Regeneration
INTERVIEW WITH
Ben Ruse
director HS1

“We wanted people to fall back in love with this station. So we asked ourselves: If we make this station attractive enough, can we make it a destination in its own right? And the answer was: Yes.”

FACT 1
7 seconds of average train delay

FACT 2
£ 800 million project cost

FACT 3
1 million passengers passing per week
TIMELINE
1996 HighSpeed1 (HS1) takes ownership of St. Pancras International Station
1998 Modernization team establishes. Study visits to major global transit stations including Madrid, Lisbon, New York, and Schiphol Airport
2001 Architectural and engineering plans drawn and approved.
  – negotiations with Heritage First about building preservation techniques and agreements for ground level retail
  – renovations begin
2003 First retailers sign lease contracts
2007 Renovation complete: 60 of 64 retail spaces on ground floor filled
2010 Hotel St. Pancras' historic renovation complete

CONTEXT
In the 1970s and 1980s, the British railway system experienced a period of steady decline. The once-grand St. Pancras Station was in poor condition, dirty and attracted crime and drug use. The 1990s brought discussion of renovating and modernizing the grade 1 historic building and renewing the surrounding neighbourhood, which is mostly inhabited by middle- and lower-income residents.

PROBLEM
The main issue was how to maintain this building and its function as a major transportation hub and make it a destination of its own. Preserving its architectural integrity was a high priority but few wanted to invest in a commercial case for the building. Creating a commercial district within the building seemed nearly impossible with the amount of space needed for passenger-related areas, especially with Eurostar as a preeminent client, such as international customs, lounges, security and ticket information.

SOLUTION
By opening the historic storage areas at the ground level, where beer, grain, and raw materials were once reserved, light and air was allowed into the ground level, providing an opportunity to position retail there and make the ground floor productive. Entrances to the station were placed on all sides, inviting the public into the space. Managers focused efforts on bringing in specialty stores and cafés into the ground level, not fast-food chains or other formula shops you can find all over London.

SECRET
Community buy-in. Being a good neighbour was a strict priority for HS1, the owner of St. Pancras Station, throughout the construction process and continuing today. They purchased double-glazed windows and dryers for all surrounding residents because of the noise and dust incurred by the restoration process. Now HS1 sponsors various events both within and outside the station and are active in the community.

LESSONS
Find inspiration. The restoration team travelled all over Europe searching for the best practices of passenger travel. Schiphol Airport (Amsterdam) turned out to be the leading example. Schiphol’s ground level design, superb way-finding techniques, and pedestrian scale plan stood out to the St. Pancras team.
Create a shared vision. The partnership between English Heritage (preservation), HS1, and London Continental Railways began with a shared vision strategy that made them come together and contribute to the group’s goal.
Aim high. Together the partners set a new bar for a travel hub. They aimed as high as possible by seeking Eurostar as a client. Without fear, they took risks on new brands & specialty stores that are not usually located in stations.
IMPACT
It works! With an effective partnership, shared mission, and active participation in the community, St. Pancras is a place for lingering, relaxing, and people watching. The architectural details of the station were wonderfully preserved and accentuated on a human scale—at the eye level. Compared to other stations and pre-restoration, anti-social behaviour like violent crime and graffiti are not issues anymore. Also, St. Pancras continues to be a destination, even for those not travelling; about 25% of visitors come to the station without a transportation reason.

DO
– write a vision statement
– find international inspiration
– take calculated risks

IN CONCLUSION
The St. Pancras International Station restoration is an inspiring example for a public transportation node with a unique strategy for improving space at the eye level. The restoration team set a shared vision and created a destination, reinstating the building as an urban landmark, national transportation hub, and community asset. Now the station is again an active gathering place.
INTERVIEW WITH
Willie Macrae
planner, City of Toronto Downtown Section

“We showed developers that you can preserve heritage buildings— and do it well!”

