Students Reinventing Cities

Open spaces surrounding Tufello Culture & Sports Centre, Rome

Via Monte Cardoneto

Located between Via di Val Melaina, Via delle Vigne Nuove, and Viale Jonio, north of the Città Giardino neighbourhood of Montesacro, the Tufello district is in the northeastern quadrant of Rome, within the boundaries of the Third Municipality. The neighbourhood's service infrastructure barely meets the standards required for residents, and public outdoor spaces are poorly structured and almost entirely occupied by cars.

The project area, situated in the southeastern part of the district, involves a cluster of school buildings and cultural and sports facilities concentrated within a few adjacent blocks. Given the presence of multiple functions and public amenities, the project aims to create synergy, enabling diverse uses and, through the continuity of spaces, facilitating internal crossings between the blocks, enhancing slow mobility and pedestrian pathways while reclaiming areas that - due to the geomorphological characteristics of the neighbourhood - are currently not permeable.
The need to enhance open spaces by combining urban livability, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience—addressing changing socio-economic and climatic conditions—is closely aligned with the goals of the Horizon Europe ReGreeneration Project in collaboration with C40 Cities, whose interventions are in the Tufello district.

Also through tactical urbanism interventions, the aim is to rediscover the centrality of spaces and the identity of the neighbourhood, proposing a renewed system of connections where people can walk, find organised spaces for socialising and play, and minimise barriers to accessibility. This approach will contribute to reimagining Tufello as a more livable, inclusive, and resilient district.



Figure 1 – The Tufello Urban Area

Approx. site area:
The area, spanning approximately 7 hectares, lies at the edge of the plateau on which the neighbourhood was developed in the first half of the 20th century.

Key Information:
The Tufello district is home to around 14,000 residents, with a population density of 161.5 inhabitants per hectare. The elderly population is predominant, with an ageing index (over 65/under 15) of 2.3. The average age of residents is around 48 years. The proportion of foreign residents (9%) is in line with citywide averages.

Priority areas & main expectations:
The proposals should focus on:

- Connecting existing public services and facilities;
- Transforming areas currently dominated by cars into new public spaces;
- Creating new internal pathways within the blocks to facilitate the development of new gathering and relational spaces;
- Enhancing accessibility to the upper entrance of the metro station;
- Planning tactical urbanism interventions to encourage collaboration and preview project decisions.

Site Presentation and Development Expectations



Figure 2 – View from the south. Below, is the route of Viale Jonio marking the southern boundary of the neighbourhood

The Tufello district is rich in historical and cultural landmarks that define its territorial identity and the collective memory of its residents. Established as a Borgata under the provisions of the 1931 Plan, the neighbourhood was designed to house evicted residents from the city centre (Piazza Navona, Via delle Botteghe Oscure, and Borghi) and repatriated citizens returning from France after the war. Its name derives from the tough rock on which it stands, while other street names in the area reflect physical geography, referencing mountains, valleys, seas, and islands.

Triangular in shape, the neighbourhood is bordered by Via di Val Melaina and Via G. Conti to the sides, Via delle Vigne Nuove to the north, and Viale Jonio to the south. Together with the valleys surrounding the tuff hill, these boundaries make the district distinctly recognisable, as these edges remain visible and are perceived by residents as their defining limits.

In the early 20th century, a compact settlement took shape in the southern part of the neighbourhood, contiguous with the Città Giardino expansion, featuring regular blocks and urban public spaces predominantly used as traffic routes. By the 1970s, public housing expansion to the north (Piano di Zona Vigne Nuove) adopted a completely different model, organising public spaces within three macro-buildings and relegating streets to serve primarily as parking and transit areas for vehicles.

Despite being public housing developments, the quality of construction is generally good, both in terms of architectural design and green spaces around the buildings. However, maintenance and management issues have contributed over time to visible signs of decay. Public spaces, such as streets and squares, are poorly structured and completely dominated by cars, a problem stemming from a lack of dedicated parking for many buildings and the single-function design of streets, sidewalks, and parking areas—even in northern areas where dedicated parking exists.

