequalities are often discussed as future risks or systemic constraints, Svankevigå illustrates how green transition initiatives can produce immediate and deeply felt housing injustices when redevelopment intersects with existing social and cultural ecosystems.

### *Conclusive reflections*

Situating these findings within Stavanger's broader housing context reveals several critical points about how housing inequalities are produced and reproduced through densification. Across both cases, housing justice appears weakly institutionalised within the green transition agenda. While social sustainability and inclusiveness are increasingly referenced in municipal strategies and planning documents, they tend to be operationalised through soft and design-oriented measures rather than through robust mechanisms addressing affordability, tenure security, or long-term access. A recurring narrative—common in major Norwegian cities—is that smaller dwelling sizes will automatically enhance affordability, yet the empirical material suggests that such assumptions do little to counteract rising prices or improve access for households with limited purchasing power. In the absence of binding affordability requirements or alternative tenure models, housing outcomes remain largely shaped by market dynamics, even within projects explicitly framed as environmentally progressive.

The dominance of market-based housing provision further constrains the municipality's capacity to counteract exclusionary dynamics emerging in densification and redevelopment projects. Even when housing inequalities are recognised by public actors, the available tools to address them are perceived as limited, slow, or politically difficult to deploy. In Norway, the construction of new social housing has largely ceased for decades, and the delivery of affordable housing models is mostly delegated to private developers, making their provision largely discretionary rather than structurally guaranteed. Several interviewees describe a sense of institutional "fatigue", linked to repeated acknowledgement of affordability and displacement pressures without corresponding expansion of regulatory or financial instruments capable of altering outcomes. As a result, housing justice concerns are often managed through negotiation rather than through structural change.

The Stavanger case also raises broader questions about the risk of an emerging "green divide", in which access to environmentally sustainable housing and neighbourhoods becomes increasingly stratified by income and social position. Green transition initiatives contribute to enhancing the attractiveness of central and well-connected areas through improved mobility, public space, and environmental quality. However, when these improvements are not accompanied by strong housing policy measures, they tend to benefit households already well positioned in the housing market. In both Bybånd and Svankevigå, interviewees point to patterns of selective access, where climate-friendly locations and upgraded urban environments are increasingly associated with higher prices and reduced social diversity. Over time, this risks producing a city in which environmental sustainability and social inclusion move in opposite directions, rather than reinforcing one another.

Importantly, the analysis also suggests that housing inequalities linked to green transition are not only spatial but temporal. In addition to long-term affordability pressures and gradual socio-demographic change, redevelopment processes can generate prolonged temporal vulnerability, uncertainty, waiting, and insecurity, particularly for users of low-rent spaces and community-based activities.

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## 6 Appendix 1 – Glossary

### 6.1 Abbreviations

**BOBY:** *Bolig og Byplanforening* (The Norwegian Housing and City Planning Association). It is a nationwide, independent, non-profit professional association focused on housing policy, urban planning and community development in Norway.

**NEB-STAR :** *New European Bauhaus – Sustainable, Together, Affordable Renovation*; an EU initiative promoting deep energy renovation that integrates sustainability, design quality, and social inclusion. It includes pilot projects in Stavanger, focusing on affordable and cooperative housing.

**NTP:** National Transport Plan

**OBOS:** Oslo Bolig- og Sparelag (Oslo Housing and Savings Association) - largest housing cooperative and developer in Norway

**RFK:** Rogaland Fylkeskommune (County) -public body

**TOD:** Transit Oriented Development

### 6.2 Terms and Concepts

**Nurse Index:** The nurse index is an indicator of housing affordability used in Norway and it is expressed as the percentage of dwellings sold in a specific year that a nurse can afford to buy. In 2025, this percentage was 16,7% in Stavanger vs. 2,5% in Oslo.

## 7 Appendix 2 – Key interview data and transcripts

#	Position of Interviewee	Sector/company	Date of interview	Media
ST1	Advisor and project manager for community planning	Stavanger municipality	23-Jun	Teams
ST2	Former employee of Sandnes Tomsteselskap	Sandnes municipality	21-May	Teams
ST3	Community and strategic planning	Sandnes municipality	16-Oct	Teams
ST4	Community and strategic planning	Stavanger Municipality	16-Oct	Teams
ST5	Housing Justice expert	University of Stavanger	23-Oct	Teams
ST6	Architect	Stavanger Utvikling	28-Oct	In person
ST7	Architect	Sandnes municipality	10-Nov	Teams
ST8	Member of BOBY	BOBY	11-Nov	Teams
ST9	Planner	Stavanger municipality	25-Sep	Teams
ST10	Researcher	University of Stavanger	26-Sep	Teams
ST11	Project manager	OBOS	1-Oct	Teams
ST12	Local Activist	Svankevigå	1-Oct	Teams
ST13	Local Activist	Svankevigå	9-Oct	Teams
ST14	Architect	Stavanger municipality	10-Oct	Teams
ST15	Local Activist	Bevar Svankevigå	10-Oct	Teams

