

food in the city,” says project coordinator Heidi Grantner. “Alleyways and unused pavement spaces could be livened up with food and could become a key part of having a sustainable food system on Vancouver Island.” In the past year, FED added six new planter boxes and three new members. FED helped carbon-neutral Italian eatery Zambri’s plant lemon and olive trees and procured Kaffir lime trees for hawker-style Asian spot Foo.

Best of all, the district is changing the way people engage with their food. Every summer, a FED party offers tastes and sips from member businesses, and this year FED will pilot walking tours of the district and its gardens, with plenty of nibbles en route. “Food should be communal,” Grantner says. —LORA SHINN

BARCELONA

Making city streets more pedestrian-friendly

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While conducting a noise study in 1987, Salvador Rueda, director of the Urban Ecology Agency of Barcelona, assessed that traffic routinely exceeded the 65-decibel noise limit. “To reduce noise to acceptable levels, select streets must be residential,” he says.

Thirty years on, Rueda’s findings have morphed into an ambitious Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan that, in addition to reducing noise pollution, aims to reduce traffic accidents and air pollution. The solution: implementing a series of pedestrian-only urban cells, or “superblocks.”



First introduced in the trendy El Born district in the '90s, the superblocks are outlined by a network of roads connecting to the rest of the city. Within the cells, traffic speeds will be reduced to 10 km/h (6 mph), with vehicle access for residents only, clearing more than 70 percent of traffic congestion in favor of green spaces. And more than 120 miles of bike lanes will replace cars as the standard means of transportation.

While it’s normal for change to be initially met with resistance, a pilot superblock introduced last fall in the emerging Poblenu neighborhood received surprisingly favorable reviews; neighbors embraced the car-free area by regularly organizing events and pressuring the city council to add trees, benches, and a playground.

For Rueda, this plan is long overdue. “Since the usage of cars has become widespread in society, it has been the king and we the servants,” he says. “Perhaps it’s time to revolt and turn that the other way around.”

—JESSICA BENAVIDES CANEPA