

## Reviving Abandoned Suburban Settlements: Urban and Architectural Approaches to Seasonal Housing

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52340/building.2025.71.25>

**Abstract.** The revival of abandoned suburban and seasonal settlements has become increasingly relevant in response to rapid urbanization and the growing need for nature-based living spaces. Historically significant for recreation and relaxation, these settlements are being reimagined through sustainable urban and architectural planning. Key principles include functional zoning, ecological building practices, modular and adaptable housing systems, and the integration of natural elements. Global examples, particularly from Scandinavian countries like Sweden, demonstrate successful models that combine environmental sensitivity with quality of life improvements. This study explores these approaches and highlights their potential for restoring suburban spaces as sustainable, inclusive, and community-oriented environments.

**Key words:** *Revival of suburban settlements; Abandoned villages; Seasonal settlements; Urbanization impact; Urban-rural dynamics; Sustainable development; Ecological architecture; Energy-efficient buildings; Restorative tourism; Community-based planning; Georgia's suburban history; Eco-friendly housing concepts.*

The revival of abandoned suburban settlements is an interesting and relevant topic, especially today, when many villages or settlements have disappeared or have been degraded due to urbanization. Suburban settlements have traditionally been of great value both for urban dwellers and for all conditions related to nature, relaxation and improvement of the quality of life. A seasonal settlement is a place that is used mainly during a certain season, usually summer or spring, when climatic conditions support closeness to nature and the environment.

### Introduction

The revival of abandoned suburban settlements is a growing and compelling topic in today's world, particularly as many villages and settlements face decline or disappear due to the pressures of urbanization. These suburban areas, once vital hubs for relaxation, recreation, and connection with nature, have traditionally offered a retreat from the hustle and bustle of urban life. However, with changing societal dynamics, there is an increasing recognition of their potential for rejuvenation. Seasonal housing, in particular, offers a unique solution, providing spaces that cater to short-term needs, like recreation and relaxation, during specific seasons. This text explores the urban and architectural approaches to reviving these suburban settlements, focusing on their historical context, the design principles necessary for their sustainable growth, and the lessons drawn from successful global models. By blending ecological sensitivity, modular systems, and functional zoning, these settlements can be transformed into thriving, sustainable communities that offer both a connection to nature and a high quality of life.

**1. The Needs of Settlement Planning:** The main goal of seasonal suburban settlements is to cater to short-term needs such as recreation, nature, and free time. The planning of housing types, infrastructure, and spaces are planned for active or controlled use during the summer period.

**Functional Characteristics:** The needs of such settlements include living spaces where people can spend time in peace and comfort. This includes both permanent structures (in addition to modular and adaptable housing) and temporary housing.

**Natural Environment:** Another important aspect of suburban settlements is their

proximity to nature. In such places, the population often maximizes the use of agriculture and nature — gathering natural products, engaging in entertainment, walking, or engaging in sports activities.<sup>18</sup>

## **2. History of Suburban Settlements**

Suburban settlements, as a concept, mainly developed in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. This period was marked by urbanization and industrial growth, when living conditions in cities became more complicated, and people felt the need to spend time outside the city.

**The Primary Type:** The creation of suburban settlements mainly occurred by entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and representatives of prestigious mechanisms, often by building houses in suburban areas or remote villages.

**Tourism and Recreation:** As society grew economically, resorts, recreational areas, and suburban settlements proliferated in virtually every country. In Europe, for example, the concept became particularly popular in Norway, Sweden, and Germany, where suburban settlements became large gathering places during the summer season.

### **Development in Georgia:**

In Georgia, suburban settlements have played an important role since the late 19th century, especially in the regions surrounding large cities. Part of the urban population spent their summers in country houses, which introduced a different model of rural and suburban life.

In this historical context, such settlements were initially characterized primarily by ethnic and social status, but today they are widespread and it is clear that they have new functions and social roles.

**The Next Phase:** In the 20th century, suburban settlements underwent changes, with a greater focus on architectural details, infrastructure, and the opening of these spaces to a wider population. This meant opening up these spaces not only to the elite, but also to a broader population, including tourists.

**The Current Situation:** Today, the importance of suburban settlements has grown even more, as urbanization and the tension of

city life make people return more often to nature and seek places to relax.<sup>19</sup>

## **3. Urban Principles of Settlements**

The planning of suburban settlements should be based on functional zoning, which allows the settlement to combine different functions, such as residential, commercial and recreational areas. This means that the settlement should have spaces not only for living, but also for various social and economic activities.

**Residential Zone:** Residential houses should be designed in such a way that the local population and guests can enjoy a peaceful environment and proximity to nature. These houses should be comfortable and their layout should encourage the creation of better community spaces.

**Commercial Zone:** The commercial areas of suburban settlements create opportunities for small businesses, such as shops, small markets, pharmacies and other service facilities, which help the local economy and tourism.

**Relaxation and Entertainment Areas:** The settlement area must include parks, walking trails, sports fields, and other spaces where people can relax and engage in leisure activities.

