Financing Green Projects: Local Government Approaches and Benefits for Residents

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Abstract

The article analyses the engagement of the Košice-Dargovských hrdinov city district in implementing "green" projects and proposes solutions for sustainable urban development at the local level. Theoretical frameworks of public finance and green economy are outlined as a basis for examining how public institutions can support environmentally beneficial projects. The current state of the city district is evaluated, including its financial resources and existing green initiatives, with a SWOT analysis identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results highlight the need for external funding and community involvement to overcome budget constraints. Several proposals are discussed – from establishing partnerships and nonprofit organisations to specific green projects (rain gardens, park revitalisation, green infrastructure) – that could significantly mitigate adverse climate impacts and improve residents' quality of life. These recommendations, while economically feasible and ecologically beneficial, would contribute to the development of the district and serve as an inspiration for other municipalities.

Keywords: *green economy, green projects, public funding, city district, sustainable development*

Introduction

Global climate change and environmental degradation place increased demands on public administration in the area of sustainable development of cities and municipalities. Green projects, such as measures aimed at mitigating the effects of heat waves, rainwater retention and reducing emissions, are becoming an essential part of modern city management. Public administration plays a key role in supporting and financing such initiatives, which bring benefits to society and improve the quality of life of residents (Žárska 2007). Many European cities are therefore integrating a green vision into their development strategies, as exemplified by the city of Košice's bid to become European Green City 2023. Although Košice did not ultimately win the European Green City 2023 title, the candidacy itself highlighted the need for systematic environmental measures in the city.

This paper focuses on the Košice-Dargovských hrdinov district (also known as Furča) as a case study of green project financing at the local level. It is a residential district with approximately 25-28 thousand inhabitants on the eastern edge of Košice, which, like other local governments, faces the challenges of a limited budget, but at the same time pressure to improve the environment and infrastructure for its residents. This paper presents an analytical assessment of the local conditions in the Košice-Dargovských hrdinov district, focusing on existing green projects and identified climate challenges.

Table 1: Green vision for the city of Košice by 2030

Zero ecological, water and carbon footprint in the city
Balanced internal temperature of the city and the surrounding climate
Use of renewable energy sources and protection of natural resources
Support and implementation of ecological ideas and innovations in the public sector
Creation of an environment with social and natural benefits

Source: own processing

The aim is to provide an overview of the theoretical basis for financing green measures in public administration, to assess the current situation in a selected city district and to present specific proposals for solutions. The proposed measures should not only improve environmental conditions and the quality of life of residents, but also show how local government can effectively use available financial resources (both internal and external) for projects in the spirit of the green economy.

1 Theoretical basis of the research

Public sector financing differs from private sector financing – while private finance pursues profit, public finance focuses primarily on meeting public needs and fulfilling the functions of the state and local governments (Lipták 1999). Public financing includes a system of public revenues (e.g. taxes, fees, subsidies) and public expenditures, which enables the provision of public services (Hrašková 2012). From the perspective of local government, the local budgets of municipalities and towns, which are compiled according to principles defined by law (e.g. Act No. 583/2004 Coll. on the budgetary rules of local government), are of key importance. Programme budgeting in local government is intended to increase the efficiency and transparency of the use of public resources (Peková 2004). However, for small territorial units such as the city districts of Košice, the budget is often limited – local government often

manages only a limited amount of funds allocated by the city of Košice and has minimal income of its own. Therefore, when financing development or environmental projects, it is necessary to seek external sources (state subsidies, grants, European funds) to supplement local budgets (Beličková et al. 2010).

In addition to the economic aspect, the environmental concept of the green economy is also taken into account in considerations of urban development. The term *green economy* emerged in the late 1980s and is now used to describe an economy that takes into account environmental limits and sustainability goals (Kasztelan 2017). According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), a green economy is one that promotes human well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological damage (UNEP 2009). It is essentially an economy that uses resources efficiently and cares for natural capital so that it is available for future generations. The principles of the green economy include, for example, an emphasis on resource efficiency, pollution reduction, biodiversity protection and the equitable distribution of development benefits (Kanianská et al. 2017). Green jobs, i.e. jobs that contribute to environmentally beneficial activities and technologies, are also an important part of the green economy (Kordošová and Gabčíková 2014).

