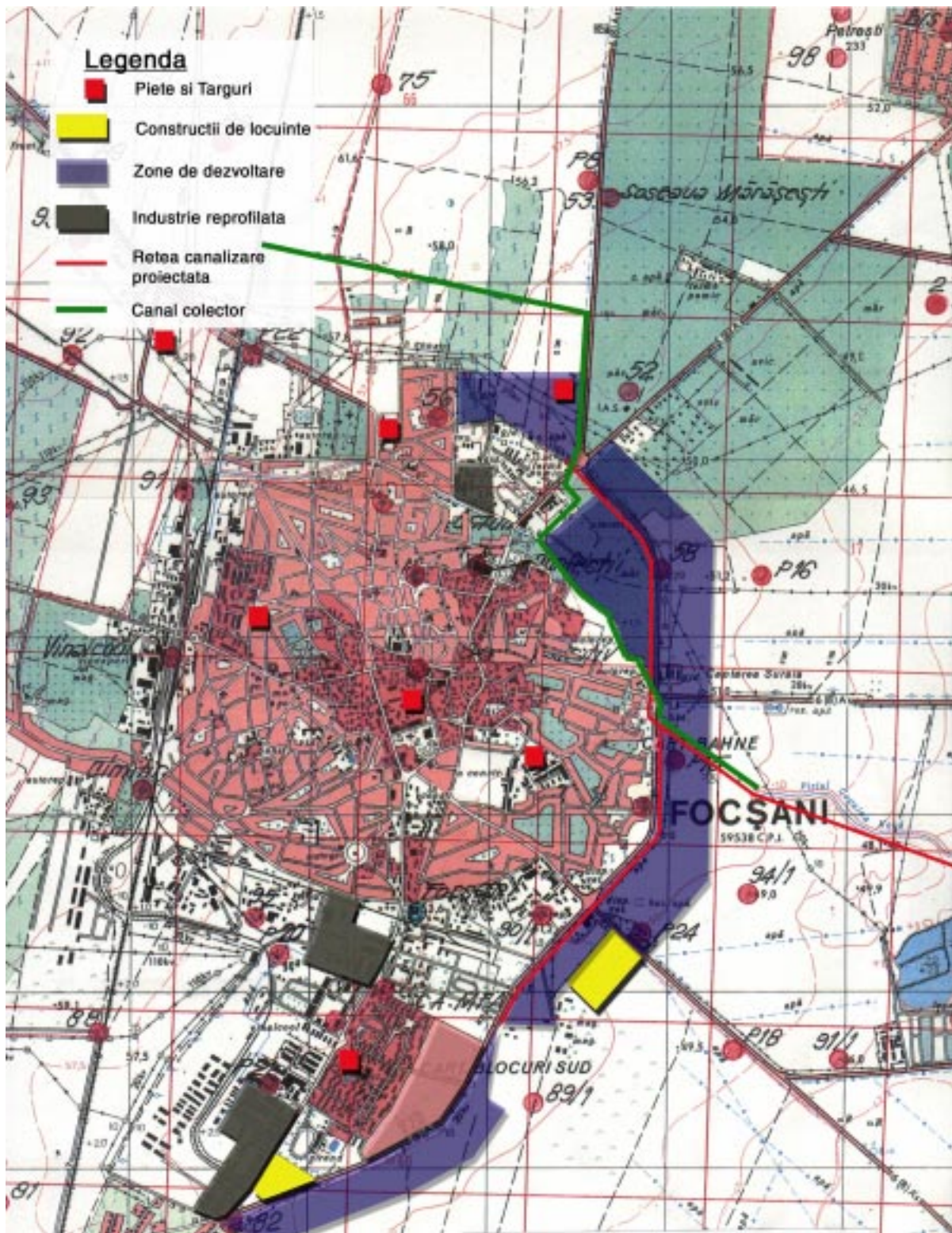




VRANCEA COUNTY CITY OF FOCSANI

THE STAGE OF ELABORATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



Map of Focsani

1. Introduction

Strategic planning has become one of the instruments used by local communities to make sure the proposed politics and programs correspond to the expectations of the citizens, and to the restrictions that limited local resources impose on development.

The initiation of such a process in the town of Focsani is of considerable importance, particularly given the fact that no strategic plan existed prior to this initiative. Focsani is presently elaborating a Strategy for Development, for which the City has had the opportunity to benefit from two programs assisting local administration. Financed by USAID and developed by RTI and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, these programs focus on the citizen participation, urban planning and economic development.

The first UPLED Seminar in Oradea constituted the starting point for this important process. Its importance lies mainly in the improvement of knowledge and capacities of the Focsani working group, and in a greater opening and understanding of local authorities and institutions to such processes. Finally, it created the opportunity for approaching similar processes in the same strategic manner. It is important to point out early on the complexity of the process: planning of this type interrelates three different types of actions, namely: conceptual, institutional and practical.

