



Urban Agenda Platform

The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.

BAM – Biblioteca degli Alberi Milano, a project by Fondazione Riccardo Catella (FRC)

Region	Europe and Central Asia
Award Scheme	Dubai International Award
Themes	Capacity-Building Environmental Resilience Public Space
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages Goal 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Goal 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all Goal 7 - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all Goal 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Goal 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts Goal 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development Goal 15 - Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss Goal 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels Goal 17 - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development
New Urban Agenda Commitments	Sustainable Urban Development for Social Inclusion and Ending Poverty Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Prosperity and Opportunities for All Environmentally Sustainable and Resilient Urban Development Planning and Managing Urban Spatial Development Capacity Development

Summary

Born in 2019, BAM is an innovative PPP (public private partnership) between Milan Municipality, Fondazione Riccardo Catella (non-profit), and COIMA (real estate), for the management of a public park, the enrichment of urban biodiversity, and the engagement of community. FRC is responsible for park maintenance, cleaning, security and for the creation of 300+ inclusive free cultural experiences/year.

Background and Objective

BAM represents an innovative urban regeneration project that transforms a green public space into a vibrant hub for culture, education, and community engagement.

Challenges Addressed:

- Urban Density and Lack of Green Spaces:** BAM addresses the need for green public spaces in densely populated urban areas
- Sustainability Awareness:** BAM promotes environmental sustainability by integrating nature into urban life and educating the public about sustainable practices.
- Cultural Welfare:** BAM offers cultural and educational experiences open and free for all, regardless of economic and social background.



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Goals:

1. Enhance urban biodiversity while guaranteeing a clean, well-maintained, and safe public park open to all.

Promote community engagement with a strong social, cultural and educational impact.
2. Foster effective collaboration between public, private, and civil society sectors in progressing towards SDGs, aligning public and private interests.
3. Empower new generations and position them as key players in building a sustainable future.

BAM aims to create a dynamic, inclusive public space that enhances the urban environment and cultivates a sense of community and environmental stewardship.

Actions and Implementation

1. **Design, Production, and Communication of an innovative Cultural and Educational Program:** BAM organizes over 300 free events annually, focusing on outreach to marginalized communities, thereby ensuring inclusivity and fostering a sense of belonging
2. **Listening and Engaging the Community:** BAM actively engages in dialogue with the community to tailor programs that best meet their needs. By creating projects that involve the community in the park's activities and cultural programs, BAM promotes active cultural participation and citizenship
3. **Maintenance, Cleaning, Security and Enhancement of Urban Biodiversity:** A dedicated team maintains the park, fostering a healthy environment for over 500 trees, more than 100 botanical species, and 135,000 plants, ensuring a beautiful and safe space for the community.
4. **Fundraising:** A robust fundraising strategy, including grants and corporate sponsorships, ensures BAM's financial stability, allowing it to continue offering free events and maintain the park's high standards.
5. **Research and Collaboration with Universities:** By integrating research and practical learning opportunities, BAM amplifies its educational impact and fosters a culture of environmental stewardship.

Outcomes and Impacts

CULTURAL: Promotion of widespread cultural welfare accessible to all; capacity-building through learning opportunities with a focus on new generations.

- 1,760 free cultural experiences
- 330k people involved, of which 102k children



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ENVIRONMENTAL: Biodiversity enrichment; air quality improvement; mitigation of urban heat islands; boosting water conservation through efficient practices.

- 100 botanical species, 500 trees, 135k plants
- CO2 removed since 2019: 103,062.89kg
- Reduction of the heat island effect: average recorded temperature in 2011 in BAM's district: 39-44°C / average recorded temperature in 2021: 31-35°C
- Nature-based maintenance techniques, drip irrigation

SOCIAL: Changes in people's behaviors towards sustainable lifestyles; appreciation of cultural diversity through inclusion projects.

- 662 hours of socially useful work by participants under 18
- Activities in the Italian Sign Language
- Participation in the Cultural Fostering project to combat educational poverty and engage families typically not involved in cultural services

ECONOMIC: Mobilization of private and public financial resources for sustainability; promotion of effective PPP

- 111 companies, public entities, grant-making foundations involved

Sustainability and Scalability

BAM holds significant potential for scalability and here are key strategies that can ensure continued impact and adaptability:

- **Community-centered approach:** By prioritizing community needs through active listening and placing people at the heart of program development, BAM ensures its program remains integrable to new contexts, aligning with the specific needs, characteristics, and identities of each community.
- **Focus on universal needs, SDGs, contemporary issues:** BAM addresses core issues like safe public spaces, inclusion, migration, disabilities, climate change, environmental awareness, all of which are relevant to many urban communities.
- **Innovative managerial and funding model:** The PPP model and the fundraising business approach, which foster effective collaboration between public, private, and civil society sectors, presenting a replicable framework for other cities. This model ensures sustainable funding, promotes the sharing of resources and expertise among sectors, and ensures efficient management of public spaces. Securing consistent funding represents one of the main challenges; therefore, a strong reputation and effective fundraising strategies are essential.



