

An Analysis of Local Detailed Plans in Tirana

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ABSTRACT

LDP, or Local Detailed Plans are instruments which derive from LGP (Local General Territorial Plans). On February 16, 2013 was approved the Local General Territorial Plan of Tirana by the Council of Ministers. According to this, Tirana city territory was divided in 11 structural units and each of them has a number of sub-units. On September 2013, started the process of designing 77 LGP of different sub-units of Tirana city.

Following the recent urban developments of Tirana city, this paper aim is to analyse LDP problematic at sub-unit level. Through this can be point out which are the most important issues regarding new plans and real situation, form the designing to the implementation process.

For this analysis, we will take in consideration two different sub-unit located in different areas, presenting different characteristics. Then we will analyse their relevant characteristics in relation to the LDP indicators proposed. Some final conclusions and recommendations will be drawn on designing and implementation phase.

Conclusions and critics are made based on purpose to assure balance between public and private stakeholders involved in this process.

KEYWORDS: Local General Plan (LGP), Local Detailed Plan (LDP), Detailed Local Instruments, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), Business private Relations (BpR), Public Relations (PR).

1 INTRODUCTION

Being the capital city of Albania, the process of urbanization in Tirana was more rapid and significant than in other Albanian cities. Densification of city centre and growth of informal buildings in periphery were the result of the uncontrolled "free movement".

On February 16, 2013 was approved the Local General Territorial Plan of Tirana by the Council of Ministers. According to Local General Territorial Plan, Tirana is divided in 11 structural units and several structural subunits. Although each of them has particular characteristics, LGP should provide uniform developments in accordance with general objectives. LDP are prepared according to LGP and respective regulations. They define more precisely land management instruments of specific areas and methods of these developments control in order to provide sustainable public and private land use.

Being a very spread out city, Tirana needed a refreshing plan with services distributed into city according to development levels. LGP defines thirteen energizing points all over the city, each of them with different characteristics. These poles represent the most important economic and social areas and will provide polycentric development around them. Translated into geographical distribution, LGP promotes seven development poles: North Pole after Train Station, hospitals pole, "City of Students" pole, new south-west pole, ex "Aviation Field" pole, "Kombinati" pole and "Kamza" pole. These are called development priority areas, influence all city development. When the present situation of a unit or subunit is not in sync with LGP it is necessary to design LDP to reflect the necessary transformations.

On September 2013, started the process of designing 77 LGP of different sub-units of Tirana city, projected by municipality and interested stakeholders.

2 OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE

Following the recent urban developments of Tirana city, our aim is to analyse LDP problematic at sub-unit level. Through this can be point out which are the most important issues regarding new plans and real situation, form the designing to the implementation process.

For this analysis, we will take in consideration two different sub-units located in different areas of the city, presenting various characteristics. Then we will analyse their relevant characteristics in relation to the LDP indicators proposed. Some final conclusions and recommendations will be drawn on designing and implementation phase.

3 NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL

3.1 Selection of the interest area

Our focus will be on two different areas of the city which present different characteristics. More precisely, we found very interesting these areas (Fig 1):

1. Unit no 7/33, located after ex "Aviation Field" zone up to New Ring Road. This is one of the most undeveloped and partially informal area of the city.
2. Unit no 9/19, located after "Harry Fultz" collage, in "Don Bosco" street. This is a mixed area with formal and informal houses.

Each of these selected areas are located nearby the so called "poles" which, according to LGP, are considered important economic, cultural and commercial areas. Each one of these sub-units differ from their structure, building typology, accessibility points, quality and quantity of services offered.