2. Two Stages of Strategic Planning

1) Initiation of the process

- a) Creating a Task Force of stakeholders that are involved throughout the process:
 - i) Local Public Administration
 - ii) Decentralized governmental institutions
 - iii) Specialists in various fields
 - iv) Business representatives
 - v) NGOs
 - vi) Mass media
- b) Elaborating a vision to give cohesiveness to the planning process:
 - i) To see Focsani as a center of regional interest that through sustainable development and continual improvement in quality of life, affirms its identity and personality within a framework of active community involvement.
- c) Using this vision to establish priority strategic directions:
 - i) Sustainable development
 - ii) Quality of life
 - iii) Identity and character
 - iv) Community participation

2) Development of the process

- a) Organizing planning activities:
 - i) The analysis of potential risks and establishing measures to avoid them. Understanding that some institutional changes may be necessary (namely the creation of a specialized public structure to ensure the coordination of the activities).

- b) Creating an institutionalized framework to organize and foster cooperation among involved institutions
- c) Collecting information
- d) Polling citizens and establishing a basis to elaborate the strategy.
- e) Deciding on objectives and strategic components.

3. Objectives of Focsani's Strategic Plan

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIC COMPONENTS
Create a proper environment to develop the private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building strategic partnerships with the business sector; • Elaborating/structuring a strategy of urban development; • Developing links between urban planning, infrastructure and economic development; • Overcoming restrictive regulations concerning urban development (valorization of land)
Improve quality of life and promote social equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing local housing policy • Creating a community of social equity
Promote strategic urban management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing institutions' capacity to implement the strategy for urban development • Developing human resources in the public sector • Developing a better legal framework for local development • Cultivating proactive attitudes and efficient procedures • Promoting partnerships among all actors involved in urban development (public and private sectors, NGOs and community)
Promote sustainable use of local public finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making more efficient use of the activities and energies of the local community and local investments. • Developing better financial practices • Diversifying and increasing the number of financial resources for urban development

Four consultative groups were developed for each of the strategic fields. Key activities outlined by the groups included:

Institutional and organizational reform:

- Creation of a strategic planning department;
- Creation of a GIS department;
- Creation of the Center for Public Relations (for ensuring transparency in public relations).
- Establishing attributes and responsibilities of new departments

In the field of urban planning:

- Spatial analysis of household income and definition of disadvantaged zones to facilitate their development;
- Elaboration of urban plans and feasibility studies for the priority investments;
- Lobby for a Government Regulation to stop some land improvement projects in the built-up zone of the town.

In the field of investment analysis and prioritization:

- Inventory of investments;
- Establishing criteria and selection indicators;
- Financial analysis.

4. The Public Participation Process

The City began analyzing and interpreting data collected during the public outreach process. Through analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of Focsani's economic development and quality of life approaches, a preliminary number of concrete objectives and responsibilities were established. This type of analysis allowed the City to better understand its strong points and local and national opportunities, and helped lead to realizing Focsani's vision. (The results of this SWOT analysis are found in the appendix. In addition, the reader will find a list of economic development programs and projects that resulted after the strategic planning process.)

It is important to emphasize the positive outcome that this public outreach has had on participation, and more importantly, on creating viable partnerships between the local public administration, local institutions and the business sector. Statistically speaking, the process to date has resulted in:

- 36 people involved in consulting group work in various fields;
- 14 meetings;
- 5 press conferences;
- 39 articles in written, audio and video media at local and regional level;
- 4 information briefs presented to the Local Council;
- 522 persons interviewed;
- 24 persons consulted regarding the stages of the strategy's elaboration.

Public enquiries demonstrated that ensuring quality of life and the standard of living were priority issues. As housing plays an important part for these two issues, the City's housing policy was reconsidered. A first plan for housing development includes:

- Construction of a new apartment complex – the “Tineretului” quarter;
- Promotion of adding attic apartments to existing buildings and rehabilitation of their facades and interior pipes;
- Rehabilitation of housing units administered by the municipal government;
- Accessing funding for social and market-rate housing.