In the context of spatial planning, the concept of green infrastructure is often applied, which represents an interconnected network of green elements (parks, forests, gardens, green roofs, etc.) in the urban environment. Green infrastructure improves the ecological stability of an area, contributes to the preservation of biodiversity and, at the same time, improves the quality of life of residents by providing recreational areas and cooling effects in urban environments (European Environment Agency 2011). Investments in green infrastructure and sustainable mobility in cities are key adaptation measures to mitigate the effects of climate change (Guštafíková et al. 2014).

Several initiatives have been launched at both supranational and national level to support green investment. The European Union is promoting a green growth strategy that combines economic development with environmental protection. According to the European Commission, the transition to a green economy also has significant employment potential – *green growth* can bring new job opportunities in the clean energy, building renovation and waste management sectors (European Commission 2012). In its study *Green Growth in Cities*, the OECD emphasises that cities play a crucial role in achieving the goals of the green economy, as it is in cities that most resources are consumed and most emissions are generated, but at the same time, it is here that there is the greatest scope for innovation in the fields of energy, transport and urban planning (OECD 2013).

In Slovakia, the topic of green financing resonates within the Recovery and Resilience Plan (2021–2027), which allocates a significant portion of EU resources to support the green

economy and climate change adaptation (Government Office of the Slovak Republic 2021). Specifically, the Slovak Recovery Plan allocates funds for sustainable transport, the renovation of buildings to increase energy efficiency, the development of renewable energy sources and climate adaptation measures in cities. Municipalities and cities can thus draw on funds for rainwater retention, planting greenery, eco-friendly public transport and the renovation of public spaces, for example. In addition, there are grant programmes run by foundations and state funds that support smaller community environmental projects (an example is the Slovenská sporiteľňa Foundation's grant of €10-15,000 for innovative green projects for local authorities and non-governmental organisations – SLSP Foundation 2023).

Overall, theoretical principles suggest that the successful implementation of green projects requires a combination of economic and environmental approaches. Public administration must seek financial mechanisms that allow investment in environmental measures without placing an excessive burden on public budgets. At the same time, it is necessary to involve the community and the private sector – either through partnerships or by creating incentives – so that green projects become a common priority for all stakeholders.

2 Objectives and working methods

The main objective of this paper is to propose solutions and measures that would lead to the effective implementation of green projects financed from public and external sources in the Košice-Dargovských hrdinov district. These measures should contribute to the further development of the district under review, but above all to the effective mitigation of adverse climate impacts and a significant improvement in the quality of life of residents and the overall environment in the housing estate.

In order to formulate relevant proposals, it was necessary to complete several subtasks:

- analyse the current state of the Dargovských hrdinov district in terms of its financial possibilities and previous activities in the area of green projects;
- identify the main problems and shortcomings that hinder the development of environmental measures in the area;
- to reveal existing strengths and opportunities that can be built on (e.g. community potential, available grants); and finally
- to examine relevant examples and recommendations from literature and practice that could be applied in the conditions of the municipality under review.

The methodology consisted of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. In the initial phase, a study of documents was carried out – in addition to relevant literature on the green economy and public finances, internal materials from the local authority of the Dargovských hrdinov borough (e.g. the borough's budget for 2022–2023) and strategic

documents of the city of Košice relating to the environment (e.g. conceptual plans for *a Green City*). A situational analysis in the form of a SWOT analysis was also used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the borough, as well as opportunities and threats in the area of environmental projects. The SWOT analysis helped to obtain a comprehensive picture of the internal capacities of the housing estate (e.g. the existence of green spaces, community initiatives) and external influences (e.g. the availability of EU funds vs. climate change threatening the area).

Semi-structured interviews with local government representatives and experts involved in environmental projects in Košice were also used to collect current data. These interviews provided a practical view of the feasibility of the proposed measures and helped to identify barriers (e.g. legislative restrictions, lack of human resources) to the implementation of green projects. The findings from the analyses and consultations then served as a basis for formulating specific proposals for solutions at the end of the paper.

The results of the analytical methods and findings from the field are presented in the following section as part of an overview of the current situation and a subsequent discussion of possible solutions. This structure makes it possible to link theoretical knowledge with empirical findings and subsequently derive recommendations for public administration practice.