The hierarchy of traffic routes is, however, a key identity feature of the neighbourhood: most vehicular flow occurs along the peripheral roads (Via di Val Melaina, Via Giovanni Conti, Via delle Vigne Nuove, and Viale Jonio), while internal traffic is concentrated along the tree-lined axis of Via delle Isole Curzolane, the primary entry road.

The district is directly served by the Jonio metro station on line B1 and is close to regional railway lines via Nuovo Salario station, which connects to Fiumicino International Airport through line FL1. Bus express services, such as line 90, provide a dense network and ensure direct links to Termini Station.



Figure 3 – View from the north: Public housing district of Vigne Nuove in the foreground

The Tufello district has been included in the 15-Minute City Program initiated by the municipal administration. Based on priorities identified by local municipalities, this program has produced a Masterplan that outlines intervention priorities and a set of projects for future development based on further studies and funding sources.
The potential regeneration process for this area represents an opportunity to implement the municipal administration's vision of a polycentric, accessible, and sustainable city, with neighbourhood units offering proximity services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.
Within this program, the Design Guidance Document (DIP) identifies schools as a central element, conceptualised broadly as cultural and social hubs within the redesign of the 15-minute city, driving transformation in neighbourhoods.

Main objectives outlined in the Tufello Masterplan:

- Creating an integrated and accessible network of public spaces following the "15-Minute City" model;
- Redesigning boundary areas as high-value environmental nodes within the urban fabric through the transformation of relational public spaces;
- Enhancing built and unbuilt urban spaces through adaptive reuse (high energy efficiency) and integrating new functions into the existing fabric;
- Expanding cultural, educational, and leisure activities in existing facilities while ensuring maximum flexibility of use;
- Overcoming physical and infrastructural barriers through solutions that prioritise pedestrian connectivity, sustainable mobility, accessibility, and resilience;
- Expanding public spaces adjacent to services, enhancing squares and historical-environmental resources;
- Reorganising traffic flows to create "environmental islands" by concentrating cars in specific areas and establishing networks of pedestrian and soft mobility connections.

Priority actions to achieve these objectives include:

- Improving soil quality through de-sealing measures;
- Restoring green and permeable spaces to mitigate urban heat island effects and reconnect them to the neighbourhood;
- Reorganising traffic flow hierarchies, prioritising pedestrian pathways, and proposing solutions to improve safety and accessibility to key amenities, particularly commercial areas specialising in local services.



Figure 4 – View of the cultural and sports activity hub.

One significant aspect of the Masterplan is developing a Pedestrian Interconnection Network to ensure continuity between central locations and potential connecting routes, guaranteeing quality and safety for pedestrians.

In Tufello, this goal aligns with the presence of several school buildings and cultural and sports facilities (e.g., the Detroit Centre and the swimming pool) within a few adjacent blocks. However, these blocks, which are free from building curtains, are currently enclosed by fences, geo-morphological barriers, roads, and on-street parking. The dominance of cars in transit and parking on the driveway, combined with the lack of alternative pedestrian and cycling paths that would facilitate access to services and make the use and crossing of the blocks safer and more pleasant, as well as the absence of properly equipped and furnished spaces for resting and relations, represent the main critical issues in this marginal part of the neighbourhood that, nevertheless, possesses the potential for the development of a new local centrality, both from a morphological and functional point of view.

To address these challenges, one of the first interventions under the 15-Minute City program involves the technical and economic feasibility study for redeveloping the hill of the abandoned “ex-Detroit” sports facility. This space plays a pivotal role in the public space network of the neighbourhood.