FACT 1
13 acres

FACT 2
0 cars allowed within the neighbourhood

FACT 3
40 buildings
TIMELINE
1832 Gooderham & Worts Distillery founded
1990 Distillery operations ceased, creating an investment opportunity for most of the Victorian industrial buildings, all built between 1826-1927. Though not publicly accessible, the site was used for over 800 film and TV productions
1994 Toronto City approved a Heritage Master Plan for The Distillery District
1997 Three residential buildings begin development on the periphery of the district by a non-profit developer
2001 The site was sold to local developers (CityScape, Inc.) who partnered with Dundee Realty; the partnership took the Master Plan to reality
2001 Begin adaptive reuse and preservation of heritage buildings
2003 The Distillery District opened to public
2010 Two peripherally-built residential towers finished construction, one tower on its way, and developers have applied for 4th tower

CONTEXT
After 158 years of successful distillery production, the Gooderham & Worts distillery finally closed its doors in 1990. Its prime location, near the Lake Ontario waterfront and two kilometres from Toronto’s CBD, and the site’s historic buildings made the 13-acre site a top-choice redevelopment and investment venue. Toronto urban planners immediately began the Master Plan process, envisioning a new, fully equipped, vibrant mixed-use neighbourhood that focused on culture, arts, and entertainment.

PROBLEM
The planners and developers came across obstacles for planning the ground level from the very beginning. Issues regarding properly preserving and adaptively reusing the site’s historic buildings, auto use and parking for residents and visitors to the area, maintaining affordable rental costs, keeping ground floor tenants happy during further construction, and just how to get people down there (and keep them coming back!) were all major challenges that needed careful, strategic planning. Regarding the plinths in particular, though, was the challenge of physical buildings. Since they were originally designed to produce and store alcohol, installing windows and maintaining transparency between the outside and inside space was a nightmare.

SOLUTION
A successful ground floor meant keeping it active, safe, and pleasant all day and into the evening. Placing a mix of uses centred around arts and entertainment venues (theatres, restaurants, cafes, and bars) ensured day-long, night-long, and year-round use in the district. The primary developer, Cityscape, Inc., insisted on creating a “3-hour experience” for residents and visitors out of this unique cultural hotspot and community, where all types of people live, work, and play together. For individual plinths, Cityscape chose creative retailers (absolutely no chains!) who invented original ways to display their goods and attract people inside their shops, in spite of the lack of windows and transparency.

SECRETS
Design to complement preservation. The King Parliament Secondary Plan identified each of the district’s buildings and specifically addressed which components were necessary to maintain—essentially, a set of design guidelines. In 2001, when Cityscape took over the property, they were very committed to heritage preservation of all the buildings onsite, following the design guidelines, and creating a streetscape that prioritizes preservation. As a guiding principle, they wanted the restoration to recreate the historic feel of the neighbourhood. Moreover, the residential
towers were strategically designed to be slender and placed on the periphery of the District’s border—so as to preserve the historic view corridors and to maintain as much sunlight as possible on the Distillery’s centre.

**Pedestrianize the street.** A major component of success included maintaining the area as a car-free zone. With only pedestrians, it was important to use material that respected the surroundings and the era of the buildings, to design the entrances to attract and welcome customers, to introduce new and exciting streetscape elements, and to retain other design elements that engage the regular passers-by.

**Devise a 3-hour experience.** Public art, outdoor lighting, seating, transparent windows, and high ground floor ceiling heights all contributed to shaping the ground floor public realm. Although the uses within the District are diverse, they all fit under an umbrella of arts and entertainment and create an inviting space for people to wander, linger, and discover new things—all in about three hours.

**Lessons**

**Eliminate big chains.** Cityscape demanded zero formula or chain commercial on the ground floor in order to maintain a local, neighbourhood feel. Though big box stores would bring in more revenue, Cityscape knew that would be detrimental to the vision of the neighbourhood.

**Acquire unique partners.** The developers recently partnered with Artscape, a non-profit organization that assists local artists, to subsidize the ground floor gallery spaces. This way, local and small-scale artists can afford, use, and remain in the ground level spaces.