3 Results

Profile and current state of the city district

In recent years, the city of Košice as a whole has declared its ambition to improve the environment and adapt to climate change. The effort to compete for the title of European Green City 2023 was one of the impulses for the preparation of several project plans focused on greenery, water features and sustainable transport. As the second largest city in Slovakia (with a population of approximately 240,000), Košice struggles with similar problems of air quality and overheating of the urban environment as other European cities – significant sources of pollution include heavy traffic, lack of greenery in some neighbourhoods, and extreme weather events (heat waves in summer, torrential rains). In response to these challenges, the city is gradually implementing measures: in 2022, it completed the reconstruction of the historic Singing Fountain in the centre (as an element of microclimate cooling) and renovated several parks, with a total investment in "green projects" exceeding €3 million (City of Košice 2023a).

Košice-Dargovských hrdinov (hereinafter DH) is one of the 22 districts of Košice, located on the eastern slope above the city. It is a housing estate built mainly in the 1970s and 1980s, with extensive residential blocks and specific terraced buildings. The borough covers a relatively large area; in addition to residential areas, it also includes the adjacent *Furča* forest

park and several smaller parks and playgrounds within the housing estate. In terms of population, it is one of the larger city districts (approximately 25–28 thousand inhabitants, representing about 10% of the population of Košice). Demographically, it is mainly families and older residents living in prefabricated buildings; the younger generation is attracted to the surrounding family houses in nearby villages, which emphasises the importance of maintaining the quality of life in the housing estate.

In terms of financial resources, the DH borough depends on the budget of the city of Košice, which redistributes part of its tax revenues to municipalities and boroughs. The borough's own revenues (e.g., local fees, rents) make up only a small fraction of its budget. For example, the borough's budget for 2022 was approximately €1.3 million for current expenditure (salaries, maintenance, services) and around €100,000 for capital expenditure (investments), of which only a negligible amount could be allocated to environmental projects (MiÚ Dargovských hrdinov 2023). Such limited financial resources are sufficient primarily for basic maintenance of public spaces (e.g. mowing lawns, repairing pavements), but do not allow for the implementation of more extensive investment projects, such as the comprehensive revitalisation of parks or the systematic planting of trees throughout the housing estate. Given these budgetary constraints, it is therefore necessary to combine several sources of funding to enable the implementation of green projects at the borough level. For better orientation, two summary tables are provided in this section: Table 1 summarises the financing options and Table 2 provides a SWOT analysis.

Table 2: Financing options for green projects at the local government level

Source of funding	Characteristics	Suitable use
City district budget	Limited amount of own resources	Minor modifications to green areas
Košice city budget	Higher investment potential	Revitalisation of parks
European Union funds	Linked to calls and projects	Climate adaptation
Slovak Republic Recovery and Resilience Plan	Support for green transformation	Energy efficiency
Foundation grants	Flexible smaller funding	Community projects
Participatory budgeting	Involvement of residents	Local improvements
Public-private partnerships	Co-financing	Lighting, planting

Source: own processing

In practice, the DH borough uses a combination of several sources, with external grants and participatory mechanisms playing a significant role, as documented by the projects listed below.

Despite financial limitations, however, the DH borough has begun to take its first steps in the area of green measures in recent years. In 2022, a pilot rain garden was created in the housing estate – this involved modifying the rainwater inlet and surrounding area at the Kalinovská nursery school, where vegetation capable of retaining rainwater was planted and space was created for natural water infiltration (Televízia Košice 2022). The rain garden project was implemented in cooperation with the Košice Region Volunteer Centre and financed by an external grant; it served as an example of a solution that can alleviate problems with rainwater runoff during heavy downpours and at the same time beautify the school's surroundings. Internal materials from the local authority show that in 2023, the borough prepared two smaller green projects – one was the revitalisation of greenery on Lidické námestie (restoration of the lawn, planting of shrubs and installation of an urban apiary) and the other was the installation of so-called *lawn* concrete blocks in selected car parks with the aim of creating green parking areas (a combination of paved areas and vegetation). These projects were approved by the local council at the end of 2022 with implementation planned for spring 2023. Although their scope was limited (budgets in the order of thousands of euros), they represented an important shift – they demonstrated the local government's willingness to invest in environmental measures, not just routine maintenance.