**Improved Infrastructure:** In architectural and urban planning, it is important that the infrastructure is improved and as conducive as possible to providing comfortable living conditions.

**Infrastructure Facilities:** Reliable roads, water and electricity systems, sanitary and purification facilities must be planned to ensure comfort and stability in living conditions.

**Trade and Service Spaces:** The combination of commercial and residential areas must be arranged so that the population has easy access to necessary services and can live in comfortable conditions.

**Inclusive Design:** The infrastructure must take into account the needs of all age and social groups (including those with special needs) to ensure that everyone has maximum access to the settlement.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://worldgbc.org/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.archdaily.com/>

#### 4. Seasonality and Modular Systems

Seasonal settlement refers to a settlement that functions only for a certain period of time, such as during the summer or spring seasons. Therefore, it is necessary to implement modular systems that can be easily adapted based on the season.

**Mobile Structures:** For such settlements, the best solution may be mobile homes that can be easily moved, adapted and quickly changed according to the season. This could include mobile camps or affordable housing systems that can be expanded or relocated.

**General Adaptation:** The settlement can create infrastructure that accommodates enough space to adapt to different types of activities seasonally (for example, sports areas in the summer and relaxation areas in the fall).

#### 5. Architectural Principles

**Ecological Buildings:** One of the main principles related to suburban settlements' architecture is ecology. Buildings should not only be energy-efficient but also environmentally friendly.

- **Natural Materials:** The use of natural materials for suburban houses, such as wood, stone, glass, and other eco-friendly building materials, is not only aesthetically pleasing but also has a lesser environmental impact.
- **Energy Efficiency:** It is necessary to use solar energy, install solar panels, and recycle water. These approaches not only contribute to environmental protection but also significantly reduce the resources required for living.
- **Energy-Efficient Planning:** Buildings should be designed to make the most of natural resources (sunlight, natural ventilation, and weak water recycling) to minimize the use of electricity and water.<sup>20</sup>

**Local Design and "Micro-Houses":** The architecture of suburban houses should be oriented towards compatibility with nature and

the local culture.

- **Local Architecture:** The design should be appropriate for local traditions and styles. This could involve elements like roofs, facades, balconies, and terraces that reflect local architectural traditions and blend more easily with the natural environment.
- **Micro-Houses:** Micro-houses, or small homes, are often used in suburban settlements because they offer functional and efficient use of small spaces. Such houses often include solar panels, plant borders, integrated living spaces, and compact designs.

**Integration of Natural Elements:** The harmonious integration of nature and architecture must be included in any design to ensure that locals and tourists can stay as close to nature as possible.

- **Large Windows and Open Spaces:** Large windows in homes allow residents to fully enjoy the beauty of nature. The same applies to terraces and open balconies, which are prioritized in suburban houses.
- **Parks and Landscape Planning:** It is essential to combine park and landscape engineering to create a pleasant environment. For example, designing the natural landscape with trees and plants helps create a more comfortable and sustainable environment in the settlement.
- **Natural Elements:** Gardens, water streams, reservoirs, and other natural features depend on seasonal conditions and offer additional benefits.

These architectural approaches provide not only visual comfort but also help users stay in closer contact with nature.

#### 6. Practical Examples and Successful Models

**Global Experience:** Several countries around

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<sup>20</sup> <https://unhabitat.org/>

the world stand out for their successful models of seasonal settlements that effectively use places near nature, innovative architectural and urban approaches, and ensure maximum comfort, ecology, and sustainability. Such models are often developed by Scandinavian countries, such as Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

**Sweden:** Sweden is one of the first countries to actively use seasonal settlements as restorative tourism and relaxation spaces. Many of these settlements are located in beautiful natural landscapes and near lakes, which support local and international tourism.<sup>21</sup>

- **Ammerån-Hosjö:** One of the popular locations in Sweden, which has been revived as a seasonal settlement. The homes built in this area are architecturally innovative and ecologically sustainable, welcoming tourists during peak summer months for local relaxation. The buildings are made from ecological materials such as wood, stone, and glass, harmonizing well with nature.
- **Eco-Houses in Sweden:** Sweden is distinguished by modern ecological house models that are designed based on energy efficiency and sustainability principles. Many residential complexes in Sweden use solar energy and water recycling to reduce environmental impact and increase sustainability.

### Conclusion:

Suburban settlements, as seasonal spaces, combine the use of functional zoning and ecological approaches to ensure high-quality living conditions close to nature. The urban and architectural principles of the settlement, such as modular systems, the use of ecological materials, functional zoning, and the integration of natural elements, contribute to comfortable and sustainable living. The global experience, such as in Sweden, Norway, and Finland, shows that these types of settlements thrive when local resources and ecological

approaches are correctly utilized. Models from Sweden and Norway demonstrate that such settlements not only play a social and economic role but also help maintain harmonious relationships with nature and promote sustainable development.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.naturvardsverket.se/>