

## United Polio Brothers and Sisters Association mixed-use development, Freetown

*Lower Parsonage Street, Kissy Neighbourhood, Sierra Leone*

The selected site is situated on Lower Parsonage Street, in Shell New Road in Freetown. The site houses a diverse and resilient community of people who are affected by Polio, and who foster unity, peace, and strength amongst themselves.

The site is owned by Freetown City Council and is leased to stakeholders, including the United Polio Brothers and Sisters Association (UPBSA), who are managing the site's ongoing development projects. Currently, a total of 95

stakeholders are involved in activities in the compound. As the legal custodian of the land, Freetown City Council is in a stable position to develop the area, according to the wishes of the community.

The site operates as a multifunctional unit, and encapsulates a dynamic blend of elements, including a garbage collection transfer station (operated by the local authority as a separate entity); a training school, retail shops, and temporary residential units.



### Approx. site area

The site is on flat terrain with an area that is a scalene in shape (four sides are different in length). The perimeters are 269m (North) x 103m (East) 160m (South) 76m (West).

### Key Information:

The population consists of 75 residents (22 families) whose spirit fosters a close-knit community atmosphere.

### Priority areas & main expectations:

The site's diverse uses provide an excellent foundation for the development of an established multi-purpose complex.

As this is a small-scale site, students should develop a vertical, mixed-use extension design that includes retail, leisure, and residential facilities, as well as a training school and nursery.

The structure should be accessible and inclusive to all, and integrate sustainable construction practices.

## Presentation of the site and development expectations

The site's economic and social characteristics are marked by the bustling marketplace, where local businesses thrive. In addition, the site hosts a training school that serves as a skills development centre for both abled and disabled persons. The strength of the community lies in the diversity of services and activities being offered, which defines the essence of community living.

The UPBSA compound is situated in a diverse and bustling neighbourhood, surrounded by various facilities that contribute to the overall vibrancy of the area. On the eastern border of the compound, there is a cluster of stores that cater to the daily needs of the residents. On the west side, there is a school, and on the north, there is a charity home. Adjacent to the school, there is a scrap yard, adding an industrial element to the neighbourhood.



Figure 2) Map of the site, Freetown City Council  
Coordinates: P1(8.28'31.65"N,-13.11'23.97"W) P2(8.28'29.18"N,-13.11'23.22"W)  
P3(8.28'31.65"N,-13.11'22.08"W) P4(8.28'31.16"N, -13.11'21.48"W).

However, many residents have not been able to access suitable government-assisted housing and training. Persons with disabilities are generally disadvantaged in Sierra Leone where the laws in place to give them equal rights to accessible infrastructures are not adhered to by most providers. As such, residents created make-shift infrastructures for themselves on an ad-hoc basis, which is largely incomplete and unsuitable. In addition to the unfinished construction of shops, these makeshift accommodations have created hazards and have limited the full realisation of the site's potential.

The Mayor of Freetown has committed to improving the residential facilities for the well-being, safety, security, and comfort of residents. Thus, the city envisages a bold redevelopment plan for the area to address the growing community needs, and inject new life into the community's economic, social, and environmental core.

Projects should therefore consider the following redevelopment priorities:

- Design a mixed-use development consisting of a multi-functional workshop (for metalworks, woodwork, masonry, etc.), a 100-seat auditorium, classrooms, office space, gym, nursery, shops, recreational spaces (indoors/ outdoors), urban greenery and residential accommodation for at least twenty families.
- As there is no possibility of acquiring additional land space in the vicinity, teams should focus on utilising **vertical space**.
- Integrate adaptation measures to mitigate climate-associated risks, including floods, extreme heat waves, water scarcity, and soil pollution.
- Embed equity into designs to ensure that facilities are accessible and inclusive for all occupants.
- Enhance the existing training school by creating a space to display the group's works and a platform to showcase their unique products to the wider public.
- Integrate sustainable construction practices, including energy-efficient buildings, renewable energy, and the use of local materials. Utilise this process to create green employment opportunities, training residents in new skills.

## City climate priorities and specific environmental challenges

The city, guided by its [Climate Action Plan \(CAP\)](#), emphasises environmental sustainability and resilience in the redevelopment of this plot of land. The city's existing climate priorities revolve around reducing carbon emissions, enhancing energy efficiency, and promoting green initiatives.

In this project, the city envisages incorporating specific environmental objectives such as natural light and ventilation to address climate challenges. Energy-efficient building designs, renewable energy integration, and local and sustainable materials are key aspects to be integrated. The current occupants and wider membership of the UPBSA can use the opportunity to gain new skills such as carpentry, masonry, metalworks, project management, etc. during the development of the site. This can be extended to other similar groups within the vicinity.

Green and open spaces play a vital role in the city's vision, promoting biodiversity and providing natural cooling effects. The vision is that the project should incorporate green roofs, community gardens for cash crops (vertical), and tree-lined pathways to enhance the overall environmental quality. Resilience and adaptation measures are critical, with a focus on mitigating risks associated with climate change.

Specific risks related to climate change, such as floods, heat waves, and water scarcity, must be addressed in the project design. Sustainable water management strategies, flood-resistant infrastructure, and heat-resistant building materials are crucial components. Moreover, initiatives to combat air and soil pollution should be integrated to ensure a healthy and sustainable living environment for users and residents.

The redevelopment of the site aligns with the city's commitment to creating a resilient, sustainable, and environmentally friendly community that withstands the challenges of a changing climate.

In envisioning a resilient future for the current users, the city's planning approach is centred on a comprehensive and sustainable design that addresses the pressing challenges of flooding, and heat-related issues.

Recognizing that flooding accounts for the most annual fatalities, the proposed design should incorporate strategic site planning and a robust sustainable drainage system. The site is located in a flat and some metres away from the sea areas, with little or no landscaping facilitating efficient water drainage.

Given the significant impact of heat on health, particularly for the most vulnerable, the design should include green spaces and cool corridors along the street that will integrate and provide cooling areas, promoting both physical and mental well-being.

The city planning approach for the land is a holistic and forward-thinking strategy that integrates natural and artificial solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change. By addressing the specific challenges of flooding, and heat, we aim to create a resilient and sustainable urban environment that prioritises the safety, well-being, and prosperity of its residents.

## Specific planning rules and regulations

As of the current information available, Freetown does not have a comprehensive set of specific planning rules and regulations outlined.

However, there is a notable consideration regarding the height of buildings. In general, it is advised that buildings should not exceed five stories. This regulation advises a limit on the vertical scale of constructions to preserve the visual aesthetics of the city. By capping buildings at five stories, the city aims to maintain a balanced and proportionate architectural profile, preventing the dominance of towering structures that might alter the city's character.

However, in cases where buildings exceed five stories, elevators are required to be incorporated. This provision reflects a commitment to modernization and accessibility within the city. Elevators are essential for ensuring that taller structures are equipped to cater to the needs of diverse demographics, including elderly individuals and those with mobility challenges. This regulation aligns with global trends in urban planning, emphasising inclusivity and addressing the requirements of an ageing population.

While the absence of an extensive regulatory framework provides some flexibility, the specific height and elevator mandate serve as crucial considerations for developers and urban planners in Freetown. This unique regulation not only addresses safety concerns but also enhances the city's infrastructure to accommodate the evolving needs of its residents and visitors.

## Language requirements

Proposals must be submitted in English.

## City-specific awards

The winning team will have the opportunity to present their proposal to the local community, stakeholders, and council committee. There may also be an opportunity to present to the Mayor of Freetown.