In addition to the local government itself, residents and the local community are playing an increasingly important role. In 2022, the Dargovských hrdinov district introduced a new tool – a participatory budget that allows citizens to directly propose and vote on projects in their neighbourhood. In the pilot year of the participatory budget 2023, €24,000 was allocated to support citizens' ideas (Košice-DH District 2022). Residents submitted several projects and voted on the three winners, which shared almost €20,000 (TASR 2023). Interestingly, one of the winning projects with maximum support of €8,000 was "Živý park pri fontáne" (Living Park by the Fountain) – a proposal to renovate the central housing estate park by the Ondava fountain, including moving the stage for cultural events, adding natural seating and landscaping (TASR 2023). Other successful projects included the reconstruction of a damaged statue in the housing estate and the improvement of the interior of the local library, which, although not strictly ecological interventions, contribute to the improvement of public space. The participatory budget continued in 2023 (the second year for projects implemented in 2024) with an allocation of €15,000 and a focus on sustainable ideas from residents – for example, the creation of relaxation zones, the addition of greenery, benches and solar lamps on playgrounds (Radio Košice 2023). This approach significantly strengthens opportunities for the city district, as it activates the local community and brings new ideas for improving the environment, which can be jointly financed from public funds and volunteer work.

Based on the collected data, a SWOT analysis was prepared (Table 3), which summarises the internal strengths and weaknesses of the Košice-Dargovských hrdinov district, as well as external opportunities and threats affecting the implementation of green projects.

Table 3: SWOT analysis of the Košice-Dargovských hrdinov district from the perspective of the implementation of green projects

Strengths (S)	**Weaknesses (W)**
• significant share of public green space (Furča forest park, inner blocks of the housing estate), • large number of residents and potential for community involvement, • Experience with the implementation of smaller environmental projects • Participatory budgeting as a tool for public involvement • support for environmental policies from the city of Košice.	• limited financial resources of the city district, • high technical debt of public spaces, • dependence on budgetary decisions made by the city of Košice, • lack of professional capacity to prepare projects and grants, • Outdated housing estates with a high proportion of paved areas.
Opportunities (O)	**Threats (T)**
• availability of EU funds (Slovakia 2021–2027 Programme, Slovak Republic Recovery Plan), • growing emphasis on climate adaptation in cities, • opportunities for cooperation with the non-profit sector and private partners, • growing interest among residents in the quality of public spaces, • development of blue-green infrastructure in cities.	• worsening impacts of climate change (heat waves, torrential rains), • risk of insufficient co-financing for projects, • administrative complexity of drawing on external resources, • resistance from part of the public to changes in public spaces, • increase in operating costs of local governments.

Source: own processing

The SWOT analysis synthesises findings from the budget framework and activities to date; the summarised findings also form the basis for recommendations in the discussion. The borough has a solid natural foundation – a relatively large number of existing green spaces – but these need revitalisation and maintenance. Another strength is the growing interest of residents in their surroundings, which is an asset that can be built on (volunteer activities, community projects). On the other hand, financial constraints and neglected infrastructure significantly limit the local government's ability to act quickly and on a larger scale . From the external environment, the availability of external sources of funding appears to be a key opportunity – currently, in particular, European funds within the framework of integrated

territorial investments for Košice. In 2023, support for nine green projects from European funds for Košice and its surroundings was approved, with a total value of €10.5 million, including a project to revitalise public spaces in the Dargovských hrdinov housing estate (near Bašťovanského and Clementisova streets) with a budget of ~€449,000 (City of Košice 2023b). This project includes the restoration of the local park and fountain, the addition of green and blue infrastructure elements (rainwater retention) and the creation of space for community activities – implementation began in 2024 after funds were released from the fund. This is an example of how, if a borough has a well-prepared project and cooperates with the city on integrated planning, it can obtain a significant financial injection for an environmental project that it would not be able to implement from its own budget.

Environmental risks dominate among the threats – although these are general, they have specific manifestations in local conditions. For example, the Furča housing estate on a hill suffers from overheating in summer (large concrete parking areas and little greenery between the blocks) and, in the event of torrential rain, water quickly runs down the slopes, which can cause soil erosion and problems in the lower parts of the city. There is also uncertainty as to whether projects on paper will be successfully implemented – bureaucratic delays or the need for co-financing may jeopardise the use of approved EU funds. Local authorities with limited budgets must carefully consider their financial commitments in order to be able to co-finance 5-10% of project costs (which, for a €450,000 project, means finding ~€45,000 in their own budget or from other sources).

