

Fact sheet for planning levels

Planning level		Type of plan				
Regional		<p>Regional plan for the capital region 2040 (Höfuðborgarsvæðið 2040).</p> <p>Adopted by the local authorities in the capital region in May-June 2015, approved by the National Planning Agency in June 2015.</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">Planning system of Iceland</p>						
Planning level	Planning instrument	Content of plan	Legal basis	Policy maker	Legal impact	Scale
National	National Planning Policy (Landsplánaáætlun)	A strategic policy on national planning, providing guidance for local authority plan-making and other public authorities dealing with urban development and use and infrastructure.	The Planning Act No. 123(2015), Chapter II (Skilvígðing)	Prepared by the National Planning Agency (Skilvígðing) on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure (Orkuvæðing). Passed by Parliament (Alþingi) in parliamentary resolution.	Local authorities must take the national planning policy into account in their plan-making, but can deviate from it, if sufficient reasons are presented.	Nation-wide including marine waters.
Regional	Regional plan (Svæðisplánaáætlun)	A strategic, regional planning policy dealing with those aspects of urban development and use and infrastructure that the local authorities concerned find important to establish a common policy.	The Planning Act No. 123(2015), Chapter VI	Prepared by regional planning committees, in which local authorities, and advised by local authorities. Also subject to final approval by the National Planning Agency.	Binding for town/region plans and development.	Regional (two or more local authorities).
Municipal	Municipal plan (Staðsplan)	Municipal-wide land use plan, including a land use zoning map. Land use policy for at least 12 year plan period.	The Planning Act No. 123(2015), Chapter VII	Prepared and adopted by local authorities. Also subject to final approval by the National Planning Agency.	Binding for town/region plans and development.	Municipal-wide. Generally 10,000 for urban areas and 150,000 for rural areas, but some flexibility allowed.
Municipal	Site plan (Staðsplan)	Establishes premises and design guidelines for building permits and the design of streets, open areas etc. Such as, amongst other, use, size, height and location of buildings.	The Planning Act No. 123(2015), Chapter VIII	Prepared and adopted by local authorities. Subject to an examination by the National Planning Agency after adoption by the local council and prior to entering into force.	Binding for building and development.	Generally 1:1,000 but some flexibility allowed.



Facts

Legal basis

Planning Act No. 123/2010, Chapter VI.

Competences

- According to the Planning Act, regional planning is voluntary except for the seven municipalities that form the capital region, where regional planning is mandatory.
- The relevant local authorities appoint a regional planning committee, which is responsible for preparing a regional plan (*svæðisskipulag*), but can hire planning consultants to assist them with running the planning process and drafting a planning proposal.
- Regional plans are adopted by the regional planning committee and all relevant local councils.
- Regional plans are subject to an examination by the National Planning Agency, both during the planning process and after adoption by the local councils. Regional plans are subject to approval by the National Planning Agency prior to entering into force.
- Regional plans have to take the National Planning Policy into account, but local authorities can deviate from it if sufficient reasons are presented to the National Planning Agency when the agency examines the regional plan.
- The regional plan for the capital region was adopted by the relevant local councils in May-June 2015 and approved by the National Planning Agency in June 2015.

Binding force

Regional plans are binding for lower tier plans, i.e. municipal plans and site plans, as well as for building and development permits.

Tasks and content

A strategic, regional planning policy on those aspects of urban development, land use and infrastructure for which the relevant local authorities find it important to establish a common policy, with at least a twelve-year perspective. Regional plans shall be based on the aims of the Planning Act and the National Planning Policy.