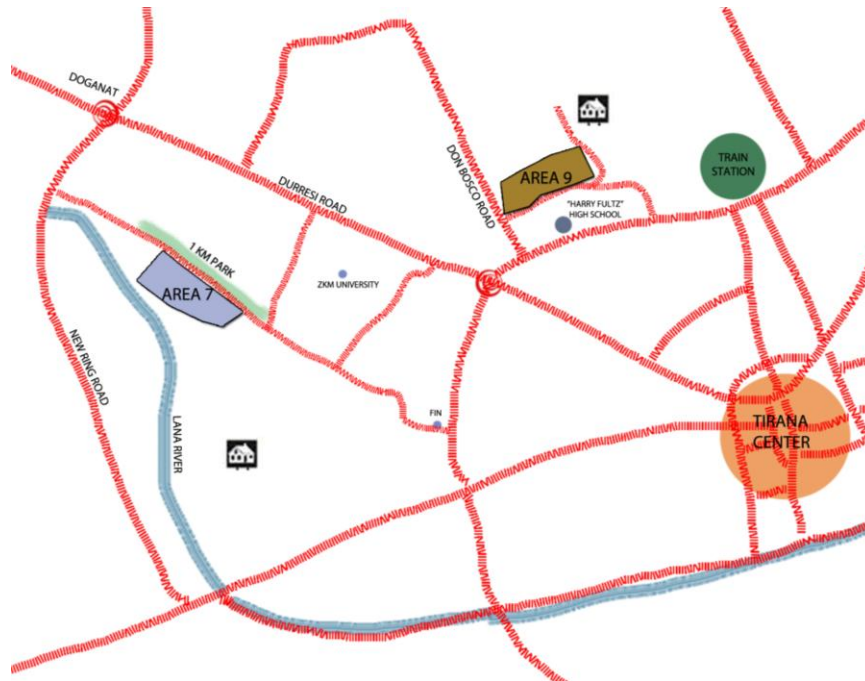


Figure 1: Map of selected areas in Tirana city

3.2 Research methodology

Methodological approach used for this paper is analytic and comparative one. We will use the inductive reasoning by observing the situation, patterning the regularities and pose some general conclusions. Several qualitative methods will be used by interviews of specialists, field research by photographing, and desk research by studying previous case studies and relevant documents. Maps and data will be used for further analysis.

Participants of this study will be planners, municipality specialist from whom will get further information and colleagues.

3.3 Research analysis

a) Sub-unit no 7/33

Based on LGP maps, it will be a mixed use area with housing priority including services as housing, public and social services, commercial areas, recreation etc. (Fig 2). Building intensity (FAR) of the selected area is defined $1.41 \div 2.75$. Intervention typology proposed is reconstruction and redevelopment of the area. Furthermore, it is predicted to have a neighbourhood park which, according to LGP, is evaluated with the coefficient $1.5 \div 2.4$ ha/unit.

Existing use of parcels will not change, but interventions will be done according to LDP. Improvement of public infrastructure in the subunit should be considered.

Territory occupation: land use coefficient for residential use is $50 \div 70$ %. This considers higher coefficient for structures built in the edge of main roads and lower coefficient in internal roads of subunit, creating more open area.

Structure's proposed height: housing category is proposed with max height of 6 floors.



Figure 2: Municipality of Tirana, Development Poles, LGP Tirana, 2012

b) Sub-unit no 9/19

Permitted land category in this area will be for housing (including public and social and commercial services). Building intensity of the selected area (FAR) is defined $1.41 \div 1.75$. Intervention proposed is reconstruction and redevelopment of the area.

Low separate structures will undergo redevelopment. Intervention in the area will be under PDV proposals, which should take into account the improvement and enhancement of public infrastructure.

Exclusively for buildings built before '90 may be allowed horizontal ad on floors up to 20% of the area of the existing building and / or vertical up to one floor for residential use, restructuring, or façade changes without affecting or building line, always within the housing category, even before the adoption of the PDV-Subunit.

Territory occupation: land use coefficient for residential use is $50 \div 70 \%$.

Structure's proposed height: max height of 6 floors.

3.4 Site analysis

a) Sub-unit no 7/33 (Fig 3; Photo 1, 2)

This sub-unit is located between Lana River, "1 Km" Park and ex-Aviation field, with an area of about 10.5 ha. The main road that leads to the sub-unit has access to "Muhamet Gjollësja" and "Kavaja" street. Unfortunately, even the near location, it does not offer direct access to "New Ring" road which is an important city axis.

The major part of the area is characterized by residential buildings, spread out all the area, mostly 2-3 floors. Buildings are mainly new, built about the 2000, located in individual parcels and fenced. Many of these houses are informal but have begun the legalizing process. The centre of the area, is almost a vacant area with greenery. One important territorial element is Lana River, which flows on the edge of the site border.

The area presents accessibility problems because of insufficient road width, cul-de-sac roads and buildings with no access into main road. Most of internal road of the site are not in good condition.

Analysis of the carrying capacities of the area: The actual residential land use coefficient is 18 % (LGP proposes 50 - 70%). The current intensity of the area is 0.29 (LGP proposes 1.41 - 2.75). The floor number is from 1 to 4 floor (LGP proposes max 6 floors). The other percentages in the table are calculated to fulfil the full percentage use (so 12 % for road coefficient, 24% for public land use coefficient and 14 % for commercial use).