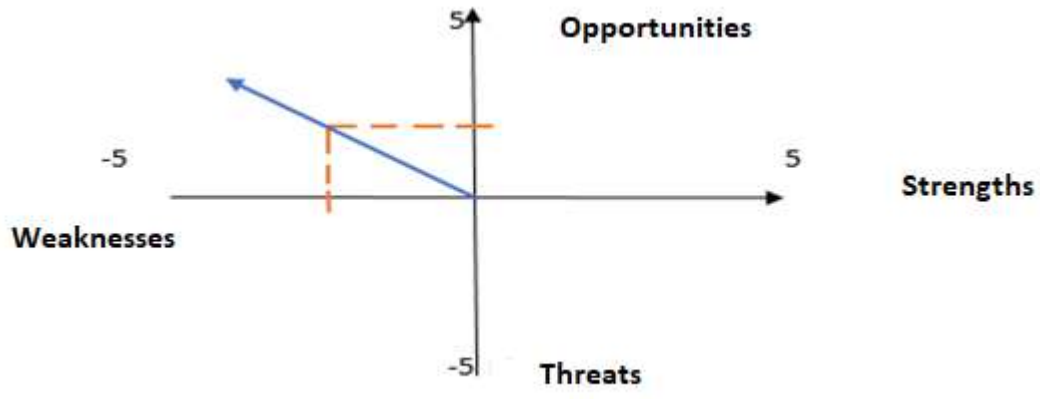

Figure 1: Graphical representation of the SWOT analysis of the Dargovských hrdinov municipal district
Source: own processing

Based on the calculations and graphical representation of the SWOT analysis, we found that the Dargovských hrdinov borough should pursue an alliance strategy. This strategy reflects the current situation in the borough, where weaknesses outweigh strengths, but in an

attractive environment. Overall, the evaluation of the results shows that the Dargovských hrdinov district has the potential to become a pilot "green housing estate" in Košice, but this requires a combination of: (a) improvements in internal financial and project management, (b) activation of external resources (grants, partnerships) and (c) continued citizen involvement. The following discussion elaborates on proposals that could fulfil these prerequisites and overcome the identified weaknesses and threats.

4 Discussion

Based on the results of the analysis, it is possible to identify several types of green projects that are feasible in the Košice-Dargovských hrdinov district and at the same time contribute to increasing environmental sustainability and the quality of life of residents. An overview of the proposed types of measures, their objectives and expected benefits is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Overview of proposed green projects in the Košice-Dargovských hrdinov district

Project type	Main objective	Expected benefit
Rain gardens	Rainwater retention	Reduction of surface runoff
Revitalisation of parks	Improvement of public space	Higher quality of life
Green car parks	Reduction of overheating	Climate adaptation
Green roofs	Energy efficiency	Lower operating costs
Solar lighting	Sustainable energy	Energy savings
Community planting	Community involvement	Community strengthening

Source: own processing

The results of the analysis indicate that without external funding and innovative approaches, it is difficult to implement larger-scale green projects in the Dargovských hrdinov borough. Therefore, the key recommendation is to make better use of available opportunities – European funds, state subsidies, foundation grants – and to increase the borough's capacity to obtain these resources. One of the proposed measures is to establish a separate non-profit organisation or civic association that would work closely with the borough to prepare and implement green projects. Such an organisation (e.g. *"Green Furča"*) could bring together local activists, experts (urban planners, landscape architects) and local government representatives. Its advantage would be flexibility – unlike the local authority, a non-profit organisation can more easily apply for smaller grants, accept sponsorship donations from companies and involve volunteers. In addition, the presence of an active non-governmental organisation directly in the city district would increase donors' confidence that projects will be

implemented communally and transparently (Kubiňcová 2010). An example of good practice is the Košice-Sever district, where a similar association helped to create a community garden and plant a row of trees financed by a private donor.

Related to the above is the recommendation for closer cooperation with existing civic associations and initiatives in Košice. There are several environmentally oriented civic initiatives and non-profit organisations in Košice that focus on issues such as public space, sustainable mobility and community development. The Dargovských hrdinov borough could, for example, establish partnerships with organisations and initiatives working in the areas of public space, community development and urban greenery, or with specialist departments or green space managers. Partnerships bring synergistic effects: local government provides support and legitimacy, while NGOs provide volunteer labour and often expertise. The result is projects with lower costs and a higher degree of sustainability, as the community "adopts" them. From a project practice perspective, cooperation between the public and non-profit sectors is often seen as beneficial, as it combines the institutional background of local government with active public participation.

