

**LUBLIN LOCAL INITIATIVES PROGRAM:
A SUCCESS STORY**

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LUBLIN LOCAL INITIATIVES PROGRAM: A SUCCESS STORY

The Lublin Local Initiatives Program demonstrates the tremendous potential of participatory planning and community-based development processes. The Program's success to date has been dramatic, as evidenced by tangible improvement of the living environment within project areas, and worldwide recognition for its strategic concepts and effective implementation instruments. The Program was chosen in 1996 out of 600 projects nominated worldwide as one of twelve UNCHS/Habitat Best Practices in Improving Living Environment.

The Program's success depends on extensive outreach, mobilization of resources, effective institutionalization within the city government, as well as utilization of development processes skillfully adapted to the dynamics of the local economy. Strategic investments, a productive city/community partnership, and empowerment of the residents involved in the rehabilitation process guarantee the sustainability of the revitalization effort, with diminishing public inputs required over time.

Due to Poland's fiscal program of decentralization, the city of Lublin faced economic restructuring, unpredictable central transfers, and severe budget restraints. Despite these obstacles, Lublin showed insight in opting to tackle economic and social development by means of creative revitalization strategies focusing on awareness building, participatory planning, strategic improvements, fiscal initiatives, and empowerment within a framework of city and community partnerships.

Objectives of the Local Initiatives Program:

- To revitalize the project areas and upgrade infrastructure;
- To foster the development of micro-enterprises and home-based income generating activities;
- To improve the quality of the living environment;
- To valorize the assets of limited income households;
- To help conserve and enhance Lublin's valuable historic and cultural heritage;
- To promote self-built and self-improved housing;
- To reuse vacant industrial land and buildings;
- To re-privatize and rehabilitate multi-family housing;
- To promote community maintenance of public spaces, and
- To create a new image of the rehabilitated area

INSTITUTIONALIZATION: A KEY ELEMENT

To ensure sustainability of revitalization and development of its diverse neighborhoods Lublin has institutionalized the Local Initiatives Program. Residents and local investors want reassurance that the City is committed for the long term, will remain responsive to local concerns, and has the flexibility to operate through an interface that guarantees the community a role in the decision-making process.

Institutionalizing a decision-making framework dependent on participatory practices and the inputs of a multiplicity of actors is a great challenge. In 1993 and 1994, the legal and institutional framework in Poland was still in a state of flux. Community-based development was a new concept and the legal basis for setting up tax-exempt, non-profit community development organizations did not exist. The will and leadership to carry out local improvements clearly existed in the neighborhoods, however, the municipality had to provide a supportive framework for local initiatives.

In 1995, Lublin institutionalized the Local Initiatives Program as a key environmental improvement strategy. The institutional framework is integrated within the existing organizational structure built on linkages between departments. It has simplified the interface between the residents and the city administration, while allowing for a wide range of operational strategies related to the objectives of the revitalization plan and the opportunities in each neighborhood.

The flexibility of the interface allows the municipality to work in partnership equally and jointly with residents, private investors, community groups, associations and community-based organizations as it becomes financially feasible to set them up. Program activities are planned so as to leverage and coordinate public and private inputs magnifying the productivity of investments as well as their contribution to local development.

Lublin's decision to institutionalize the Local Initiatives Program in 1994 and its determination to carry out the decision reflects a growing confidence within city government in the efficacy of participatory planning and partnership initiatives. In this, Lublin has taken the lead among Polish and Eastern European cities.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Lublin's community planning process has established entirely new relations between local government and residents, based on mutual respect and trust. It has also started the long-term integration of marginal neighborhoods into the city's economy and urban fabric, despite limited local resources and tight municipal budgets. The process required extensive outreach efforts including consultations with individual households, open discussions and consensus-building.

The key strategies include giving the community an official voice engaging the leadership, giving residents a role in shaping the future of their neighborhoods, and establishing a performance-oriented decision-making framework that allows them to set their own priorities and initiate joint action or proceed with individual activities.

Information is made readily accessible to interested residents. Regulatory plans are written in layman's terms. Guidelines, cost-sharing formulas, and small maps are packaged in a compact, easily understood format and made available to property owners.