Process, duration, participation

- The planning process is initiated by the relevant local authorities, which establish a regional planning committee. The regional planning committee presents a prospectus on behalf of the local authorities, laying out the aims for the plan-making and planning process ahead, e.g. who will be consulted during the planning process and the vision for planning of the region.
- The final proposal for a regional plan is put out for public consultation for at least six weeks.
- A regional plan is adopted by the regional planning committee and all the relevant local councils after the regional planning committee has processed the comments received from the public, stakeholders and public agencies during the public consultation period and made changes to the regional plan, as applicable, in response to the comments received.
- Regional plans are subject to an examination by the National Planning Agency, both during the planning process and after adoption by the local councils. Regional plans are subject to approval by the National Planning Agency prior to entering into force.
- A regional plan enters into force when the National Planning Agency publishes the fact of its adoption in the official gazette (*Stjórnartíðindi*).
- The regional plan for the capital region 2040 was initially adopted by the local councils in the capital region in May-June 2015, approved by the National Planning Agency in June 2015 and published in the official gazette in June 2015, but has been amended on particular issues or site-specific policies twice since it was originally adopted and approved.

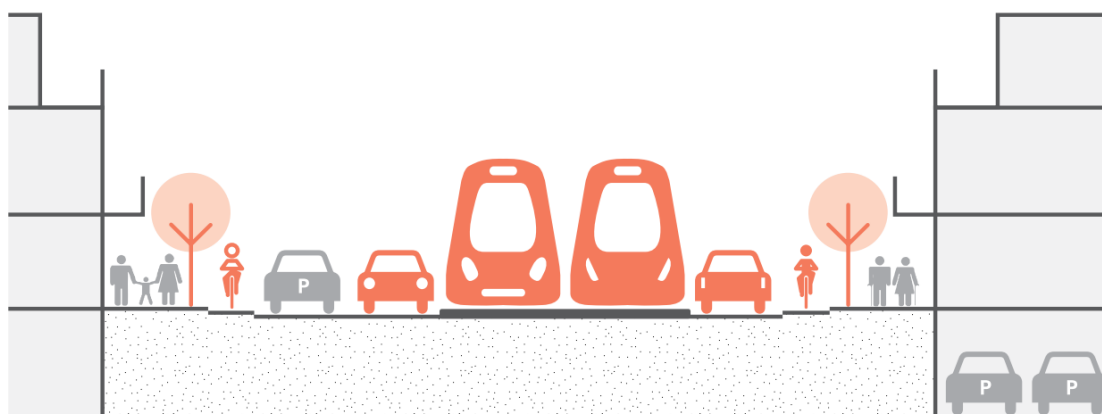
Duration of validity

Regional plan policies have a time frame of at least twelve years, but regional plans have no fixed expiry. The relevant local councils shall at the beginning of each four year election period appoint a new regional planning committee, which shall discuss whether the regional plan shall be reviewed, but regional plans can be amended or reviewed, partly or in their entirety, whenever this is deemed necessary.

Details of the plan

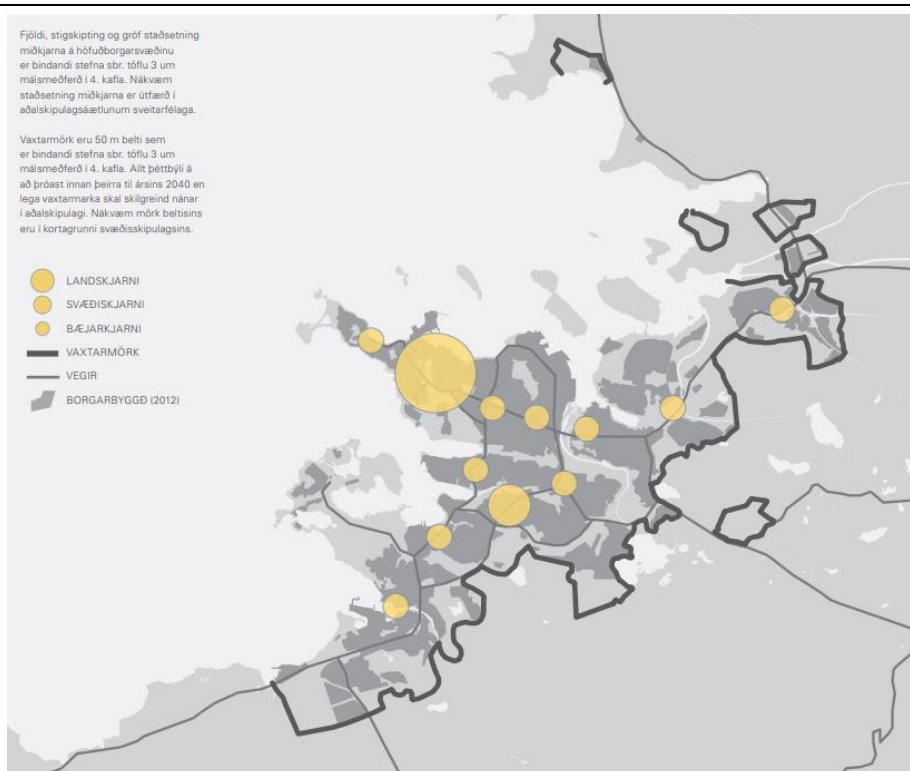
The regional plan report for the capital region.