Another area of proposals concerns specific green projects and measures that have been identified as the most necessary and feasible. These include:

- **Revitalisation of existing public spaces:** Selected areas in the housing estate (e.g. the park by the Ondava fountain, Lidické námestie and the area around the Východ health centre) can be restored relatively quickly by combining smaller investments from the municipal budget with grants. In practice, this would mean planting new trees and shrubs, adding street furniture (benches, shade structures) and creating natural features such as flower beds and rain gardens for water retention. The proposal *for a Living Park by the fountain*, which came from the residents, is exactly in this direction – it envisages moving the stage, landscaping and adding greenery. The implementation of this project could be a pilot example of a smaller climate-resilient community space. With a minimal investment (up to €10,000), the microclimate would be improved (shading, greenery reducing the temperature) and a space for outdoor community events would be created.
- **Introduction of blue-green infrastructure elements:** Several rain gardens could be created in the housing estate, following the example of the project at the Kalinovská nursery school. School grounds and inner courtyards between apartment buildings offer areas where rainwater from gutters could be directed into vegetated depressions in the ground. These measures are less costly, and for smaller projects, the costs can be in the low thousands of euros, depending on the scope and technical solution, but they significantly improve rainwater management and reduce the risk of local flooding

during storms (European Commission 2012). Similarly, so-called green roofs on selected public buildings (e.g., the local government building or cultural centre) would improve the thermal regulation of buildings and reduce the risk of heat waves (European Commission 2012). Similarly, green roofs on selected public buildings (e.g. local government offices or cultural centres) would improve the thermal regulation of buildings and retain rainwater. The borough can also encourage apartment building owners to consider greening their roofs when renovating them – at least in the form of extensive green roofs with low-maintenance vegetation (Kiss 2013). Although such projects require investment by owners, the local government can provide expert advice or help with finding subsidies from available subsidy schemes and grant calls. Figure 2 shows a green roof in Košice -Dargovskych hrdinov district.

Figure 2: Photo of a green roof on a building
Source: own processing

- **Improving the energy efficiency of public lighting and buildings:** Although this does not fall directly under "green projects" in the sense of new greenery, these are environmentally significant measures. In the housing estate, it would be beneficial to replace old sodium street lamps with modern energy-saving LED lighting, which would reduce electricity consumption and light pollution (Hrašková 2012). At the same time, a pilot project for solar public lighting is being considered in places where there is no cable network (e.g. in more remote parts of the forest park). Solar lamps with LED technology are an environmentally and economically efficient solution for public lighting in less accessible locations. Their implementation is possible through a combination of public and private funding sources. Funding could be combined – part from the borough's budget allocated for lighting renewal and part from a sponsorship contribution from the local energy company (public-private partnership model).
- **Increasing the proportion of greenery in residential areas:** The housing estate was designed with a certain proportion of grassy areas, but over time these have been

reduced in favour of parking spaces and other paved areas. One solution to combine the need for parking with the requirement for greenery is the use of permeable surfaces, such as grass-covered concrete blocks in car parks. This allows rainwater to seep through and green vegetation to grow in the gaps between the blocks. In housing estates, the pilot introduction of permeable surfaces in selected parking areas (e.g. covering an area of approximately 1,000 m²) could be considered, with the possibility of phasing the implementation into smaller units. The indicative investment costs for similar solutions are usually in the tens of euros per m², depending on the technical solution and the scope of work. At this rate, a significant part of the parking areas would be transformed into greener areas within 5 years, without the need for a large one-off expenditure. The expected benefits would be a reduction in the heat island effect (grass surfaces overheat less than asphalt) and better rainfall infiltration, which in turn helps to prevent surface runoff during storms. Figure 3 a 4 shows a rain gardens in a housing estate in Košice – Dargovských hrdinov district.

