

# IDENTITY SENSITIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN TEIVO-MÄKKYLÄ



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# ABSTRACT

As Teivo-Mäkkylä urbanises, its promotional narrative may differ from residents' perceptions. It is likely that new residents, expected to be 5,000, have different views and expectations of the area (Ylöjärvi, 2025). Growth and development bring new residents, building types, and uses, which can strengthen identity but also risk fragmentation if change is disconnected from the existing landscape and heritage values. As a result, some residents may feel excluded from the community, as shared identity promotes a sense of belonging. Addressing this challenge fosters community and accommodates ongoing and future development, benefiting current and future residents. While a strong sense of belonging encourages community engagement and long-term residency, a strong local identity enables residents to feel emotionally connected to their environment and to one another.

**KEYWORDS: IDENTITY BUILDING, VISIBLE PARTICIPATION, LONG-TERM PARTICIPATION, PLACE ATTACHMENT, IDENTITY-SENSITIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

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## INTRODUCTION

Teivo-Mäkkylä's identity is shaped by a combination of pull factors, including pine forests, the ridge landscape, growth dynamics, and stakeholder influence. These elements determine how the area is perceived, who it attracts, and how well it can retain residents and activities over time. A strong identity functions not only as an image or narrative but also as a force that supports long-term attachment, belonging, and continuity during urban transformation.

Although urbanisation is often portrayed as sustainable and beneficial, literature shows that these processes can lead to eco-gentrification and socio-spatial inequality, as rising land values attract affluent populations while implicitly marginalising existing residents (Leino et al., 2025). In the context of Teivo-Mäkkylä, although such processes may manifest as direct displacement, they may also take subtle forms, such as reduced accessibility and loss of place attachment. This poses the question, "Is urban nature in Teivo-Mäkkylä primarily understood as a functional resource (serving recreation, well-being, and place attractiveness) or as a relationship between people and place that entails long-term care, responsibility, and restraint?"

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## CENTRAL CHALLENGE

How to ensure Teivo-Mäkkylä's future development allows its identity to evolve without compromising its existing character?



## ANALYSIS

Since the identity of an area is directly connected to the subjects who inhabit and constitute it, our group, Pink Pine Ponies, decided to conduct *five semi-structured interviews with residents and visitors* of the Teivo-Mäkkylä area. The findings from the interviews were then used to formulate questions for a *collective stakeholder interview* with the area's project manager and marketing planner.

Through thematic qualitative analysis of interviews, we identified key themes in the concerns and expectations of visitors and residents. This included **the preservation of nature, recreational opportunities, the trotting track's future, and inclusive planning**. Further, interview questions based on these themes of concern helped us gain valuable insights from stakeholders on what our actionable recommendations should focus on.

Similarly, our group's *multidisciplinary literature reviews* and *benchmarking exercises* sparked more discussion and ideas for addressing our central challenge.



## BENCHMARKING

**Benchmarking of Viikki and Vermo highlights that identity-sensitive development requires more than physical planning.**

While Viikki demonstrates how integrating nature and everyday use may support a stable identity, Vermo shows the risks of identity fragmentation if development is not balanced with the existing landscape and history. These two cases emphasise the importance of **continuity, everyday usage, and context-sensitive planning** in shaping meaningful urban identity.

Together, these cases suggest that successful identity transformation depends on:

- maintaining continuity between past and future
- supporting everyday practices and use of space, not only planned functions
- integrating natural elements and local history into development
- ensuring mixed-use and socially inclusive environments

While both cases differ from Teivo-Mäkkylä in context, they highlight a shared lesson: **identity cannot be designed solely through planning documents or branding, but must be experienced, used, and reinforced in everyday life.**

## Current Identity

Teivo-Mäkkylä is experienced as a quiet, nature-oriented area where the ridge, pine forests, and open landscapes shape everyday life.

Its character is defined more by informal recreational use than by built structures: walking forest paths, outdoor exercise, and spending unstructured time in nature.

The identity is subtle and lived, rooted in calmness, accessibility, and familiarity.

## Future Identity

The area will evolve into a denser, more structured residential district, where identity becomes more visible through architecture, infrastructure, and designed public spaces.

The key elements of identity, such as landscape features, accessible recreational routes, and references to the area's horse racing heritage, will be preserved.

Together, residential blocks, shared courtyards, playgrounds, mobility networks, and planned green areas will introduce a more urban rhythm.

## KEY INSIGHTS

### A gap exists between constructed and lived identity

Planning and marketing emphasise future attractiveness and growth, while interviews reveal that current users value existing qualities. This mismatch risks weakening place attachment and creating uncertainty during the transition.

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### Communication and participation do not effectively reach or engage current users

Although information is available, it is often selective and targeted, and many residents and visitors remain unaware of ongoing development. As a result, knowledge spreads through informal channels, reducing trust and increasing the risk of resistance.

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### Identity is defined in planning, but not yet embedded in practice

The quality handbook and planning documents define a desired identity for the area. However, there is still a lack of mechanisms to ensure that this identity is continuously experienced, reinforced, and adapted through use, participation, and feedback.

# ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

## I. EMBEDDING IDENTITY THROUGH COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY

### UNORTHODOX METHODS OF COMMUNICATION; RAVIFESTARIT

#### RELEVANCE

*The interview data (personal communications, March 11, 2026) we collected from the residents reveal that residents and visitors are not fully aware of the development. Communication appears selective and targeted, focusing on future appeal rather than current users. Risks associated with this difference include resistance, weak place attachment, and uncertainty. This solution will bridge the gap between planned identity and lived experience by building trust and keeping identity as a guiding principle all along.*

#### SHORT TERM (0-1 Y.)

- Pilot low-threshold communication (pop-up planning points, small-scale events)
- Introduce visualisations of future development in everyday spaces
- Increase awareness and reduce uncertainty

#### MEDIUM TERM (1-5 Y.)

- Establish recurring neighbourhood interactions (neighbourhood block events, seasonal gatherings) to foster continuous participation
- Develop communication practices with 'feed-forward' workshops

#### LONG TERM (+10Y.)

- Institutionalise continuous engagement as standard practice
- Embed communication into the everyday life of the neighbourhood
- Symbolic events to act like a transition ritual (e.g. Ravifestarit)



Fig 1: CoPlan AI generated new vision of Ravifestarit.

# ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

## 2. IDENTITY BUILDING AND KEEPING

### PRESERVING THE OLD VIEWING BUILDING AS A KEY IDENTITY ELEMENT AND MULTI-FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITY HUB

#### RELEVANCE

*This recommendation directly addresses the central challenge of enabling identity transformation without losing the place's existing meaning. It complements current identity work (e.g. quality handbook) by ensuring that identity retention is not only designed but also implemented in practice. Preserving the Teivo building demonstrates a visible, tangible implication of identity preservation. Similarly, adding recreational activities in the ridge area will encourage appreciation of natural landscapes and promote a sense of connection and responsibility for their conservation.*

#### PRESERVATION

The old horse building should be formally protected in planning and zoning decisions. Protecting the structure at the initial stages prevents its loss to redevelopment pressures. Also, if renovated and repurposed as a multi-functional community hub, it will serve both new and existing users, providing continuity in an otherwise rapidly changing environment.

#### SHORT TERM (0-1 Y.)

- Collect local input on desired uses (e.g. workshops, exhibitions, community activities)
- Begin temporary activation (e.g. pop-up events, exhibitions)



Fig 2: CoPlan AI generated new vision for Teivo building

#### MEDIUM TERM (1-5 Y.)

- Renovate and repurpose the building into a multi-functional community hub
- Few ideas for Teivo building: community space for local association, children, families, and workshops, hobby clubs, local art & crafts, a summer terrace, allotment gardens on rooftop, area for bike rentals, a little bookshelf station for the start of a hike&read.
- Few ideas for ridge recreational activity: guided forest routes, ecological adventure park



Fig 3: CoPlan AI generated new vision of ecological adventure park on the ridge area.

#### LONG TERM (+10Y.)

- Maintain the building as a central and active community space
- Create small-scale exhibitions to incorporate elements of the area's horse culture and local history, and the ridge

# ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

## 3. VISIBLE PARTICIPATION: DIGITAL PLATFORM; REAL-TIME ENERGY MONITORING; INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES THAT ENCOURAGE INTERACTION

### RELEVANCE

*This finally wraps the gap between planned participation and actual implementation. The aim of visible participation is to ensure that identity is co-created and actively sought. Elements and methods of visible participation extend participation in measurable quotidian practices.*

#### SHORT TERM (0-1 Y.)

- Introduce visible and low-threshold participation opportunities (e.g. parks and streets naming processes, idea collection)
- Test initial data visualisation solutions (e.g. basic energy or recycling information)

#### MEDIUM TERM (1-5 Y.)

- Establish permanent inviting shared spaces accessible to all ages
- Implement real-time energy monitoring systems in residential buildings (e.g. digital lobby displays)
- Introduce individual tracking tools (e.g. app or webpage for personal carbon footprint)
- Install shared information screens in buildings to visualize collective environmental impact

#### LONG TERM (+10Y.)

- Use collected data from previous years for further tech development
- Minute everyday actions into building climate-friendly identity
- Ensure that participation and identity-building remain adaptive and evolve with residents' needs



## LIMITATIONS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Uncertainty of long-term engagement

Continuous participation and communication require sustained resources and commitment. Interest and activity levels may decline over time.

### 2. Challenges in implementation

Integrating identity into planning processes may face institutional or practical constraints. Coordination between planners, developers, and residents may be complex.

### 3. Risk of selective participation

Not all groups may engage equally, potentially leading to unequal representation. Certain voices may dominate participatory processes (as per usual)

### 4. Dependence on external factors

Economic conditions, political priorities, and development timelines may influence implementation (the tram being a major factor).

# FUTURE RESEARCH AND POLICY NEEDS

1

**Measuring identity and attachment:** Development of practical indicators for sense of belonging, place attachment, and everyday use

2

**Understanding lived identity over time:** Longitudinal research on how residents experience and shape identity during urban transformation

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