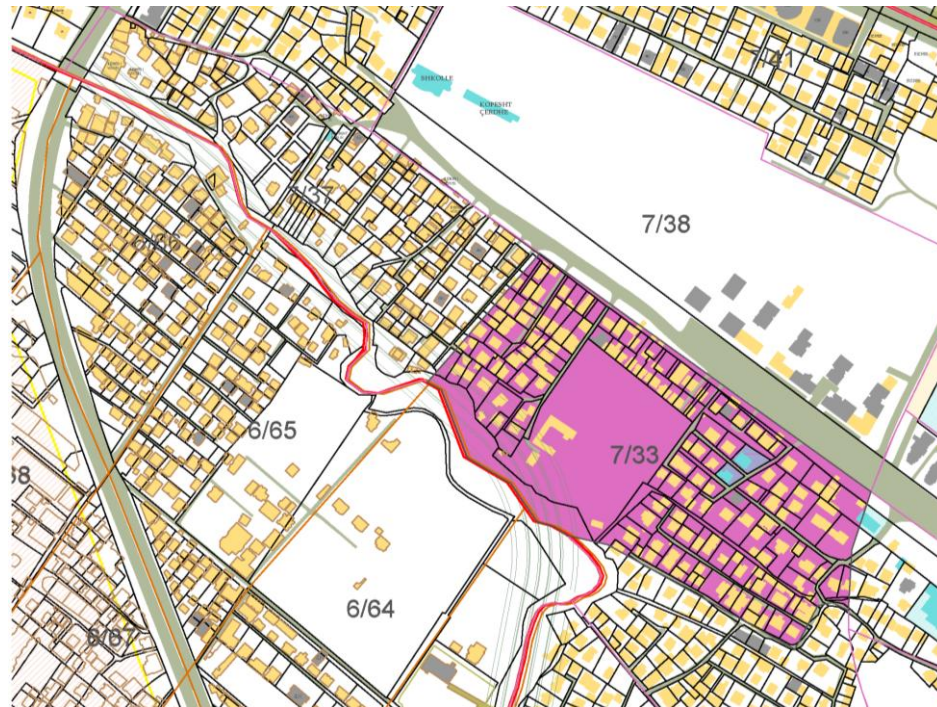


Figure 3: Sub-unit no 7/33



Photo 1, 2: Sub-unit no 7/33

b) Sub-unit no 9/19 (Fig 4; Photo 3, 4)

This sub-unit is located to the right of "Don Bosko" Main Street, with an area of about 5.76 ha. It does have direct access to "Ring" road which is an important city axis that leads to "Rilindja" square". Near the area are some important state institutions like "Seismic Centre" and other private institutions like "Harry Fultz"

The major part of the area is characterized by residential buildings, spread out all the area. There are two types of buildings: those built before 1990, 5-6 floors, and others built about the 2000, located in individual parcels and fenced. Many of these new houses are informal but have entered in the legalizing process. The old residential building form long attached structures, creating closed courtyards which serve as recreational facilities.

The area presents accessibility problems because of insufficient road width, cul-de-sac roads and buildings with no access into main road (mostly in the right side). Some of internal road of the site are amortized. There are some sidewalks but no bicycle and pedestrian lines.

The actual residential land use coefficient is 61 % (LGP proposes 50 - 70%). The current intensity if the area is 2.45 (LGP proposes 1.41 - 2.75). The floor number is from 1 to 9 floor (LGP proposes max 6 floors).

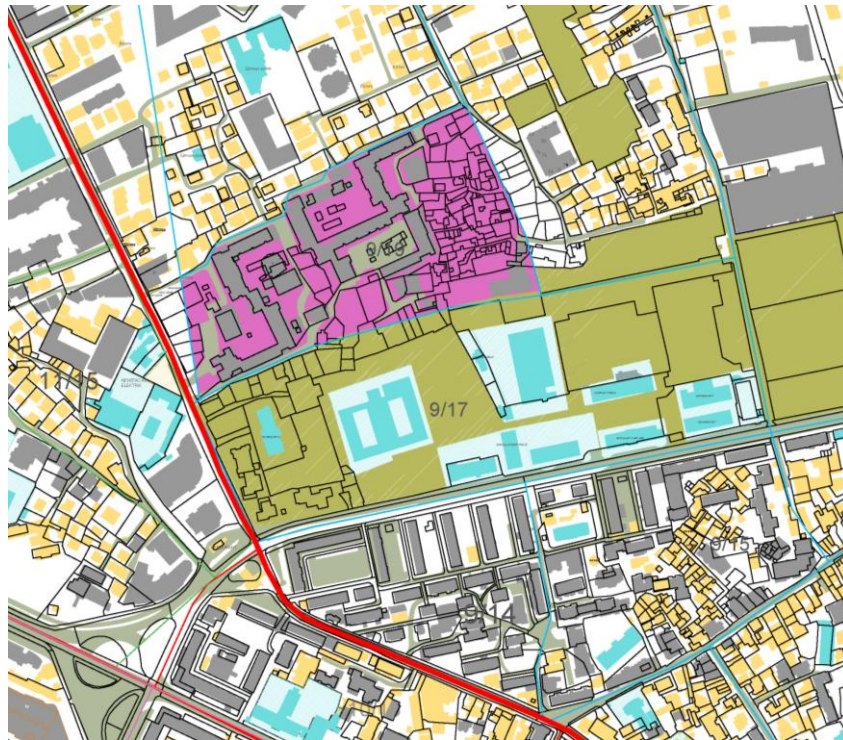


Figure 4: Sub-unit no 9/19



Photo 3, 4: Sub-unit no 9/19

4 CONCLUSIONS

The chosen sub-units represent different areas of the city, with different characteristics and type of development proposed. LGP proposals are in accordance with area development trends. Sub-unit 9/19, located in an old neighbourhood which have had new developments lately, is proposed to be redeveloped in accordance with neighbourhood structure and city trends. Sub-unit 7/33, which is located in an informal peripheral are of city, is also proposed to be redeveloped but in this case the whole area needs to be reconstructed according to new interventions proposed along Lana river coast.