To continue this regeneration process, the project should focus on connecting other blocks housing public services, opening facilities such as the basketball court for broader use throughout the day, and transforming car-dominated spaces into new public areas. In order to continue the redevelopment process, the students participating in the competition are called upon to focus specifically on connecting the blocks that house the

services, for example opening up the basketball court even during the other hours of the day, and transforming the outdoor areas, which today privilege users by car, into new public spaces.
The transformation of the car park in front of the schools into a new public square and play area, and the pedestrianisation of Via Monte Cardoneto, can also be an opportunity to arrange the green slope at the foot of the sports area in front.

Among the actions to be developed in the project is also the creation of a new road system within the blocks that is safer than the surrounding streets and that allows for the creation of new parking areas and relational spaces.

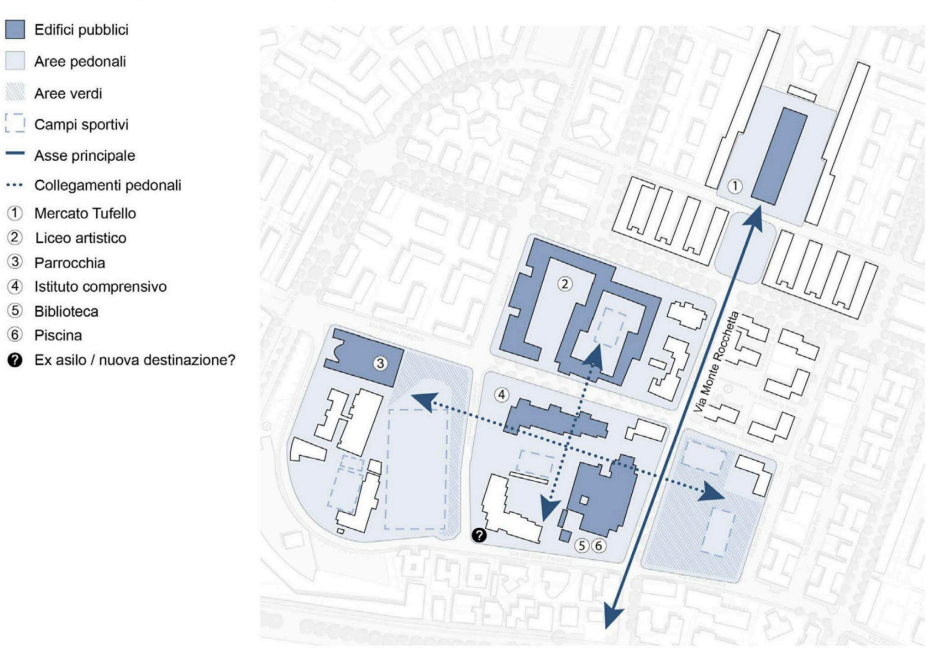


Figure 6 – Central locations and project schemes for the intervention area (excerpt from the Tufello Masterplan).



Using tactical urbanism to experiment with future project layouts in the short term, participants are tasked with creating a phased program of interventions. This plan should define the uses of public spaces and reinforce new connections to rediscover proximity and revitalise public activities and services.

