

**T**he origins of the name of the Danish capital itself suggest the close connection between harbour and city. Copenhagen, in Danish originally Købmannehavn, later København, means the Harbour of Merchants. Today the same harbour is the focus of much of the urban development in Copenhagen and plays a central part in the strategy to house the annual growth of 2% in inhabitants that takes place in Copenhagen.

### **Urban development strategy**

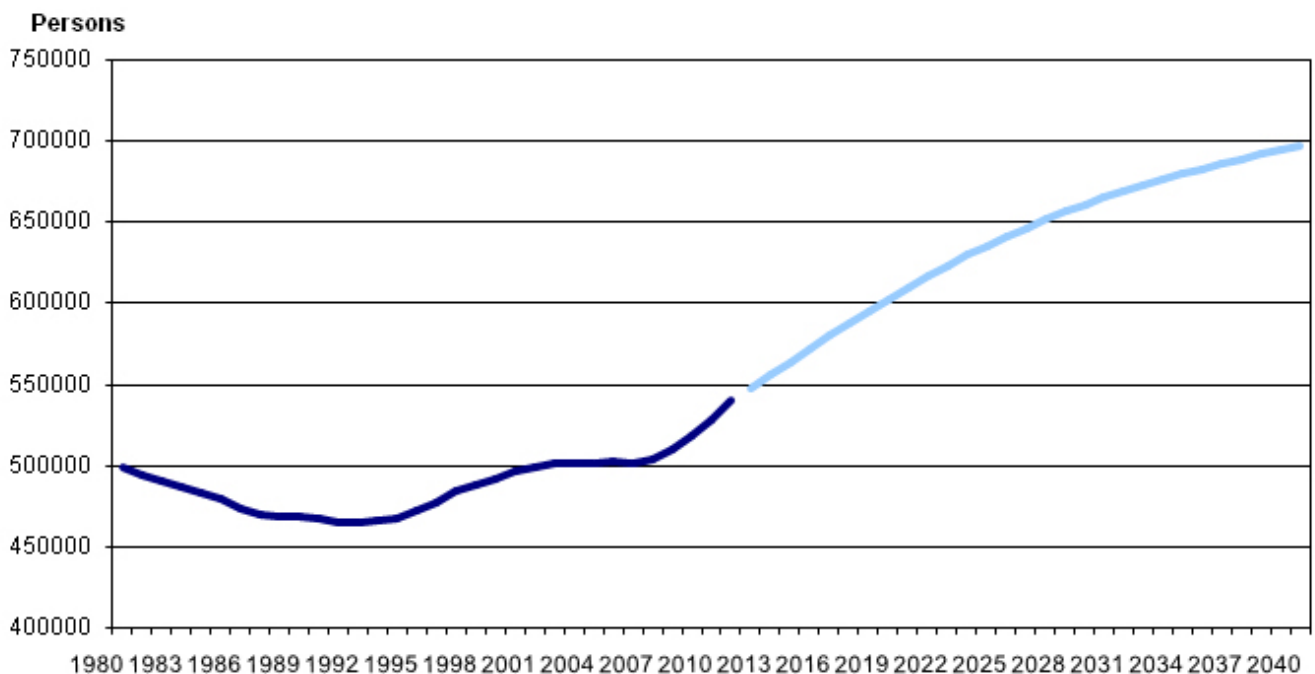
The areas that the harbour takes up in Copenhagen has spread along the shores of the Inner Harbour towards the north and the south and along the Øresund coast of Amager stretching 8 kilometers from north to south. Another way of expansion has been landfill to accommodate the demand for handling space that keeps increasing. This went on for centuries and still takes place today. Alongside this development in shipping the industrial production in Copenhagen has declined since the 1960s. This meant that large areas of the harbour were abandoned after the first oil crisis in early 1970s and on. In the 80's the Parliament decided to move the navy out of Copenhagen taking away a lot of jobs but also leaving huge and very attractive areas open. In the 80's the big ship yard Burmeister & Wain closed the shipyard also vacating big areas in the very centre of the city.

At the same time people were moving out of Copenhagen to the suburbs. In the mid 90's the City of Copenhagen had just around 460,000 people out of the around 1½ million living in the metropolitan area. The City was close to bankruptcy and a deal was struck with the national government to strengthen the development potential of the city.

The City took the initiative in the late 90's to create a strategic plan for the development of the harbour areas, in order to avoid accidental developments without a general plan for what the City wanted. The City took the lead in this work in cooperation with the largest landowner, the Harbour of Copenhagen and the Danish State. Dutch architects Sjoerd Soeters and Adriaan Geuze together with Danish architect Henning Larsen drew up a master plan for the harbour in 1999. This plan took characteristic elements from the Copenhagen cityscape such as the canals in the historical city centre and the closed block known from the big expansion of the city around 1880 - 1910. This approach is very visible today in the new districts, especially in the southern part of the harbour. At the same time

the City of Copenhagen started investing more money in turning the harbour into an attractive asset.