However, during the analysis conducted for these areas were noted some problems regarding sub-unit border definition which is not compatible with actual neighbourhood structure. For example sub-unit no 7/33 is proposed to be part of large redevelopment of Lana river side by adding urban infrastructure lines and create new roads (as demonstrated in figure 5). The proposed coefficients are calculated on basis of actual border line. However, a new border line will be created because of new roads configuration, which is not predicted in these coefficients.



Figure 5: Sub-unit no 7/33 - Existing and new border proposed

Meanwhile border lines of sub-unit 9/19 have not been made by infrastructure lines, but in some part the contour line crosses parcels and house buildings (figure 6). Therefore may be created confusions and conflicts about the development rights of those parcels.



Figure 6: Sub-unit no 9/19 – Property situation

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the implementation of planning instruments, municipality should be very careful before approving LDP. Specialist should analyse whether all defined parameters are fulfilled and make appropriate critics in case of irregularities.

To promote balance between private and public interest (BpR vs. PR), to preserve public goods, to "collect" the added value of property, municipality may use tax as financial instrument. There are two ways to conduct this process: the first is by increasing tax because the interventions that will be done in the area will increase property value, the second is by reducing tax to promote developers and free trade initiatives. Each of these attitudes have direct institutional and financial impact. Tax increment may dissatisfy owners, but will increase municipalities' incomes. On the other hand, tax reductions may negatively affect in free market creating monopolies. In order to help the planning system and 'gear up' the development process, we would suggest municipality to use tax increment. However, this value should be divided in proportion to the investments and profits of each actor. Actually developers pay approximately 40 % of their profits on taxes. Our suggestion is that taxes on impact on infrastructure, greenery and development can be paid on proportion of percentage of participation from developers and owners (actually are paid only from developers). For each profit % more than 30%, owners should pay additional taxes (ex. additional % for income tax, profit tax, registration tax).

The above recommendations are made taking into account the legality of property. Some of the properties in the sub-unit analysed above, have entered in legalization process. We have supposed that all these properties will secure approval and provide property title. Law No. 9632, date 30.10.2006, "On local tax system", mentions that tax for impact on infrastructure of buildings which are in legalization process is 0.5% of investment value (while for other buildings is 0.1% of investment). On the contrary, if these buildings are not legalized they will not be considered part of development process. However, legalization process will affect positively real estate market. Legalization of illegal buildings will make more dynamic land market and make them part of investment market. These buildings, which somehow present "unused wealth", will be promoted in real estate market. As being illegal, they could not be part of selling, buying and renting process. By legalizing, these properties can be valued at their real value and can be sold or rented. Benefits from property legalizations and investments in this areas may be capitalized into land values. Subsequently, because investments increase land value, this extra gain can be reinvested in public infrastructure. As mentioned above, one way is to increase tax for the extra value of land captured. Examples from Brail, have shown that taxation on base of gains in land value of each parcel, according to participation level, is very difficult to be identified and managed. Bogota, Columbia is a very good example to be followed because of the program applied. Public infrastructure projects have been funded by a general fee that varies by benefits of zone, not of property.

Further detailed analysis should be done to complement deficiencies arising from LDP and its regulation. Each sub-unit should be viewed out according to a larger concept of unit development and then according to its specific characteristics. LGP development instruments are not properly defined are not specified according to zone problematic. Furthermore, sub-unit borders should respect existing or proposed road axes or natural elements. Municipality should review LDP proposals to improve deficiencies.

It is necessary to prepare specialists which would be able to conduct detailed studies of the regulatory, planning and legal framework. Respective institutions may collaborate with universities to launch specialized staff or create partnership of joint projects.

Our suggestion for sub-unit 9/13 is for planners to reconsider border contour referring to actual property borders and considering not only existing but also new proposed road lines. Furthermore, in order to achieve proposed LGP coefficients, in this area should be considered demolition of old and flat houses and construction of new residential buildings which offer more public and recreational areas.

Our suggestions for sub-unit 7/33 is for planners to use redevelopment as an instrument to improve public infrastructure, improve environmental situation by cleaning the riverbed and riverside, planting green belts across roadside and riverside and offering better social and public services.

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