

***Guideline for
the General Procedure of Developing and Implementing
an Urban Green Space Strategy
DRAFT 1***

Milestone 2 (Action 4.1)



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1 Introduction

This guideline is one of the milestones of the INTERREG IIB CADSES Project GreenKeys.

The main issue of the guideline at this stage of the project is to provide support to the twelve city partners within GreenKeys to develop and implement a long-term urban green space strategy.

The present guideline is still a draft that will be developed and improved further in the course of the project according to the analysis of the progress made by partner cities and by review of literature on strategic planning in the domain of green space management. The final version, which will be part of the GreenKeys Manual and part of the Education Module (working title), is intended to help European cities not participating in GreenKeys to develop and implement their own urban green space strategy.

Strategy is in general a policy for achieving a number of specific objectives. It means developing a major approach or method, which is suitable for attaining goals and resolving specific issues. For GreenKeys:

Urban green space strategy sets out a collective vision for improved green spaces, which meet community needs and provides a reference point for allocating resources and plans of action.

2 Formal and Practical Framework of the Guideline

This guideline briefly defines a structured procedure, which is based on experiences and recommendations documented in existing urban green space strategy guidelines (e.g. CABE Space (2004), Greater London Authority (2004) Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (2001). These guidelines are intended for local authorities in United Kingdom. However, they have very useful and valid instructions for application for European cities outside UK. Moreover, with an appropriate adoption to the particular needs of the GreenKeys partner cities they will be an effective starting point for the development of green space strategies within this project. Therefore, we analysed and summarised the most important aspects from these and other documents to compile this GreenKeys Urban Green Strategy Guideline.

Using and understanding the guideline:

This guideline shall help the city partners to start and organise the working steps for the development of their urban green space strategy. As a resulting effect, the partner cities can have a better judgement about their progress concerning this task within GreenKeys:

Some useful hints and recommendations are listed in the chapter 4 “Additional Remarks”

This guideline will be supplemented by support via telephone contact and the discussions and working groups during the workshop in Ljubljana (26 – 28 September 2006).

3 Stepwise approach for formulating the urban green space strategy

There is not a fixed programme or structure to be used for formulating an urban green space strategy. The procedure that can be applied depends on many circumstances and has to reflect the local conditions and requirements as well as national planning legislation and processes. In that sense, every city has to find its own way how to do the work. Financial resources and personal resources and skills that are available play also an important role and determine the quality and comprehensiveness of the strategy. However, some general tasks are necessary to work out in any strategy planning exercise. The structure presented here is a recommendation, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Strategy Building: A Three-Phase Process

The strategy building process is divided into 3 phases in which typical tasks are carried out. With this structure, we are referring to the recommendation that CABE Space has documented in its 2004 publication “Green space strategies – a practical guide”.

According to the Action plan of the GreenKeys Project and the strategy building process outlined in the presentation on development of strategies of PP07 and PP04 at the workshop in Volos these three phases are:

1. Phase 1: Preliminary activities (Action 2.3)
2. Phase 2: Information gathering and analysis (Action 2.4)
3. Phase 3: Composing the strategy (Action 2.4)

The preliminary activities of **phase 1** lay out the foundation for a successful strategy process. The main actors should be identified and contacted. Within this phase a responsible strategy group has to be created, political support has to be arranged and a preliminary mission should be achieved. The investment in these tasks will pay off later. Therefore, you should take care of the issues discussed and recommended here.

The **phase 2** includes the collection and analysis of “objective data” and subjective information that are necessary to put the strategy on a satisfying empirical basis. The data pool collected in this phase is indispensable to make reasonable judgements and to find out what are the major priorities that the strategy should deal with. The data pool makes it possible to identify the local situation of the type, location, accessibility, quantity and quality of public parks and green spaces. If available, Geographic Information Systems could be a good tool to collect the spatial and tabular data in a digital way for easy evaluation and presentation in maps and also to integrate existing strategies or plans into the urban green space strategy easily.

In the final **phase 3**, you should prepare a draft version of the strategy document based on the results of your activities in phase 1 and 2. The draft document is the basis for consultation with the stakeholders involved in the strategy process. From the responses, you can draw conclusions for the final version of the strategy document. The final document is then subject to get approval by the local authority. Having such a green space strategy document means that you can use it as reference point for the local authorities decisions related to the development, planning, design and maintenance of green spaces. It documents the strategic thinking and strategic management approach that is necessary to contribute significantly to a sustainable development of towns and cities.

The following paragraphs describe the individual tasks and working steps of each phase. These steps are not numbered and are not to be understood as a sequential process. In planning processes, overlapping of tasks in each phase cannot be avoided. In general, this is not a problem and it is your decision which sequence you will work through. A decision support is supposed to be the most efficient and convenient way.

