

# Larvik (NO) COMMUNITY (AS) CENTER



## INTRODUCTION

Larvik's unique status is owed to its strategic geographical location on Norway's southeastern coast, situated between the Skagerrak Strait and Farris Lake. This positioning makes it a crucial crossroads between Oslo and the western regions of the country.

From as early as the 16th century, Larvik gained prominence as a significant seaport, primarily due to its leadership in timber export. Throughout its history, the town's identity and economy have always revolved around the harbour.

In the 1920s, a design competition was held to redefine Larvik's waterfront, leading to the expansion of the port and the establishment of a railway station, shaping the area as it exists today.

However, when the ferry port moved to the city's southeast coast in 2000, a new opportunity was presented to renovate the waterfront and reinvigorate Larvik's identity.

Several projects have already been completed, such as a spa, cultural center, and housing developments, which have significantly increased the density of the western coast. Nevertheless, it is essential for the historical harbour to go beyond being a platform for speculative projects. Instead, it should be reimagined as a new vibrant core for the city, nurturing a sense of community identity and serving as a new beating heart for Larvik.

## COMMUNITY (AS) CENTER

The lack of a strong connection between Larvik's city center and waterfront is both physical and mental, due to few public buildings present along the sea, creating a sense of distance from the community. To address this, the Tolbadden building presents an excellent opportunity to catalyze people and activities in the area.

Transforming the old customs house into a new community center will serve as a focal point to draw the people of Larvik closer to the waterfront. By renovating and expanding the building, it can accommodate a diverse range of functions such as a library, coworking spaces, and multifunctional areas. These amenities will not only bring the community together but also play a vital role in defining the future identity of the harbour area.

The physical disconnection between the city and the harbour is partially attributed to the current railway's position, which may undergo changes if a new intercity line will be established closer to the center. Instead of viewing this as a problematic issue, it can be seen as an infrastructural challenge that could be overcome with thoughtful planning.

The option of creating an underground passage linking the upper and lower parts of the city emerges as a potential solution. Such a passage not only resolves the disconnection but also offers an exciting opportunity to rediscover Larvik's geological richness, turning it into a significant new attraction for residents and visitors.

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## **BØKKERFJELLET: A SHARED GARDEN AND A NEW GETAWAY TO THE HARBOUR**

The constellation of cliffs that has shaped Larvik since its earliest development plays a vital role in defining the city's identity. The recognizable Larvikite formations are evident in historical drawings and maps, serving as observation points to oversee and control the surrounding territory due to their 360° view.

However, Bøkkerfjellet poses both a visual link and a physical obstacle between the city center and the harbour. To ensure the preservation of this natural landmark, an underground connection will allow people to move without disturbing the untouched panorama of Bøkkerfjellet. To mark the entrance to this underground passage, a small pavilion designed to resemble a rock formation will be constructed.

Moreover, the plans include extending the park towards the city center by planting more trees and increasing the available green spaces. This expansion aims to enhance the natural beauty of the park while also taking measures to protect the biodiversity of its flora and fauna.

By implementing these measures, Bøkkerfjellet Park will be safeguarded for future generations to cherish, ensuring that its ecological balance and natural splendor remain intact.



## **CONNECTING THE CITY BY DISCOVERING ITS GEOLOGY**

The plan to create an underground connection between the upper and lower town of Larvik, presents an excellent opportunity to showcase the city's geology to everybody. Larvik's wide recognition as the sole location of this type of monzonitic rock makes it a remarkable feature worth celebrating and sharing with the public.

The underground passage, beyond being a functional link, will transform into an attraction in itself: a captivating open-air museum integrated into everyday life transitional spaces. This design approach allows people to experience and learn about Larvik's geology in a dynamic and engaging manner.

By linking the underground passage to the existing tunnels in Bøkkerfjellet, there is an opportunity to create a network of connections and access points throughout the area. Utilizing the old bomb shelters as food storage or a minimarket is a smart way to repurpose existing structures and make the most of the limited available space in Larvik, considering the geographical constraints on expansion.