**Program events.** Constant programming of festivals and events throughout the year has brought people down to the Distillery District. Since weather has been a consistent predictor of foot traffic, events have stymied the effects of cold winter weather and increased foot traffic while also strengthening the community and local economy.

**Impact**

Economically, the District’s tenants are doing very well, especially the theatre. Artists have come and gone from the gallery spaces, as anticipated, and the ground level has experienced quite a bit of turn-over though the main establishments and office tenants have remained the same. Pedestrianizing the District has also made an impact on the rest of Toronto. As the city tries to embrace more pedestrian-oriented spaces and car-free zones and implement more pedestrian improvement projects, city planners look to the success of the District for key insights and strategies. Finally, in terms of heritage preservation, the Distillery District has shown the sceptics that it can be done, and it can work.

**Do**

- adaptive reuse and brownfield redevelopment of historic industrial sites
- partner with non-profits and unique organizations who can bring creativity to the table
- create design guidelines for the site that compliment the existing design
- think strategically about the potential users’ experience

**In conclusion**

Since it’s opening in 2003, the Distillery District has been a success story of brownfield and historic redevelopment, especially for the ground level. It’s also demonstrated how the use of the arts can drastically improve an urban neighbourhood. Pedestrian-only streets and neighbourhoods are unique in the city of Toronto, and planners wanted to show the city that if it worked in the Distillery District, it could work elsewhere. By finding a unique partnership with Artscape, the Distillery
has been able to stabilize their tenants in the gallery spaces and support local and up-and-coming artists. Cityscapes’ other partnerships with educational, cultural, and entertainment enterprises also lead the District in the right direction and solidify tenant occupancy in the buildings. Finally, those who live in the recently completed residential towers on the periphery of the District will continue to support and enhance an active ground level both in and surrounding the District—an important component to any successful ground floor. The major challenge for the years to come, as David Jackson from Cityscape explained, is to maintain the original artistic vibe of the neighbourhood.
INTERVIEW WITH
Stefanie Raab
architect and owner of Coopolis

“In our shop vacancy projects, we are committed to new forms of cooperation between owners and space seekers to develop the site as needed for a stable and sustainable future.”

FACT 1
ca. 40% of inhabitants in North-Neukölln are immigrants, 37% live from social subsidies

FACT 2
30 – 50% of the plinth shops in North-Neukölln were empty

FACT 3
300 new interim spaces in 5 years
**TIMELINE**

1920 | Neukölln, southeast of Berlin, is incorporated into the city
1945 | Neukölln is part of the American sector in West Berlin
1961 | start of the construction of the Berlin Wall by East Germany (DDR)
1989 | Berlin Wall falls on 9 November
1999 | German Parliament, the Bundestag, relocated to Berlin
2003 | highest court of Germany removes zoning restrictions for Berlin
2005 | Stefanie Raab and Maria Richarz start Zwischennutzungsagentur project in Neukölln
2010 | Zwischennutzungsagentur becomes Coopolis and completes 150 new ground floor shops
2012 | The Real estate Owner’s organisation of Neukölln honours Stefanie Raab with a Badge of Honour

**CONTEXT**

During the Cold War, West Berlin was desolate and unwanted to live there. The government offered men the opportunity to move there if they wanted to avoid enlisting in the army. This promotion attracted a certain population and created a hub for alternative lifestyles. When the Berlin wall fell in 1989 and the east and west of the city reunited over the next year, an enormous growth of the population was prognosticated. Many new flats, offices and shops were built in Berlin. In the following years, the number of inhabitants did not grow to the predicted level, which caused an overflood of empty space that was then filled by the creative sector. The creativity was there, but unfortunately the economy didn’t follow. It’s often said of this city—where no minimum wage exists—that no one has a job in Berlin, but everyone has a project.