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Sustained outreach enables every family in the project area to communicate the problems they face in daily life and their aspirations for change. Participatory planning establishes a mutual understanding of needs and expectations and provides a basis for developing a detailed neighborhood improvement plan. The Program focuses on building awareness among civic leaders, neighborhood representatives, business owners, and residents through interactive participatory techniques and the preparation of written and visual materials. Through consensus building, a shared vision for each neighborhood is developed, stressing the broader development perspective and relating environmental improvements to community needs and opportunities. Detailed plans and two-year action programs highlight municipal and local responsibilities. A working partnership between the City and the community is negotiated and all parties are held to their commitments.

The fundamental premise is that the organizational process at the community level has to develop from within the community, with no outside interference. Residents are encouraged to develop their own procedures for common decision-making, form committees, and designate representatives to coordinate interaction with City Hall. The sense of civic pride grows as

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residents felt that they are full partners in the planning process, their readiness to participate actively in implementing plans expands.

THE CITY/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP: IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Pilot areas are selected, to test and adjust as needed the Program's framework and operational strategies in a new setting. Key considerations include the need to demonstrate visible results and the capacity to ensure adequate productivity of public investment.

City planners and groups of residents representing each street worked cooperatively to establish planning solutions including implementation strategies and financial partnerships between the residents and the city. In a process of mutual education, all parties become familiar with existing conditions, realistic potentials for improvement, and affordable options.

Action Plans

The acceptance and recognition of the value of private initiative, which encourages self-reliance and fosters entrepreneurship is the cornerstone of the Program's strategy. Action plans are structured to engage a multitude of small investors and coordinate the independent small-scale activities of property owners. Success depends on building trust between city officials and residents, creating a shared vision of the future, sustaining enthusiasm for incremental improvements over a long time period, enabling the dynamics of the free real estate market to work, and empowering the residents to pursue their own self-improvement. At all times, the overriding concern is to avoid stalling the process, salvage financial and manpower resources already invested by residents in their quest for decent housing, and valorize the assets of lower income households.

Action plans are structured in a sequence of grouped tasks so that each group yields a concrete output that then served as a building block in the empowerment process and a springboard for launching new actions. The pilot areas in Bronowice and Kosmineck districts were designated as urban renewal sites, which meant that residents were denied access to infrastructure on the grounds that all existing housing was "temporary" pending demolition. In addition, repairs of buildings were prohibited except for major roof leaks.

In the two years since the pilot Program was started, a number of streets have been serviced with new water, sewerage and gas lines, and one street has been paved. Residents from other streets continue to come forward with proposals for local improvements. Private investment in housing and commercial facilities continues to grow, as empowered residents and local investors see the effectiveness of the participatory process and the achievement of the visions and plans developed for their neighborhoods. Nearly 391 existing houses have been fully or partially renovated and 87 new dwellings have been built. Over 110 new shops have opened and more than 40 new and converted buildings have been given over to small-scale commercial uses, now employing close to 200 young people. Young people who had left the area are returning to family real estate holdings that have become valuable assets, multigenerational families are reestablishing themselves.

Growing Scope and Diversity of Program Activities

The Program has quickly expanded from its early focus on infrastructure and moved to support private business and micro-enterprise development, environmental improvement (including landscaping public open space), solid waste management, and the rehabilitation of rental housing.

Zoning changes are included in the new urban development plans to enable property owners to establish home-based businesses on their property "as of right" without having to apply

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for variances or exemptions. The Program Team contributes technical support, facilitates permitting, and expedites procedures.

Effective monitoring allows the Program Team to identify opportunities as they appeared and act quickly to capitalize on them, as well as for flagging constraints. As resident priorities evolve, new legal and administrative regulations are enacted, and enabling frameworks expanded to empower citizens and ensure sustainability of development initiatives. The program's broader contribution to Lublin's economic and social development provides information for funding, and prompt feedback regarding the use and impact of allocated resources. The approach has now been generalized and is being applied throughout the city.

Old Town

Experience gained in working at the community level is now being applied toward the unique challenges posed by the Old Town's badly deteriorating fabric, which constitutes a valuable cultural heritage that must be conserved for future generations. The plan adopted in 1995 details 4 programmatic areas.

1. Improvement of public space and infrastructure for which the City has assumed major responsibility,
2. Commercial development driven by the private business sector,
3. Cultural promotion and tourism, an area where organizations and businesses are taking a leading role, and
4. Housing rehabilitation that presents the greatest challenge and will need to be addressed within the framework of public/private partnerships.