WORKING GROUP as ELABORATION TEAM:

<i>Eng. Decebal Bacinschi</i>	<i>Mayor of Focsani</i>
<i>Eng. Catalin Dragulescu</i>	<i>Prefecture of Vrancea County</i>
<i>Ec. Natasa Nemes</i>	<i>Economic Director</i>
<i>Ec. Carmen Grosu</i>	<i>Inspector - Economic Department</i>
<i>Ec. Gina Popovici</i>	<i>Inspector - Economic Department</i>
<i>Arch. Daniela Olaru</i>	<i>Chief Architect of Focsani</i>
<i>Eng. Mariana Dumitriu</i>	<i>Chief of the Investments Office</i>
<i>Eng. Cristina Costin</i>	<i>Inspector - Investments Office</i>
<i>Ec. Viorica Serbu</i>	<i>Economic Director - Public Utilities Co. Focsani</i>
<i>Eng. Ionel Boc</i>	<i>Director SC TRANSPORT LOCAL SA</i>
<i>Eng. Valter Popescu</i>	<i>Director SC ENET SA</i>
<i>Eng. Violeta Balica</i>	<i>Association of Promoters in Local Development</i>
<i>Ec. Daniel Postu</i>	<i>Community Partnership Foundation</i>

SWOT ANALYSIS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Threats
ECONOMIC FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - importance of the economy in Vrancea County - unemployment rate less than national average - existence of local material resources - geographic location at crossroads of commercial routes - available space with access to necessary utilities, high demand for leasing spaces - large number of small- and medium-sized businesses - high degree of privatization and good banking system 	ECONOMIC FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - weak diversification of production - high rents for production spaces - risk of foreign firms withdrawing as a result of tendency to migrate to labor markets in Moldavia, Ukraine, Russia - limited private financial resources
DEMOGRAPHIC/CULTURAL FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qualified labor force - Well educated children 	DEMOGRAPHIC/CULTURAL FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Out-migration of labor force - Poor managerial performance - Decrease in birth rate
POLICY/PLANNING FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Movement towards an efficient local financial policy - Transparency of Local Public Administration - Favorable legislation, political will and financing programs to support small- and medium-sized businesses - Partnership of Local Public Administration in projects - Existing framework for relations with foreign partners (sister city in Holland) 	POLICY/PLANNING FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of a Business Center or other institution to promote foreign relations and investment - Lack of industrial park with necessary utilities - Lack of communication with businessmen - Difficulties in obtaining permits - Absence of viable consultation center
EDUCATIONAL FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Correlation between educational programs and labor force - Educational system with diversified training for various types of professions 	EDUCATIONAL FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of labor force retraining programs - Poor facilities for schools - Labor force less prepared in modern technological fields
TECHNOLOGY FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modern communication systems (digital telecommunications, Internet, etc.) 	TECHNOLOGY FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weak computer interconnection between various institutions
Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good infrastructure and culture of payment 	Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of wine stock market

SWOT ANALYSIS – QUALITY OF LIFE

Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Threats
INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC SERVICE FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sufficient clean drinking water - Satisfactory amount of thermal comfort in housing - Hot water supplied as scheduled - Modernization of waste collection system - Construction of a new residential quarter - Sufficient number of schools of all types - Traffic infrastructure relatively good - Favorable location in regards to access to fuel and international transportation networks 	INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC SERVICE FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of funding for infrastructure - Insufficient lighting in public areas - Improper waste deposit - No assurance that new residential quarter will have adequate supply of heating - Poor quality of school infrastructure - Insufficient parking areas - Reduced capacity of methane gas distribution system - Insufficient modernization of local public transit system - Absence of collection, sorting and deposit of recyclable materials - Poor health infrastructure and insufficient service market
ECONOMIC FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive perception of private business - Well trained labor force 	ECONOMIC FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of financial sources - Tendency of local economy to develop unilaterally and unbalanced
CULTURE/LEISURE FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Renovation of the Municipal Theatre - Receptivity on the part of local media to report on local issues 	CULTURE/LEISURE FACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient entertainment and leisure places - Lack of political neutrality of mass media - lack of restaurants
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduced number of pollutant agents 	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of environmental policy
PERCEPTION FACTOR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relatively high degree of security felt among citizens 	PERCEPTION FACTOR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of political neutrality on the part of the media
	SOCIAL COHENSION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient promotion and implementation of programs to integrate disadvantaged people - Weak power of associations of proprietors