**PROBLEM**

Neukölln, a district of West Berlin with 250 000 residents, is bisected by the S-bahn and split into two distinct parts: the south side is rich and the north side is poor. Stefanie Raab, long-time resident of North-Neukölln, has recognized the empty shops in the ground floors as a potential for the development of little local enterprises with a calculable investment risk for local entrepreneurs. She convinced the local Real estate owners of a new way of cooperation with local entrepreneurs to give them a chance to start their business without high shop-rents.

**SOLUTION**

Inspired by the idea of cooperative uses for vacant shops Stefanie Raab began the project Zwischennutzungsagentur (agency for temporary use) together with Maria Richarz in 2005. In a short time it became a planning office for temporary and sustainable use coordination, networking and participation focused specifically on Neukölln. In three years Coopolis coordinated the temporary use of 150 new fashion stores, sewing workshops, galleries, cafes, youth facilities, music clubs, and other venues, in four different neighbourhoods of North-Neukölln. The district’s urban fabric was redefined from classic sales zone over emptiness into a colourful and attractive public zone for the creative industries and local initiatives, in various sized buildings and styles. The content of the spaces have changed from classical shop using (that no one could afford in a poor district like North-Neukölln) into a colourful mixed- use- zone. The expectations of the real estate owners which rents they could ask for this zone was brought down to a realistic level. The missing link was someone to connect the vendor with the space they needed. As a connector, Coopolis took government subsidies to organize the change process. No government subsidies were used for rents or investments into the spaces themselves: The goal was, from the beginning on, to moderate self bearing deals between real estate owner and vendor so that they are independent from subsidies.
SECRET

Investment. Coopolis maintains excellent vendor relationships with their tenants through their own investment—and the tenants give back as well. Often the shops were in a really bad state and there was no chance to renovate them by the vendors because no one could afford a high rent that would be caused by a professional renovation. Coopolis supported the contractual negotiations, listened to the owners and their needs on one side and supported the tenants in their starting phase with their enterprises or projects on the other side. The result was really fair contracts for both sides: the tenants invested by renovating the empty shops by themselves, the vendors got a new user for the empty shop that did not cost much, but made the place more attractive and liveable. In a short time, empty flats were also filled if the ground floor had a new use.

Hands-on approach. As residents of Neukölln themselves, Stefanie and Maria have every opportunity to see and meet their clients face-to-face. Their expert knowledge of the neighbourhood allows them the capacity to think and do.

LESSONS

Roles. Stefanie is the mediator between families/property owners and the entrepreneurs while Maria is coach for the new entrepreneurs. By sticking to their roles, they are experts in what they do.

Cluster planning. Coopolis works with clusters of shops and moderates the collaboration with a collective of the residents who co-create the spaces in an organic way. Once the tenants/entrepreneurs have invested in their spaces, Coopolis helps the cluster to get to know each other and to cooperate in the future e.g. with common exhibitions in all shops at a site or to organize a happening for the neighbourhood like “Körnerschnitzel” —creating a dramatic effect on the surrounding neighbourhood.

IMPACT

The neighbourhood rent subsidy means that tenants will stay longer and continue to invest in their space. The original 150 entrepreneurs have all stayed in business. The ground floors of Neukölln’s streets are active during the day and into the night. It will be a crucial aspect in the following years that the owners value the engagements of their new entrepreneurs. If they raise rents too fast, entrepreneurs will leave and the attractiveness that is here today will be destroyed. To prevent this, Coopolis started in a next step a local cooperation network between the local owners.

DO

– use local knowledge
– establish hybrid formulas
– promote tenant security for the long-term

IN CONCLUSION

Coopolis’ socially oriented project promotes long-term planning and high-quality gain for the plinths in Neukölln. By using the neighbourhood subsidy scheme, the entrepreneurs benefit from lower rent and at the same time are encouraged to invest in their space. This hybrid formula has revitalized the area and secured an active ground floor for the long run. The positive development is in danger if the owners who are not so in touch with the neighbourhood that they only see the results and not the way how this result could happen under the very special conditions of local understanding, cooperation and solidarity.