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Gender and Social Inclusivity

- **Economic accessibility:** BAM's cultural program is entirely free of charge to ensure equal access for all, regardless of economic background.
- **Social inclusion:** BAM targets vulnerable segments of the population through initiatives such as Socially Useful Work programs and activities in underprivileged suburbs of Milan to engage vulnerable communities.
- **Focus on Disabilities:** BAM ensures its offerings are accessible to people with disabilities by translating talks and workshops into Italian Sign Language, offering annual internships to students with cognitive disabilities, and designing park infrastructures according to the highest accessibility standards. For the new Rose Garden (to be opened in 2025), BAM is also developing guides in Easy-to-Read font and Augmentative and Alternative Communication.
- **Gender Balance:** 48% of the engaged artists are female, showcasing a commitment to equal representation
- **Internationality:** BAM fosters international collaborations with artists and institutions worldwide, promoting cross-cultural exchanges and bridging diverse cultures.
- **Education Through Culture:** BAM delves into contemporary issues like migration and LGBTQI+ culture, promoting understanding and transcending social divides through the power of art.

Innovative Initiative

Cultural innovation: BAM redefines cultural engagement and social impact through the language of art, emphasizing culture's essential role in sustainable development. The artistic content is site-specific and co-created with artists, ensuring a collaborative process that involves the community. Activities are open-air, breaking down barriers between the audience, artists, and the natural environment. Every artistic experience is always free.

Technical innovation: BAM integrates unique design features, pioneering materials, and green maintenance techniques that yield significant environmental benefits, such as i.idro DRAIN Flooring with over 100 times the drainage capacity of natural soil, Groundwater-Based Irrigation, which utilizes water from 12 wells, repurposed after generating air conditioning; and recycled park substrates.

Managerial innovation: BAM is Italy's first PPP for public space management and cultural activation, with the Municipality establishing the regulatory framework based on BAM's agreement.

Research innovation: BAM has installed 252 IoT sensors on trees and in flower meadows to collect real-time data on plant health, environmental benefits, and pollinator activity

Resources devoted to delivery



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Financial resources: BAM's annual expenses are covered through a robust fundraising strategy that includes corporate sponsorships, grants, and awards, ensuring financial stability and supporting BAM's mission.

Human resources: Francesca Colombo, Cultural General Manager, heads a dedicated team overseeing all BAM operations. The team comprises 11 young professionals (67% under 40, 72% Female) specializing in production, fundraising, communication, HR, and finance. Their diverse educational backgrounds (1% Engineering, 36% Business, 45% Humanities, 1% Natural Sciences) contribute significantly to BAM's success. Furthermore, BAM annually hosts 1-2 interns, emphasizing its commitment to cultivating future talent.

Network: BAM has cultivated a network of 272 partner organizations, including universities, public institutions, parks, and arts organizations, to develop a high-quality program featuring top-tier artists and professionals.

Infrastructures: BAM's offices, located in the park, are powered entirely by renewable energy, showcasing BAM's commitment to sustainability. The park features innovative elements, including pioneering materials and advanced technological tools to minimize water and resource waste.

Conclusion

BAM significantly advances SDGs through its innovative approach to community development, social inclusion, cultural engagement, and environmental sustainability, demonstrating a holistic model for sustainable urban living and public space management.

To confirm the strong impact of the project, in 2024, BAM was awarded with the prestigious Dubai International Award for Best Practices, promoted by UN-Habitat and the Municipality of Dubai. BAM stood out among over 2,600 submissions from 144 countries, earning recognition for its innovative cultural program and its positive impact on community life.

The importance of BAM's initiative, besides the social, cultural and environmental impact, lies in the scalability of BAM's approach, its collaborative partnerships, and ongoing efforts to empower local communities and promote lasting change. The continuous evolution and adaptation of BAM's strategies in response to community needs underscores its resilience and long-term impact.