

How does repurposing real estate contribute to Sustainable Development?

According to the World Economic Forum, buildings are responsible for 39% of global energy-related CO2 emissions, 11% from materials and construction and 28% from operations. By repurposing and adapting use of real estate, we can reduce these numbers.

Repurposing real estate contributes to economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection.

Sustainable development requires three elements or pillars to be achieved: economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. Repurposing is linked to all these pillars.



Economic Growth

Repurposing Real Estate is consistent with the concept of circular economy as both concepts revolve around the reuse, repair, refurbishing of products as long as possible. Both concepts have the same goal: to extend the life of resources while reducing waste and creating further value.

In China, there are many cases where underused offices, hotels and factories are repurposed into affordable rental housing. Decommissioned industrial spaces are also transformed into industrial art complexes that house contemporary art galleries, artist's studios, and other cultural and artistic venues. These types of repurposing bring a number of benefits, including:

- Meeting increasing demand for housing as demand for offices declines, and
- Attracting investment, boosting consumption and creating new jobs.



Social Inclusion

Repurposing Real Estate is linked to society because repurposing an underused property often brings the regeneration of an area of a neighborhood, enhancing social inclusion. Repurposing real estate usually attracts new tenants and customers, who may prefer buildings or sites that have historical, cultural, or aesthetic value, or that offer unique features or amenities. It can also enhance the livability and vibrancy of an area or a neighborhood, by creating new spaces for social interaction, recreation, education, culture, or entertainment.

The repurposed real estate in China not only contributed to sustainable urban development but have also fostered social interaction and inclusive communities.



Environmental Protection

Repurposing real estate protects the environment because it requires less construction activities, and results in saving construction materials and energy. It reduces the consumption of land, as it extends the life of a property, preventing its premature demolition.

As an example, an industrial developer in the Polish market has a policy of reusing materials from renovated and demolished buildings. Reusing construction and demolition materials has several benefits, which includes:

- Reducing the number of wastes that are brought to landfills,
- Encouraging economic activity as businesses innovate on the use of these materials,
- Reducing building costs, and
- Reusing materials onsite also eliminates transportation costs.

In the US, we see several companies aimed at reducing their carbon dioxide emissions from construction by choosing to repurpose real estate. One way to do this is through retrofitting. Retrofitting allows companies to keep the existing structure of the building, but then at the same time it also:

- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions,
- Extends the structure's lifespan, and
- Makes the space healthier as well, because it incorporates new building technology and allows for more efficient energy consumption.

Repurposing real estate can have multiple benefits for the environment, the economy, and the society, as it is linked to all the three pillars of sustainable development. By repurposing real estate, we can reduce the environmental impact of construction, create new economic value and opportunities, and improve the social well-being and equity of the people and the places involved.



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