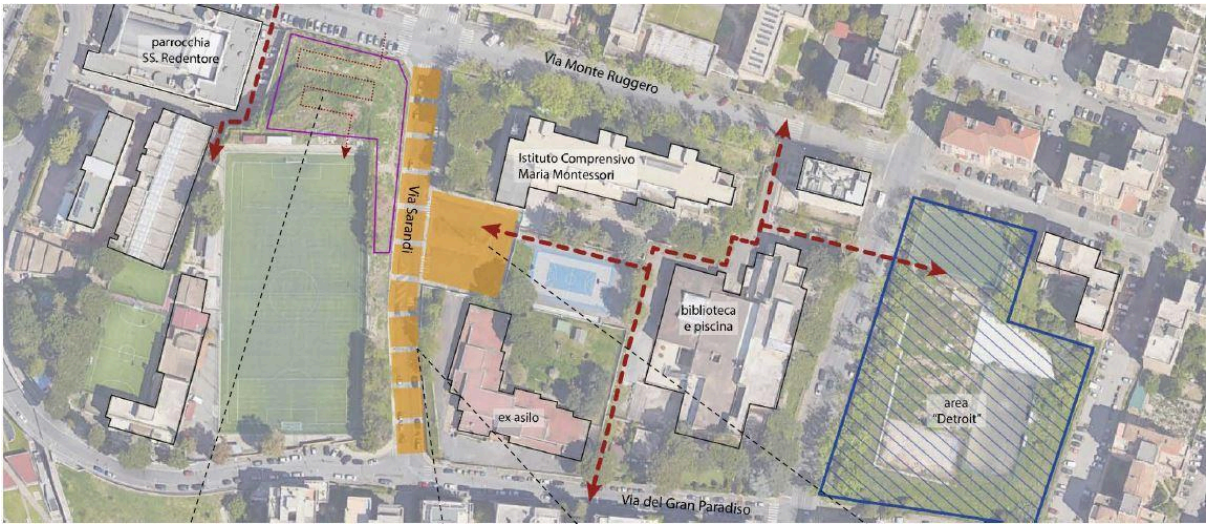


Figure 7 – Cultural and sports facilities (excerpt from the Tufello Masterplan).

Climate Priorities and Environmental Challenges

Since Italy's signing of Agenda 21 in 1992, Rome has addressed sustainability holistically through sectoral, integrated, and multi-level planning strategies, developing numerous significant initiatives to achieve the highest standards of quality of life and tackling today's challenges. In the context of the climate neutrality objectives established by the European Union in the European Green Deal, Roma Capitale, through the update of its Action Plan (PAESC), has committed to achieving the goal of becoming a zero-emission city as soon as possible, and no later than 2050. This goal will be pursued not only by continuing and strengthening actions planned until 2030 but also by implementing innovative strategies and solutions (see PAESC, particularly par. 18.3).
Among the most relevant for the area are:

- Energy-environmental efficiency improvements across the entire public and private building stock;
- Building practices and urban regeneration without additional land consumption;
- Zero-emission mobility and promotion of walking and the use of local or shared public transport;
- Local production and storage of renewable energy;
- Afforestation and re-naturalization of all suitable, vacant, or degraded areas in the city;
- Transforming the city into a Smart City and promoting smart working as the preferred mode for activities that can be carried out remotely;
- Widespread use of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS), including infrastructural ones, and their integration into territorial planning to enhance urban resilience to climate change.

Efficient and intelligent buildings, low-impact mobility systems, and re-naturalization of urban soils, appropriately linked to new welfare policies and the enhancement of the historical and cultural heritage, thus form the pillars of the city's new regeneration strategy. These priorities should be interpreted in connection with or in addition to the principles for a green and prosperous neighbourhood established by the tender.

Despite the recent global pandemic and financial shocks, Rome continues its renewal efforts through numerous public and private urban and territorial regeneration projects, including the drafting of the Strategic Operational Program for the Tiber Area. This program involves interventions near the Aniene River and proposes a set of goals and actions to rediscover a new relationship between the city and its rivers, based on three guiding principles: developing green and blue infrastructure, energy efficiency, and sustainable mobility.

The selected area is also suited to becoming an urban laboratory for experimenting with sustainable interventions in a built-up urban space where “hard” and impermeable materials have definitively eroded natural spaces. Design solutions must recover as much public space as possible for the residents, and integrate into a new network of connections favouring cyclists and pedestrians. Buildings, whether new or renovated, must meet high energy efficiency standards (NZEB) and ensure maximum flexibility of use.

Specifically, due to high building density and concentrated traffic flows, the area is affected by the heat island phenomenon and the effects of air pollution. Proposals must consider these risks and adopt appropriate design solutions to mitigate their impact, primarily associated with increasing levels of soil impermeabilisation in the urban area under review.

