



Nelson Mandela Park, EPERNAY - Landscape Architecture project which improves access to and use of green space for disadvantaged groups

📅 [23/07/2021](#) Credits: Ariane Smythe, Metamorphose

Joint IFLA EUROPE and European Environment Agency launched Call for best practices of realised Landscape Architect's projects which improve **the access to and use of green space for disadvantaged groups**.

Ariane Smythe, Metamorphose, member of Fédération Française du Paysage FFP, sent us a project entitled 'NELSON MANDELA PARK' Epernay which was realised in 2015.

Located 2 km from the Epernay city center, the Bernon district dominates the city. Built between 1968 and 1972, it includes 40% of Epernay's social housing and is home to 3,500 inhabitants. Before its urban re-qualification, the district experienced a poor public image due to oversized dwellings, a rental supply unsuited to demand and insufficient social mix. All of these problems led to chronic vacancy.

From 2005 to 2015, the Bernon district has undergone transformation and has dramatically changed its appearance. More airy, more coherent, more attractive and better connected to the city, the district has experienced an ambitious transformation. Its complete redevelopment has included the demolition of 501 housing units, the reconstruction of 205 new ones, the renovation of shops, sports facilities and public buildings as well as the creation of new public spaces, the redesigning of the road network, the renovation of residential gardens and the construction of a vast urban park.

Métamorphose was the landscape architect in the design team chosen by competition and Axis Architecture, the architect. The main aim of the global project, including the urban park, was to change the image of the neighbourhood and to reconnect it to the city. The park replaces an

groups and outdoor furniture. Large planted playing fields provide open space for the residents (who do not have private gardens) and create a visual link with the nearby vineyard, just behind the street at the district border. The leveling achieves to make the street disappear: the park and the vineyard are in perfect continuity thanks also to rows of *Carpinus betulus* and roses oriented towards the rows of grapes on the hill. A Community garden helps the residents gather together to grow vegetables, improve their quality of life, health and wellbeing, and also develops connections between people and a sense of belonging. The Bernon district, thanks to its park, has become an attractive area of the city. Indeed, there is no other contemporary park of this kind nearby. The new figure is that of a dynamic and modern neighbourhood. The Bernon district is treated like every other part of the city and has the right to have the same quality furniture as in the historical centre in the gardens of the Town Hall. Thanks to this token of respect and the social integration program included in the building of the park, there are very few acts of vandalism.

To the west of the park, the very steep slope is planted with shrubs, perennials and trees. It is the centerpiece of the park in terms of plant diversity: it changes colour each season, creates a rhythm for the stroller, decorates the park as a backdrop, gives direct access to the upper housing and helps integrate the covered sports field.

The Nelson Mandela park won a gold Victory in the Urban Parks category of the national French landscape designing competition, *les Victoires du Paysage* in 2014.



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