There is no formal plan diagram (land use map), but several explanatory diagrams are presented in the regional plan report – see the examples below.

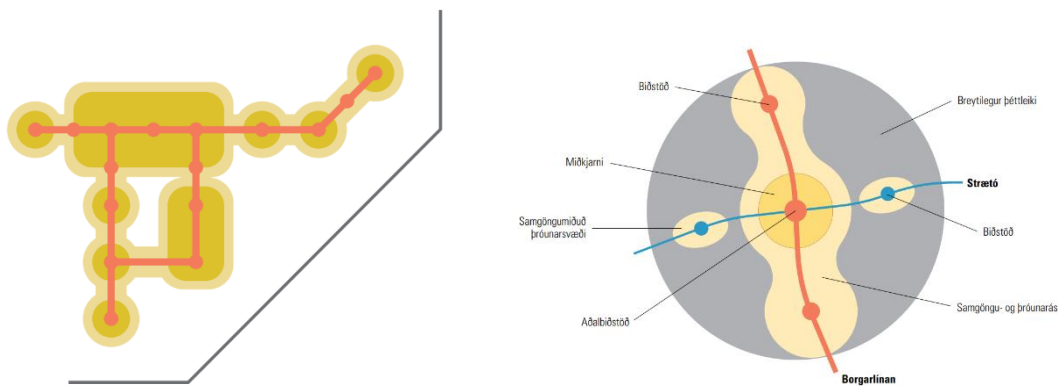


A diagram explaining the regional plan's emphasis on streets for all transport modes.

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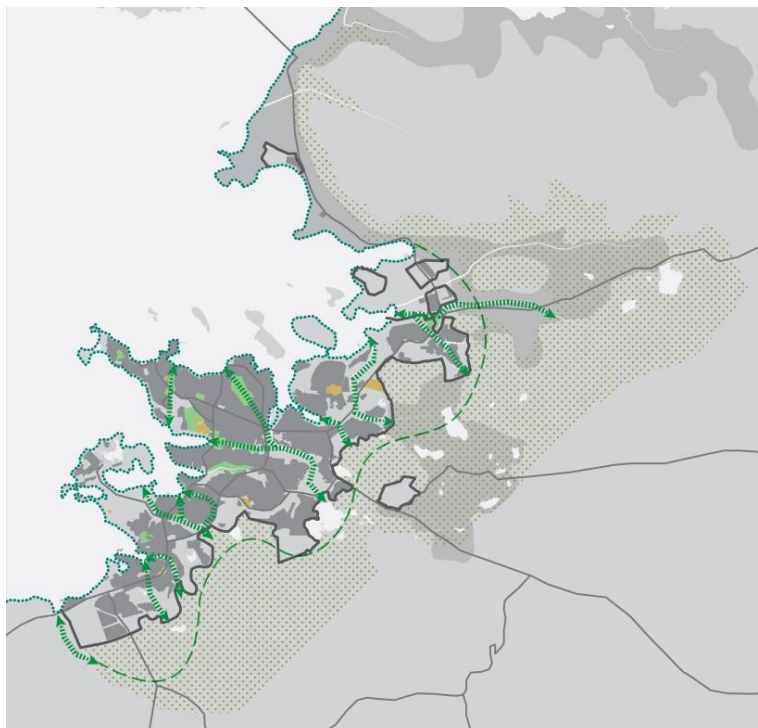


A diagram showing the built-up areas in the capital region in 2012, the growth boundary (*vaxtarmörk*) established in the regional plan, the main roads and main service centres, i.e. a centre with a national role (*landskjarni*), a centre with a regional role (*svæðiskjarni*) and centres with a local role (*bæjarkjarni*).