Urban Planning Regulations

Prescriptive Document Systems and Rules 1:10,000

In its prescriptive documents, the General Regulatory Plan (PRG) classifies much of the selected area as Città Storica (Historic City), encompassing the integrated set consisting of the central historic area within the walls and the consolidated urban expansion from the 19th and 20th centuries, even outside the walls. This classification recognizes the historical and cultural identity defined by particular qualities, identifiable through the morphogenetic and structural characteristics of the urban layout, as well as the typological, morphological, architectural, and usage traits of individual fabrics, buildings, and open spaces. These features also reflect the sense and meaning attributed to them in the memory of the settled communities (NTA Articles 24 and 25).

Prescriptive Document Systems and Rules 1:5,000

The PRG's *Sistemi e Regole* document, at a scale of 1:5,000, provides a more detailed definition of historical fabrics and open spaces relevant to the following components within the settlement system:

- **20th-Century Expansion Fabrics with Point-Block Development – T7:** These are isolated building plots with "palazzina"-type buildings, developed near and outside the city walls. They are based on urban layouts from the 1909 Master Plan, subsequent typological variants for substitution and density intensification, and the 1931 Master Plan with its subsequent changes (NTA Article 32).
- **Isolated Buildings – T9:** These are serial or special buildings that lack significant historical, architectural, or monumental interest. They are located independently from adjacent fabrics, showing typomorphological diversity and often lacking dimensional and functional integration. They are typically characterised by identifiable green or paved areas (NTA Article 34).
- **Open Spaces in the Historic City:** These are components that form the "voids" system, which, alongside built elements, contribute to the city's urban identity based on historical, morphological, architectural completeness, and ecological-environmental characteristics (NTA Article 42).

- **Public Green Spaces and Local Public Services:** Areas designated for basic education facilities, shared-use facilities, religious facilities, public green spaces, sports areas, and parking lots (NTA Articles 83 and 85).
- **Private Services:** These include urban- and local-level private services and facilities, such as educational, healthcare, cultural, religious, and housing facilities for social purposes (NTA Article 86).

Prescriptive Document Ecological Network 1:10,000

The intervention area is not directly affected by ecological network components. However, the document highlights the presence of tree-lined avenues along Val Melaina, Giovanni Conti, Isole Curzolane streets, and Viale Jonio.

The 15-Minute City

This program aims to regenerate an initial series of 15 urban areas, one for each municipality. These areas were chosen based on their morphological and functional characteristics and their representation of local identity. The program targets urban spaces that can revitalise and enhance the surrounding fabrics, along with providing the key services required to achieve the 15-minute city concept. Based on the priority objectives expressed by the municipality, an analysis of the current state of selected spaces, and their urban and environmental framework, a Masterplan was developed for the urban area, including technical and economic feasibility projects for priority works.

The Masterplan focuses on three main themes:

1. **Green Area System:**
   - Creation and enhancement of green spaces to maximise ecosystem services.
   - Improved east-west connectivity (between the large green area above the Val Melaina market and the park beyond Vigne Nuove) and north-south connectivity (pedestrianising the last section of Via Capraia and expanding the park area currently used for parking near Vigne Nuove).
   - Redevelopment of the former Detroit area as a sports facility integrated into the urban green system.
2. **Cultural and Sports Centers:**
   - Synergistic organisation of public functions and facilities to allow for multiple uses.
   - Enhancing space continuity to facilitate internal crossings of urban blocks and promoting slow and pedestrian mobility.
   - Transforming vehicle-accessible areas into new public spaces and creating pedestrian connections within blocks.
3. **Pedestrian Interconnection Network:**
   - Focused on the area around Piazza degli Euganei and streets near the covered market, with plans for long-term expansion across the neighbourhood.
   - Redevelopment of the square as the neighbourhood's focal point, creating a pedestrian area and integrating vehicle parking and transit into the square's design.

Documentation and further details about the Masterplan can be accessed here.

Language Requirements

Proposals must be submitted in either Italian or English.