Phase 2 and phase 3 are outlined very briefly at the moment because we want to integrate the experience of the cities from phase 1. This can be done after the Workshop in Ljubljana.

Phase 1: Preliminary activities

- **Secure political support:** The acceptance and the success of your strategy will heavily depend on the political support that you gain for it. Therefore, we recommend you to inform the political decision makers in your municipality at the beginning about your activities in order to get their support. This makes it much easier to get actions running afterwards.

(Optional) Output: Creation of a supportive environment, e.g. approval letter from mayor

- **Establish a strategy group:** Set up a core strategy group (about 3 to 5 or 7 people) that will be responsible for the entire task of strategy building and writing the required documents and add as much people for consultations as you require. Invite and choose those persons that are most important and valuable for this task and that are willing to contribute in a constructive way. If possible, you can include an external expert in strategic planning in the core group who can support you and can be a facilitator and mediator for the discussion when it tends to become controversial. The identification of possible group members and especially keeping in contact is a permanent activity. This helps to stimulate the group members to stay active and interested during the whole process.

Output: Address list of strategy group members or potential group members

Box 1: Examples of stakeholders (Greater London Authority 2004:p 5)

Representatives from these local groups should be involved in the process of preparing a strategy:

- *Relevant local authority departments, including planning, parks/leisure, education, housing, highways, regeneration*
- *Other key owners and managers of open space*
- *Local strategic partnership*
- *Sport and recreation interests*
- *Children's play interests and young people generally*
- *Amenity interests and 'friends' groups*
- *Disabled interests*
- *Ethnic minority communities*
- *Representatives of housing associations*
- *Cycling interests*
- *Developers*

- **Identifying links:** At the beginning of the strategy building process it is crucial to identify the multiple links which your strategy will have to other subjects like e.g. stakeholders (see possible example of stakeholder in Box 1), institutions, planning activities, resources, etc.

Internal assessment

- Make sure that you are aware of current planning processes and other local council strategies, which are important for your strategy.
- Identify all departments in your municipality that have relevance for green space development and planning and therefore have to be involved in your strategy building process. Decide if they need to be part of your strategy group or if a communication and/or consultation is sufficient.
- Identify the policy makers and stakeholders on urban green spaces outside your municipality. Consider a wide range of organisations from the private and public sector. This can be decision makers, investors, non-profit organisations, local citizen groups which are concerned and knowledgeable about public urban green spaces. Find out who would be the most valuable delegate for your strategy group. Think how you can involve those stakeholders that you not choose as members of the strategy group.

External assessment

- Find out if there are important regional or national issues you have to consider for your strategy (see part 3.1 in the City Profile). Are there links to strategies or policy plans on national or regional level? What are your minimum standards for green space?
- **Preliminary analysis:** Think about the context in which your strategy operates and the contents your strategy document should contain.

“Market” assessment

- The basis should be a brief description of the current green spaces situation in your municipality. It should reflect on problems and obstacles, on opportunities and potential for development, on local needs, existing plans, and other facts and information that make your strategy well informed. You can use your **GreenKeys City Profile** as a starting point because many aspects are dealt with in that document.

Identify resources

Resources can be people, equipment, facilities, funding, or anything else required to carry out the project tasks and activities. Concerning the project GreenKeys, the single green spaces (and maybe the open spaces) also belong to the resources.

What are the main types of green space you have to manage?

What are the personal resources that carry out development, management, planning and design, and maintenance?

Who are the users of green spaces in your city and what are their major needs?

What are the main sources of funding for your activities? Are there alternative ways of funding?

Identify also your critical issues: What are your long-standing problems in the municipality concerning urban green spaces? Critical issues are fundamental policy or program concerns that define the most important situations and choices an organisation faces now and in the future (Martinelli 1999, p 5).

Output: Overview and analysis of the resources and “user” situation concerning urban green spaces

- **Preliminary mission and vision statement:**

The mission and the vision statement are one of the most important elements in any strategy document. The **mission statement** briefly sets out the purpose and the values of your organisation with respect to green space management. It is a broad description of what we do, with/ for whom we do it, our distinctive competence, and why we do it (Martinelli 1999, p 6).

The **vision statement**, which can be a part of a mission statement, outlines at the beginning what you want to achieve in the mid-term and long-term future. Based on this vision statement you can develop your strategy. The vision statement describes what you want the urban green space situation to look like in ideal terms in the future: the results you aim to achieve, e.g. concerning the characteristics of the urban green space situation. The strategic vision statement provides direction and inspiration for organisational goal setting. Examples of vision statements are presented by box 2 and box 3 shows the relation to the time for the terms used by GreenKeys.