Figure 3: A rain garden in a housing estate
Source: own processing

Community and educational projects: In addition to investment projects, it is also important to work with the public in the area of environmental awareness. We therefore propose organising regular events such as *"Green Day"* – for example, spring and autumn community tree planting, forest cleaning, a competition for the most beautiful balcony or front garden in the housing estate, and so on. In 2016, Košice held a competition *for the "Most Beautiful Front Garden,"* with one of the prizes going to the Dargovských hrdinov housing estate. Reviving such competitions motivates residents to beautify their surroundings on their own initiative. The borough could symbolically reward the winners (e.g. with vouchers for garden supplies) – the costs are minimal , but the effect in the form of greener spaces is significant. It is also

appropriate to involve schools and young people: environmental education projects in primary schools, school gardens or the construction *of eco-classrooms* in nature (e.g. a gazebo in a forest park used for teaching) would connect the younger generation with the topic of environmental protection. Such activities can be financed from smaller grant schemes focused on environmental education and community projects, or from the borough's budget for education, as they also fulfil an educational function.

Figure 4: Illustrative image of a rain garden in a housing estate in Krosnianska street
Source: own processing

When designing solutions, we took into account economic feasibility – most of the projects mentioned do not exceed tens of thousands of euros, which is a level at which grants can be obtained or which the borough can gradually save up. At the same time, resources can be combined: participatory budgeting, sponsors (e.g. local companies can *adopt* a specific tree or playground), volunteer work to reduce implementation costs, etc.

The time frame and sequence of steps are equally important. We recommend that the borough establish a specific plan – for example, *the "Furča 2030 Green Concept"* – in which it sets out what it wants to achieve in the coming years (number of trees planted, area of parks restored, number of rain gardens, volume of external resources obtained). This strategic document should be developed in a participatory manner with the involvement of the public and experts and then approved by the local council. It will serve as a binding framework to ensure continuity in green projects even after political changes (e.g. replacement of the mayor or councillors). In addition, such a plan is a plus point when applying for grants – it demonstrates that the project is not an ad hoc idea, but fits into a broader development concept.

Finally, the implementation of the proposed solutions should have multiplier effects. A successfully implemented project (e.g. a revitalised park) can boost residents' confidence in further initiatives and increase their willingness to participate. Similarly, a positive example can attract support from outside sources – when a donor sees that a city district can use small

grants effectively and transparently, they may entrust it with larger funds. Ideally, the Dargovských hrdinov district could become a leader among Košice's districts in the field of environmental innovation. It is already setting an example with the introduction of participatory budgeting – Furča was one of the first districts in Košice to try it out and successfully implement projects proposed by citizens (Babušík 2023). Similarly, it could be the first housing estate to introduce rain gardens or solar lamps across the board, inspiring other local governments in Slovakia.

Conclusion

The evaluation of the financing of green projects in the Košice-Dargovských hrdinov district shows that, despite initial limitations, local authorities can find ways to get involved in the fight against climate change and improve the quality of life of residents. The analysis showed that the key to success is a combination of internal measures (better planning, gradual revitalisation of green spaces, citizen involvement) and the use of external resources (European funds, grants, partnerships). The proposals presented in the discussion – from creating partnerships with the non-profit sector, through specific projects such as rain gardens, green car parks and park restoration, to a long-term green concept – represent a comprehensive package of solutions, the implementation of which would bring tangible results in the coming years.

The implementation of the recommended projects could transform the Dargovských hrdinov housing estate into a more pleasant and resilient place to live. The expected benefits include mitigation of temperature fluctuations (more greenery and water features will help cool the microclimate in summer), reduction of noise and dust pollution, better rainwater management and, last but not least, an increase in the aesthetic and recreational value of the environment. Residents would thus gain higher-quality public spaces – parks, playgrounds, relaxation areas – which would have a positive impact on their health and community life. At the same time, the proposed measures would contribute to the achievement of broader goals: reducing the carbon footprint of the housing estate, protecting biodiversity and fulfilling the commitments of the city of Košice in the area of sustainable development.

In conclusion, the Dargovských hrdinov district illustrates a more general trend and, at the same time, a lesson for public administration: the transition to a greener economy and more resilient cities must start *from the bottom up*, at the level of communities and local governments. The findings and proposed measures are also applicable to other urban districts in Slovakia. These areas often face similar budgetary constraints, urban conditions and climate challenges. Even small projects implemented at the district level can be of great importance if they become part of a broader mosaic of environmental efforts. The successful financing and

implementation of green projects in Furča can serve as a model for other districts of Košice and other Slovak cities, showing that with sufficient will, cooperation and thoughtful use of resources, it is possible to achieve visible improvements in the environment in which we live.

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