Moreover, the excavated rock and terrain will be ingeniously repurposed in the design of the new park along the harbour to embrace a circular and sustainable practice, reducing waste and maintaining a harmonious relationship with the environment.

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## COMMUNITY CENTER

The centerpiece of Larvik harbour's transformation will be the establishment of a community center within the historic Toldboden, the old custom house built in 1888, which holds significant importance as an original port landmark.

During the conversion process, great care will be taken to preserve the building's historical significance while seamlessly integrating modern elements to enhance its functionality and appeal. By adding new light structures and covering the courtyard, the building's volumetric expansion on the northern side will create additional spaces and maximize usable surface.

The goal is to achieve a harmonious balance between the old and new identities of the harbour, ensuring they complement each other rather than conflicting. This approach will extend to the outdoor spaces, with the reopening of the historical Fiskebryggen and the completion of the waterfront park. Along the coast, various leisure, greenery, and recreational areas will be developed to attract people to appreciate the scenic beauty and partake in outdoor activities.

By skillfully conserving and modernizing both the historic building and the surrounding outdoor spaces, Larvik harbour will be transformed into a vibrant and welcoming community hub.

## PROGRAM

The community center is envisioned to be an adaptable and inclusive space, catering to a wide range of activities and needs within the community.

The main entrance to the center will be located in the newly covered courtyard, providing a welcoming and spacious lobby that serves as an initial casual gathering area, connecting to all other functions.

One of the significant features will be the new library of Larvik, occupying the old Toldboden. The library will span across both floors of the existing building, and through thoughtful renovation, the rooms will offer a variety of spaces for people to read, study, and relax.

The barn within the community center will be repurposed into a co-working space, where the original structure will be preserved, offering a unique and inspiring workspace. This co-working area is designed to cater the needs of remote workers, freelancers, and small businesses. Additionally, larger rooms in the barn will serve as versatile meeting and learning spaces.

The aim is to create a flexible and multifunctional environment within the barn, enabling it to host both formal and informal events when needed.

**LIBRARY**

**LOBBY**

**COWORKING**

**COVERED SQUARE**

PROGRAM **SR816**

**NO PROGRAM**

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## A COVERED PLAZA AS OPPORTUNITY

The creation of a large covered space within the community center will serve as a dynamic hub for a wide range of opportunities and events. The deliberate decision to leave this area undefined allows for adaptability based on the ever-evolving needs of the community.

This flexible architecture of the covered plaza enables seamless transformations, making it an ideal venue for various seasonal events. From holiday markets to flea markets, music concerts, cultural festivals, open-air movie screenings, and more, the plaza can host a diverse array of activities throughout the year, ensuring it remains lively and engaging.

Beyond its functional versatility, the covered plaza takes on a deeper meaning within the community: it becomes a symbol of unity and togetherness, fostering a sense of belonging and pride in Larvik's identity.

## LARVIK (IS) COMMUNITY

Larvik's transformative journey centers around placing the community at the heart of its identity. Through precise and well-scaled interventions, the city seeks to breathe new life into its harbour, making it a central focal point around which the entire town revolves.

The design of the community center exemplifies this approach, as it puts the needs and desires of the community first. By involving the residents in shaping the space according to their interests and requirements, the center becomes a place of ownership and empowerment for everyone involved.

The repurposing of the old custom house is a testament to the community's ability to rejuvenate historic landmarks and create spaces where people from all walks of life can come together, collaborate, and connect. The center is poised to become the vibrant heart of Larvik, nurturing a strong creativity, and cooperation for present and future generations.

This ambition extends beyond the harbour area, as new functional and recreational spaces are created to seamlessly link different parts of the city. The goal is to interlace a harmonious connection between all areas of Larvik.

By putting the community at the center of its life, Larvik will embrace its unique identity and create a bright and promising future for all who call it home.