

Summary

This project to revitalise a housing estate yard is the result of an open design competition followed by multiple rounds of consultation in an extensive participatory process. The design of the 64 289 m² public space aims to increase eco-stability by introducing new green and blue infrastructure, and areas for inclusive community activities such as a community garden, a range of playgrounds for all age groups, and a publicly accessible school yard. To increase safety, new public lighting has been introduced as well as new public paths with better social control mechanisms. Green infrastructure has been strengthened by planting dozens of trees and introducing low maintenance areas with meadows for pollinators. Blue infrastructure is represented by a stream with a bio active pond.

The solutions offered by the Good Practice

This participatory planning project was set up to revitalise a 64 289 m² housing estate yard known as 'Agatka', with zones for residence and relaxation. Measures aimed to increase ecostability by introducing new green and blue infrastructure, together with areas for inclusive community activities such as a community garden, a range of playgrounds for all age groups, and a publicly accessible school yard. To increase safety, new public lighting was introduced as well as new public paths with better social control mechanisms.

The project includes activities to:

- improve environmental aspects in cities through the construction of green and blue infrastructure elements;
- introduce measures to reduce noise in the urbanised environment;
- create a green park with small urban design infrastructure and natural landscape elements.

In addition to the project's environmental aspects, the solution is designed to:

- create suitable exercise and recreation areas for residents of all ages;
- increase the aesthetic value of the area;
- remove elements that are non-functional or have negative impacts;
- improve and supplement the existing infrastructure, with features such as pedestrian walkways, furniture, multifunctional areas, a playground with fitness elements for all age groups, an artificial stream with a retention pond, public lighting and vegetation elements.

Building on the sustainable and integrated

urban approach

This Good Practice fundamentally increases biodiversity and ecostability. By expanding and improving the quality of green and blue infrastructure elements on the site, the project directly improves the quality of life of residents in surrounding houses and increases the quality of the urban environment as a whole. With its democratic character, and open access to the general public, it fulfils the basic principle of equality in society. Anyone can use the revitalised territory without limits, regardless of their economic or social background.

Based on a participatory approach

This project was built on a participatory approach from the start. On 6 April 2017, a public meeting was held at the Spartakovská Elementary School for citizens to familiarise themselves with the intention to modify the space – and express their comments. The participants were divided into four groups, each of which was assigned one part of the resolved territory. Citizens then worked with maps of the territory, ready to draw their proposals. Supported by the meeting's creative and pleasant atmosphere, participants provided a wide range of suggestions for modifying the space to improve quality of life in the area. As a result, many ideas from this meeting went on to be implemented during the project. These include, for example, community productive

gardens, specified playground set-ups, and sports amenities such as a running track.

As a continuous process, the management and timetable of the community garden is carried out by participants themselves. This highlights the value of participatory processes not only in the beginning, but also throughout the lifetime of the project, to keep the publicly managed amenities sustainable in the long term.

What difference has it made?

Since the realisation of this project in early 2023, the popularity of the Agatka area has skyrocketed. In what was originally a vague, plain open space with minimal amenities, worn down public paths, and unsafe urban furniture, the ecostability and biodiversity – including small animals and local flora – has increased multiple times. The quality of the environment has greatly improved for local residents. The area is showing less social insecurity thanks to an improved community control mechanism, first described by Jane Jacobs as one of the most important elements in a peaceful public space. Introducing completely new playgrounds, sports infrastructure, and a community garden, has increased levels of inclusivity. The community has changed from spending a minimum of their daily time outside, to having a second outdoor living room – Agatka. The space is creating natural interactions between schoolchildren, the elderly, families, young people and challenged communities. That is something that every healthy city needs.

Why this Good Practice should be transferred to other cities

Many housing estates built in the second half of the twentieth century, especially in central and eastern Europe, are in an unsatisfactory physical condition, and do not meet modern needs for public space. Specifically, the quality of green-blue infrastructure can be low, and equipment in these spaces is lacking, or low-quality in terms of usefulness for residents. These

environments do little to support positive community development, inclusion and diversity.

The Public Space Revival project provides guidance on the way these issues could be tackled in countries such as Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and elsewhere across central and eastern Europe. The project's principles can be applied successfully to various scales of territory, and it can be transferred to a wide range of urban and socio-economic contexts.

In terms of national legislation, the practice is linked to Act 292/2014 on European structural and investment funds, and the Act 311/2023 amendment to the act on regional development support. It is also linked to the City of Trnava's regulatory plan to increase support for the acquisition and retention of quality administrative capacities.

The principle of creating a revitalisation process for a specific urban area is now widely used on all rejuvenation projects in the City of Trnava. The city has used slightly adapted versions of the Public Space Revival practice in a range of projects including the revitalisation of Tehelna and the Gen. Goliana district, as well as the pedestrianisation of Stefanikova Street. All these projects have the same principles: open design competition, participatory process, and compatibility with all the main EU agendas.