Partnership mechanisms will establish a framework for sustainable revitalization strategies involving active participation of local residents. Upgrading obsolete components of the infrastructure which tend to collapse is a priority, as is improvement of public space.

City officials, council members and the conservator all concur that without direct outreach to residents the enabling framework provided by the Local Act will not fulfill its objectives. Residents must be assured that conversion to commercial use, privatization, and selective gentrification needed to ensure the financial viability of rehabilitation and conservation will not result in forced displacement of current inhabitants. The Program team has launched a community outreach effort to increase awareness of opportunities to combine conservation and revitalization. It has instituted a participatory decision making process to facilitate cooperation among owners, tenants and city authorities. The team is also structuring creative financial packages that combine and leverage public and private resources and negotiate agreements that use the incentives provided by the City, the Ministry of Culture, the National Housing Bank, and the Environmental Improvement Fund to help mobilize private investment. Ensuring the involvement of tenants in the rehabilitation process constitutes a major challenge.

Pilot Project Area

1. The renovation of 1 or 2 city-owned buildings in need of repairs that do not require displacement of tenants.
2. Privatization of buildings that can be renovated by private developers or sitting tenants.
3. Renovation of one building in need of major repairs that necessitate permanent relocation of some families to remedy shared occupancy and overcrowding.

The revitalization of the Old Town involved multiple actors in the public and private sectors, and required reconciling their diverse interests. Over the years, ill-advised housing legislation and inadequate management of the housing stock has created interlinked social and economic

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problems that private property owners cannot be expected to resolve on their own. The Local Act for Support of Renovation of Privately Owned Rental Housing, passed in August 1995 grants limited but much-needed funding assistance to owners of multi-family apartment buildings to undertake badly needed renovations. The Local Act has accomplished the following tasks:

1. Fostered the rehabilitation of publicly and privately-owned housing by providing assistance to de-densify occupancy and eliminate the sharing of sanitary facilities and kitchens among several families. The city is committed to providing relocated families with alternative accommodations.
2. Enabled the development of commercial activities on the street level of buildings by assisting in the relocation of families living in ground floor apartments.
3. Expanded the 3-year tax exemption granted under the national legislation for housing development to encompass the residential, commercial and cultural uses in renovated buildings. In response to expressed interests of private investors, the act allows property owners to rent at market rates, flats with an area greater than 80 m².
4. Provided direct grants to support private renovation leading to improvement of all the dwelling units in the buildings. The grant covers 25% of the rehabilitation costs up to a maximum amount equivalent to 20 times the average national salary level. This would set the present level at 16-18,000 zł.

STARE BRONOWICE

Total area	73.03 ha
the area for housing	19.42 ha
number of residents	4,000
number of small scale private housing plots	415
number of plots for rental housing	34
the area designated for greens and parks	12.41 ha
the area designated for industry and wholesale	17.20 ha

improvements	1992-95	1996	1998
number of shops and small businesses	increase from 5 to 25	53	77
number of housing renovations by private owners	57	135	194
number of rental houses with flat renovations			15
number of new houses and extensions built by private owners	19	29	32
length of street infrastructure modernized	400m		920m
length of new sewerage lines	400m		+104m
Length of new water lines	400m		+480
length of new gas lines	20m		+30m
the cleaned-up green area prepared for the riverside park arrangement	7.00 ha	continued	+bicycle path +0.5 ha of access alley
the industrial areas of privatization, structural transformation and modernization	6.86 ha	+4.16 ha	31 bldgs modernized

KOSMINEK

Total area	73.03 ha
the area for housing	19.20 ha
number of residents	3,200
number of small scale private housing plots	416
number of plots for rental housing	23
the area designated for greens and parks	5.00 ha

improvements	1992-95	1996	1998
number of shops and small businesses	increase from 2 to 30	36	46
number of housing renovations by private owners	80	112	197
number of rental houses with flat renovations			30
number of new houses and extensions built by private owners	38	49	55
length of street infrastructure modernized	980m	+175m	4310m
length of new sewerage lines	620m	+255m	+150m
Length of new water lines	160m		+100m
length of new gas lines	470m		+1580m
new street surfacing		350m	
the cleaned-up green areas		1.06 ha	2.50 ha