Please note: Although the words "mission" and "vision" are used interchangeably, they are distinct in an important way: "Mission" describes "general purpose"; "vision" describes "future direction".

- In this phase you should formulate a preliminary vision statement that helps you to focus your discussions and analysis activities. Be aware that such a vision statement should go beyond what you have already achieved in the municipality. Otherwise, it would not induce any progress. A vision statement usually has some inspirational components and sometimes they may sound irrational. However, it must be achievable in the context of the resources that are potentially available for you; if not now, but may be in the near future. Be sure that the members of the strategy group and the decision maker share the vision, and later anybody who is involved in the realisation of the strategy (see examples of vision statements in box 2).
- Formulate your preliminary mission statement as self-reference and basis for further discussion in the group.

Box 2: Examples of vision statements (cited according to CABE Space 2004: p 19)

To develop the extent and quality of public open space in Southwark , in order to accelerate regeneration, encourage social inclusion, improve community health, enhance biodiversity, provide educational opportunities, and enhance the quality of life of those people who live, work and visit the Borough.

Vision statement of the London Borough Southwark, UK

Newcastle's green spaces belong to local people. They should be cherished, accessible, safe and clean – managed for the future and there for everyone to enjoy.

Vision statement of Newcastle, UK

By 2020 we will provide a well-connected system of attractive parks and green spaces that are managed and maintained to satisfy the diverse needs of all members of our communities, provide the context for continuing development and contribute to our social, environmental and economic well-being.

Vision statement of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

If a mission statement already exists, the focus of this step is on reviewing it in light of the emerging vision statement and if necessary revising the language. Here are some questions, which can help to review an already existing mission statement.

Questions for a critical review of an existing mission (Martinelli 1999, p 6):

1. Is the mission statement clear and on target in today's operating environment?
2. Do you have any specific questions or concerns with respect to the mission statement?
3. Does the mission statement duplicate the mission of any other "organisation"? If so, what should we do about it?
4. Considering the answers to these questions, how, if at all, should the mission statement be changed?

Output: preliminary mission and vision statement (not more than ½ A 4 page)

- **Preliminary goals:** After the previous steps of setting out your vision and doing your first analysis, you can come to formulate your preliminary goals and objectives that you want to achieve with the strategy. This will set out the scope and the programme of the further work. Here you have to define your priorities you want to follow in the further steps. Identify the key issues (priority areas, priority topics, priority types of green space), which you want to focus on in the strategy and which will have priority in the realisation of concrete measures afterwards. They are focussed on outcomes or results and are qualitative in nature. The strategic goal statements should be consistent with the vision statement.

Output: A set of goals and priorities to be achieved within a fixed period

- **Strategy framework report:** From the activities in the working steps described above, you should formulate a strategy framework report that outlines the draft concept of your strategy and identifies the main elements of it. This framework report gives you guidance on the next steps that will improve the strategy.

Output: The written strategy framework report

Box 3: PLANNING TERMINOLOGY (Martinelli 1999: p 8)	
MISSION-----	> "Forever"
STRATEGIC VISION -----	> 5 years out
GOALS -----	> 3-5 years
STRATEGIES -----	> 1-5 years
OBJECTIVES -----	> 1 year
MISSION: Broad description of what we do, with/for whom we do it, our distinctive competence, and WHY we do it.	
STRATEGIC VISION: Describes what we want the organization to look like in ideal terms in the future - the results we will be achieving and characteristics the organization will need to possess in order to achieve those results. The strategic vision statement provides direction and inspiration for organizational goal setting.	
GOALS: Broad statements of what the organization hopes to achieve in the next 3-5 years. Goals focus on outcomes or results and are qualitative in nature.	
STRATEGIES: Statements of major approach or method (the means) for attaining broad goals and resolving specific issues.	
OBJECTIVES: Specific, concrete, measurable statements of what will be done to achieve a goal generally within a one-year time frame.	

Phase 2: Information gathering and analysis

During this phase, you have to conduct a more comprehensive analysis of the current situation than in phase 1. According to the goals and objectives set out in the strategy framework report you should get the missing data and information that become obvious in phase 1. In particular it is important to clarify any open questions and to identify gaps in green space provision. You can use your City Profile as a starting point. The following list helps to consider important elements of this working phase:

- **Review of national, regional and local policy:** Identify links and potential synergetic effects of national, regional and local planning objectives to support your green space strategy (e.g. between different urban municipality departments, different plans and different stakeholders).
- **Analysis of demographic characteristics of the “strategy area”:** In order to reflect the needs of your citizens you should have a clear understanding of the demographic structure of your community and accordingly of the “strategy area”. Look at your local or regional statistics department to obtain the following socio-demographic information:
 - Population and age structure with groups like children, students, work force, retired people, and people with disabilities
 - Ethnic groups, unemployed and social fringe groups
 - Groups without gardens and groups without motor vehicles
- **Establish landscape/townscape/visual and ecological characteristics of the strategy area:** Identify and describe the basic characteristics of your green spaces and list their historic, ecological and other qualities. Highlight areas with special importance for biodiversity. Find any new qualities that these areas should have in the future.
- **Establish the spatial planning context of parks and green space:** Mapping of your green spaces, if possible using GIS tools.
- **Assess the supply including site audits and assessments:** Identify the current supply of green spaces according to your documents and databases. If possible, carry out field audits to evaluate the quality status of the areas.
- **Assess the needs and demand including consultation:** Find out what the attitudes of the citizen to green space issues are. Look for questionnaires or consultations that had been carried out in the past. (Use for example the economic questionnaire from GreenKeys). For this step is very useful to include citizens into the planning process. Find cost- and time-effective methods to gain the required information.
- **Identify local standards:**
Outputs: Area profiles, site audits, demand analysis, priority projects, local standards
- **Definition of priorities:** Starting from your database you should be able to set priorities where to put the focus of your strategy and action. This can be the improvement of existing green areas or the development of new green spaces or both.
- **Identify skills:** For the implementation of your strategy you need an appropriate staff with a wide mixture of skills ranging from general management, strategic thinking, understanding of the political and policy context, landscape management, public relation, IT skills etc. only to name a few.

Phase 3: Composing the urban green space strategy and the objectives

In this phase you should clarify and declare the way how you would like things to be with the help of the mission and vision statement, with the goals and policies you identified and the findings of your analysis of the current situation. Develop strategies for each goal you defined during phase 1 (Preliminary goals). Use a draft version of the strategy document for consultation with the stakeholders. Use their response to update the preliminary version of the strategy. With the identification of the areas of activities that will deliver the identified future possibilities you can prepare a green space action work plan with draft policies and work plan. It follows a discussion and formulation of final “Urban Green Strategy”.

A strategy is judged as potentially effective if it turns out to be in accordance with one or more of the following statements:

1. It exploits environmental opportunities.
2. It defends against environmental threats.
3. It leverages organisational competencies.
4. It corrects organisational shortcomings.
5. It offers some basis for future competitive advantage.
6. It counteracts forces eroding current competitive position.

Tasks are the following (these will be deepened in the forthcoming project work):

- **Prepare draft policies**
- **Prepare draft version of the strategy document** (including local peculiarities, potential new plans, an action plan, advertisement and policies for the Green Space Strategy)
- **Consultations on the draft strategy**
- **Prepare an action plan**
- **Finalise the strategy document** (creating a written document, which should be subscribed by main political responsible persons (binding document)).

Output: Final green strategy document

Annual objectives

Develop annual objectives consistent with the goals and strategies of the strategic plan: the objectives are specific, concrete, measurable statements of what will be done to achieve a goal generally within a one-year time frame. Objectives include what will be accomplished, by when and by whom (Martinelli 1999, p 7).

4 Conclusions and outlook

GreenKeys aims at improving the planning conditions for green spaces in the cities. This will be reached mainly based on the knowledge transfer of the gained experiences. The improved framework taking into account environmental, social and economic aspects are expected to enhance the cities' attractiveness for private and public investments in urban areas.

GreenKeys focuses on the improvement of urban green spaces as a step towards more sustainable cities. Following the project's three main objectives:

- (1) to provide incentives for structural changes in cities by offering opportunities for improving green spaces,
- (2) to develop a pool of green strategies to fulfil the demands concerning future needs and
- (3) to use the synergies for promoting the transfer of knowledge and exchange of transnational experiences – this guideline provides the partner cities a systematic way to start the formulation of their urban green space strategy. The implementation of a pilot project is a step forward in the formulation and adoption of an urban green space strategy.

An urban green space strategy is seen in the project as a strategic approach to green space planning and management. It is considered as important in order to react to rising complexity and uncertainty and the increasing speed of change processes related to community planning.

This guideline developed within WP 4 is backed on an intensive literature review, once there are only a few examples of thoroughly elaborated strategies devoted to green spaces improvement. It is to be understood as a framework that will be applied by the partner cities – the experiences in their application will be analysed and evaluated possibly in this way the formulation of a guideline tailored to needs of green spaces development.

The GreenKeys strategy is divided into 3 phases with typical tasks to be carried out. While the phase 1 is already developed in depth the phases 2 and 3 will be gradually intensified in the course of the implementation of the urban green space strategy by the partner cities.

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