Over the past 15 years the population in Copenhagen has been growing and today the statistics predict that 640,000 people will be living in the City of Copenhagen in 2025 than today. In order to accommodate this increase in population and to counter urban sprawl in the region, the general plan in Copenhagen has laid out specific areas that are suitable for development. One of the criteria is, that sufficient public transport must be available or possible to establish. This is important in order to secure a sustainable urban growth in a dense city as opposed to urban growth in the suburbs. Some of these focused areas are located in former industrial harbour areas undergoing transition. These areas have proven very popular with developers and inhabitants alike and the result is that Copenhageners are getting their harbour back. What used to be closed of areas for security, fiscal, safety and infrastructural reasons are now being opened up to new residents as well as the Copenhageners living in the neighbouring areas.



With job creation and a diverse economy in mind the City together with the land owners and the harbour ensures that this development does not push out the existing businesses and companies. This is why in connection with the development of Nordhavn, the container terminal will be modernised and moved to new landfill and a new cruise terminal is under construction for the 2013 season. This paves the way for new well functioning neighbourhoods with mixed use, but also improves the harbour functions.

Another important part of the strategic plan for Copenhagen is improving the quality of life in Copenhagen. In Copenhagen we view quality of life and green growth as each other's prerequisites. If we want to be an attractive city to businesses, we have to be attractive to people. And in order to provide the right services and the right infrastructure for people to lead a good life, we need workplaces and growth on a sustainable basis. A part of this strategy is providing more recreational space for people besides the already many green parks in Copenhagen. Including the harbour area and the water as a recreational asset has proven a winning strategy in Copenhagen and can be viewed as part of the Copenhagenisation, that urban planners are talking about when making a city more liveable and attractive, e.g. by giving the streets or part of them back to pedestrians and bicyclists.

15 years ago, close to 100 overflow channels grey waste water into the harbour of Copenhagen turning the harbour water into anything but wonderful.

Today the harbour is one of the trendiest spots in Copenhagen. In the summer and spring months Islands Brygge Harbour Bath and Park in the central part of the harbour is bustling with BBQ parties, businessmen and women having a swim after work and exam tormented students tanning in the heart of the Danish Capital.



*The Harbour Bath at Islands Brygge.*

The payoffs of the municipal strategies and investment in cleaning up the harbour come in a variety of forms.

Visiting the public bath in the harbour, the link between improved water quality and quality of life is easy to see. But what about the link between green and growth? The harbour is an

urban oasis that marks Copenhagen's position as a clean and liveable city. Liveability is a major factor when international companies are shopping for new cities to set up business in [1]. However, despite its importance, quality of life can be difficult to measure. Nevertheless, the lifestyle magazine Monocle has done so for the past few years and Tyler Brûlé, former Editor in chief at Monocle, explains how: *"Copenhagen took first prize in the global quality of life survey 2009 for a number of reasons. In monocle we looked at the core factors that make a great city when it comes to liveability. Transport, education, security. In all of those areas the city did really well. I think what really did it for us, when we looked at the city, was that there was a lot of soft features. And I think it is really the soft features that make a place. The harbour has been cleaned up. You can actually go swimming."*

This has meant that the City has been able to establish a number of "harbour baths", where you go swimming in open water pools directly in the harbour! Furthermore local business life in the service sector has soared. The area next to the harbour bath is now packed with Italian ice cream parlours, wine bars, tapas bars, sushi restaurants and old fashioned pubs and real estate prices in the area have gone up. In addition, it is important to notice that the development has also taken place in the post 2008 crash climate.

This revitalization of local business life has increased the number of jobs and revenue generated in the area. In addition, because of an increased quality of life, more families who would otherwise move to the suburbs stay in the city and contribute to economic growth.

The evidence from Copenhagen supports the view that we must look beyond the environmental benefits in order to understand the full value of greening our cities. And the changing needs for harbour activities that has opened up central parts of the harbour gives us a unique chance to further strengthen this greening process when building new neighbourhoods such as Nordhavn.

The aim of the City of Copenhagen in developing the abandoned harbour areas is to bring the water back to the city and the city back to the water. In this way we increase the quality of life for the people of Copenhagen and attract more people to live in the central and more dense part of the city region. This means less urban sprawl, more and better public transport and a better use of existing facilities thus supporting the sustainability agenda that is very important to the City in order to reach the goal of carbon neutrality in 2025.

[1] Entrepreneur, How to relocate your business - [www.entrepreneur.com/article/81406-2](http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/81406-2) copenhagen, Beyond Green.

*First image: Urban development with harbour bath in Sluseholmen, the southern part of the harbour (Sydhavn). ( © City of Copenhagen)*