

NEW ROLE OF A STREET GIVEN BY STRATEGIC URBAN PLANNING DOCUMENTS

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Abstract: The goal to achieve sustainable urban mobility draws specific attention to the role of a street. Its space should serve new features in addition to the ones meeting the needs of transit pedestrian movement and transportation. The paper describes recent experience of application of the strategic approach reconsidering urban space of the streets in 3 Belarusian cities under the perspective vision of the strategic urban planning documents – “Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan” and “Green Urban Development Plan”.

Аннотация: Для содействия достижению цели устойчивой городской мобильности особое внимание уделяется характеристикам улицы как пространства, играющего новую роль в дополнение к удовлетворению потребностей в транзитном пешеходном и транспортном движении. В работе представлен опыт по внедрению в 3-х белорусских городах стратегического подхода к трансформации городского пространства улиц согласно перспективному видению стратегических документов городского планирования – «Плана устойчивой городской мобильности» и «Плана зеленого градостроительства».

Keywords: sustainable urban mobility, street for all, urban strategy, Green Urban Development Plan, public space.

Ключевые слова: устойчивая городская мобильность, «улица для всех», городская стратегия, «План зеленого градостроительства», общественное пространство.

The recent growing attention to the sustainable urban mobility is caused by the problems of the modern cities related to climate change, environmental degradation, road accidents and urban traffic congestion. Cycling and walking, alternative mobility, public transit are believed to be the solutions to respond on questions of accessibility, saving time, safety, security and reliability. This new approach affects the status of a street and reconsiders its role within the urban environment. Besides being a space for movement a street becomes a space for communication, social integration, it serves improvement of public health and urban quality-of-life. Following the trend spatial and technical dimensions of a street are changing, that is evidenced by the appearance of many cities of the world at the beginning of the 21st century. Initiated transformation is a complex and long-lasting process as well as the integral segment of sustainable urban development [1].

Belarusian cities recognize environmental threat of increase in the use of private cars for urban transport, which negatively affects environment. Several cities took commitments to creating conditions for sustainable mobility. For example, in 2019 Polotsk and Novopolotsk developed their common “Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan” [2] to satisfy the mobility needs of people and businesses within the cities’ boundaries and their surroundings for a better quality of life. This strategic document grounds on the principle – meeting the basic mobility needs of all users, its goal is to improve accessibility of urban areas and provide high quality and sustainable mobility and transport to, through and within the urban area. Commonly transport remains the main mode of traffic, but on order to decrease the car-use in both cities a wide range of stimulating measures is planned for development of infrastructure for walking and cycling, as well as public transport.

Besides planning sustainable urban mobility best practices and recommendations of the respectful international organizations suggest applying even broader strategic approach reconsidering urban space to meet the demand for sustainable development [3]. “For promoting socially and economically vibrant and environmentally sustainable cities across the world, UN-Habitat is focusing attention to the need for better spatial planning that gives due attention to streets and public spaces” [4, p. 2]. Expansion of travel scenarios using public transport, walking and cycling routes comes in hand with modern solutions considering development of the urban districts, streets and their public spaces which both are aimed at increasing the accessibility of the city center, nature territories and the interconnection of neighborhoods, as well as providing transit-oriented development and convenient movement within the region.

This strategic approach was deployed within the framework of the UNDP Project “Green Cities” supporting green urban development in the small and medium sized cities in Belarus. In 2018-2019 Polotsk, Novopolotsk and Novogrudok completed and adopted strategic documents – Green Urban Development Plans [5]. The Plan systematize prospects of low-carbon spatial development of the city until 2040. Public interests in priority development areas were met through the synergetic incorporation of the urban projects and with the use of the locally tailored set of indicators aligned with the global agenda. Despite obvious dissimilarities between the pilot cities each of 3 Plans transforms modernist street pattern, fosters pedestrian and eco-friendly modes of transportation in order to promote sustainable mobility and combat with climate change. Participatory decisions were taken to shape perspective Vision of the city’s spatial structure, guide decision-making on land use and transport planning. The cities plan activities to redesign the urban space along transport corridors and reshape the streets in order to create pedestrian friendly urban environments: inclusive mode of street space – “street for all” – lively streets, safe and less stressful places, exercise without exercising, providing livelihood for dense and mixed land-use, proximity and accessibility of services and functions, more opportunities for social interactions, resilient environment, and etc.

For example, Vision of the future development of the City "NOVOPOLOTSK: RENEWED CITY. VERSION 2.0" comprises formation of a new system of the street and road network and a change in approaches to mobility based on the principles of "green" urban development. It is planned to calm down the traffic on Molodezhnaya Street, reduce traffic-related air pollution, and resolve challenges associated with the duration and safety of moving throughout the city, develop infrastructure for environmentally neutral modes of transport. Having this new look, Molodezhnaya Street will accommodate all traffic participants, but at the same time it will prioritize pedestrians and cyclists with organization of a dedicated lane for public transport. Changes in the typologies of streets and roads provided for in strategic documents, construction of new elements in the city’s road network, parking space policies, and the development of pedestrian infrastructure will facilitate optimal transport connections that increase the opportunities for movement and efficient use of urban areas. Green pedestrian paths will connect residential areas with the sports area and the riverine territory of the Zapadnaya Dvina. It will be safe, convenient and enjoyable to walk or cycle through all types of city streets to all residents of the city, including those with disabilities which will contribute to the development of urban public spaces. Residential streets of Novopolotsk will become more crowded due to the integration of public services into the residential development (built-in attached buildings, lower floors).

This unique experience of strategic planning at the municipal level takes Belarusian cities at the front edge of testing solutions and activities leading to improving the citizens’ quality of life in a sustainable manner. From now the streets will play new important role in making cities sustainable, resilient, save, accessible and inclusive.

Literature

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