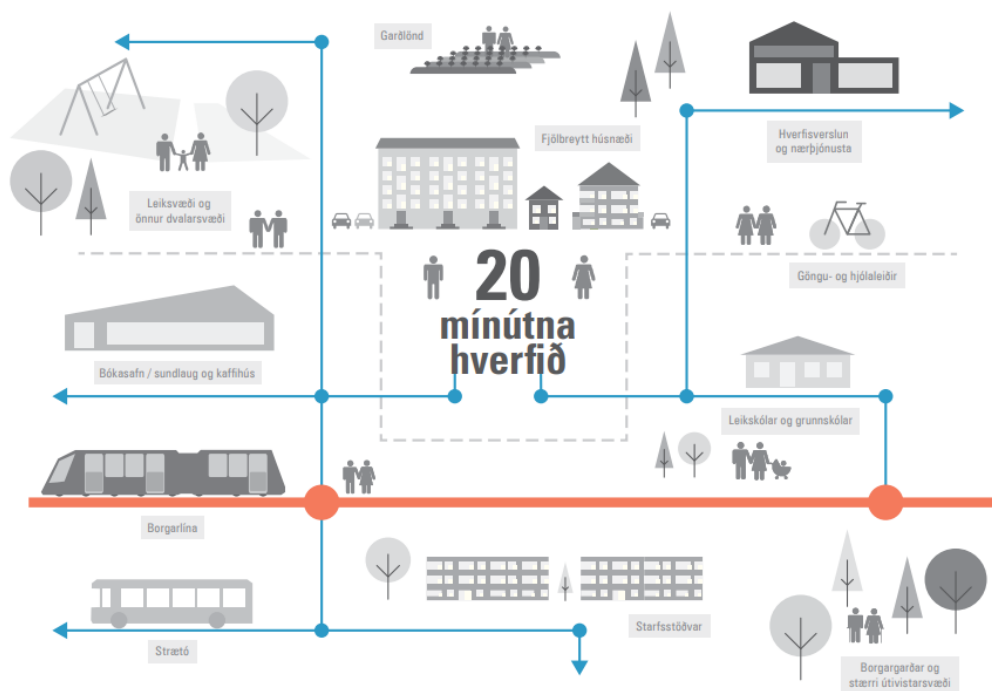


The regional plan's presentation of the concept of bus rapid transit oriented development (BRT), which is a central element in the regional plan for the capital region.

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A diagram explaining the regional plan's provisions for green corridors and a green belt running through and around the built-up area.



A diagram explaining the regional plan's emphasis on the 20 minute neighbourhood.

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Characteristics

Location of the area

The regional plan for the capital region 2040 covers the seven municipalities that make up the capital region.

Initial situation

The regional plan for the capital region 2040 is a revision of the previous regional plan, the regional plan for the capital region 2001-2024, which was initially adopted by the local councils in the region in February-April 2002 and approved by the Minister for the Environment in December 2002, but amended on particular issues or site-specific policies a number of times since.

Particularities of the content of the plan

The regional plan for the capital region 2040 is structured around six strategic objectives:

- Efficient growth of the capital region.
- Efficient, modern transport and transport system.
- Strengthened international competitiveness.
- Healthy environment and healthy life.
- Quality of the urban environment at the local level.
- Effective cooperation on the development of the capital region.

Further information

Association of Municipalities in the Capital Area (n.d.): Svæðisskipulag höfuðborgarsvæðisins (Engl.: Regional Plan for the Capital Region). Available at: <https://ssh.is/svaedisskipulag> (Accessed 31 August 2022).