HOUSING PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

OBJECTIVE AND TASKS	PARTNERS	PERIOD
<p>By the end of 2002, 53 individual dwelling units will be built in the new “Tineretului” quarter</p> <p>a) Realize feasibility study for the infrastructure and exterior works and approval of the Local Council;</p> <p>b) Realize technical project for the infrastructure and exterior works;</p> <p>c) Organize public auction;</p> <p>d) Execute construction and monitor progress</p>	<p>Local Public Administration SC Electrica SA Direction of Telecommunication National Agency for Housing Interested physical persons</p>	2001- 2002
<p>By the end of 2002, 176 community dwellings will be built for youths unable to build or buy an apartment</p> <p>a) realize feasibility study for the infrastructure and exterior works and approval of the Local Council;</p> <p>b) realize technical project for the infrastructure and exterior works;</p> <p>c) organize public auction;</p> <p>d) execute construction and monitor progress.</p>	<p>Romanian Government Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Housing SC Electrica SA Direction of Telecommunication</p>	2001- 2002
<p>By the end of 2003, 65 individual dwellings will be built on Brailei street</p> <p>a) realize feasibility study for the infrastructure and exterior works and approval of the Local Council;</p> <p>b) realize technical project for the infrastructure and exterior works;</p> <p>c) organize public auction;</p> <p>d) execute construction and monitor progress</p>	<p>Local Public Administration SC Electrica SA Direction of Telecommunication National Agency for Housing Interested physical persons</p>	2002 - 2003
<p>By the end of 2003, South Marketplace will be rehabilitated</p> <p>a) realize feasibility study for the infrastructure and exterior works and approval of the Local Council;</p> <p>b) realize technical project for the infrastructure and exterior works;</p> <p>c) organize public auction;</p> <p>d) execute construction and monitor progress.</p>	<p>Local Public Administration Administration of Marketplaces Focsani CCIA Vrancea Small and Medium Companies</p>	2002 - 2003

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

OBJECTIVE AND TASKS	PARTNERS	PERIOD
By the end of 2002, 1% of the Small and Medium Companies will be activated a) Analyze small and medium companies and select viable ones; b) Identify local financial facilities; c) Analyze distribution of active companies in town; d) Identify financial resources to support local economic development; e) Create business incubator for rejuvenating existing and creating new small and medium companies.	Town Hall of Focsani CCIA Vrancea Local Public Administration Businessmen	2001- 2002
Wine market transactions will increase by 25% a) Create Wine Stock Market b) Build headquarter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrate headquarter in the General Urban Plan and Detailed Urban Plan - Ensure land and utilities - Construct building and open for use - Publish actions and results - Include Wine Stock Market in free zone. c) Promote activities of zonal and regional collaboration	Local Public Administration CCIA Vrancea Businessmen	2001-2005

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

OBJECTIVE AND TASKS	PARTNERS	PERIOD
By 2005, counseling/education centers will be available for parents of the schoolchildren a) create psycho-pedagogic counseling centers in all 38 schools; b) develop activities in special programs supported by local and foreign financiers.	Local Public Administration County School Inspectorate Vrancea County psycho-pedagogic Counseling Center for NGOs	2002-2005
By the end of 2005, the sewerage system will be extended. a) Design the project and obtain financing (ISPA fund 70%, BEI loan 20%, local contribution 10%) b) Increase capacity of purifying station.	Local Public Administration Company for Public Utilities Focsani	2001-2005
Starting from 2003, local people will be able to watch performances at the Municipal Theatre with a group of 20 professional actors. a) finish renovation works at the Municipal Theatre b) attract and motivating young professional actors	Romanian Government Ministry of Culture Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Dwelling Local Public Administration Municipal Theatre	2001-2003
By the end of 2001, the Focsani network for methane gas alimentation will be completed. Completion of works	Focsani Town Hall	2001
By the end of 2001, the Passage Valcele will be completed and offered for use. Completion of works	Focsani Town Hall	2001
By the end of 2001, Revolutiei street will be rehabilitated and modernized. Completion of works	Focsani Town Hall	2001
By the end of 2002, Focsani local people will benefit from the improvement of telephone services. a) modernize of the 2 existent telephone stations b) expand the local frameworks in peripheral quarters – Ring Road and Variance Street c) use of the COSMOROM network	Focsani Town Hall Direction of Telecommunications Variance	2001-2002
By the end of 2003, an ecological platform for depositing waste will be accomplished a) modernize collecting and depositing waste – introduction of ecological garbage collector b) obtain financing for realization of the ecological platform c) modernize of the waste sorting system	Focsani Town Hall Company for Public Utilities	2001-2003

By 2004, local citizens will benefit of modern public transport a) renew of the minibus and medium-size bus park b) introduce of dispecerization c) introduce of a system to fluidize traffic d) createg special access band for handicapped people	Focsani Town Hall Company for Public Transport	2001-2004
By 2005, the Focsani heating system will be rehabilitated	Focsani Town Hall SC ENET SA	2001-2005
By 2005, in the northern part of Focsani, the drainage system will be rehabilitated	Focsani Town Hall	2001-2005
By 2005, local citizens will benefit of qualitatively improved drinking water through the rehabilitation and expansion of the water purification station	Focsani Town Hall Company for Public Utilities	2001-2005
By 2005, three school units with serious structure problems, will be rehabilitated	Focsani Town Hall Variance School Inspectorate	2002-2005