

Affordable housing estate

Town development on a civil community basis on one of the largest housing estate areas of Budapest

1, Goals

The main aim is to found ecologic (energy saving) aspects and way of thinking in the younger and older generations and in the group of people who live in the area of block of houses in Újpalota (who are in general retired people (of low income), employees getting the minimum wage, people living on allowance, briefly, those, who can be considered as empoverishing layer of the middle class.) As first step, we would like to promote low-cost, energy saving equipment (bulb, shower heads, selective collection of waste) in everyday life. As in Hungary, loss of confidence is quite typical (as a result of economic-political change of regime, continuous re-structuring of institutions and companies, waving change of values), "Hungarian pessimism" is widespread, so it is critical that people start to trust in small things of life, giving the basis for a social dialogue that can raise a community of generations and social groups, "simply" grouped around the issue of block rehabilitation. We would like to raise the urgent issue of block rehabilitation to societal level, and we would like to indicate the necessity of social dialogue and action, with the help of launching some kind of networking, implementation of certain solutions and the show other ideas and opportunities for cooperation.

The following actions support highly the implementation of these aims, namely community action existing for almost one decade (NGO), initiatives (selective collection of waste, creation of community areas/ spaces), furthermore civil forums, publications, Toronyhír online newspaper, articles and interviews reinforcing connections and patriotism to Újpalota). So, interactivity remains to be a key element in our project, therefore we plan to add forum function to Toronyhír online newspaper, to add advices and links of companies, successful projects, experts dealing with the issue of block rehabilitation, program offerings and application hints, as well. Besides, we operate several community forming-building programs, for example: online planning and building of interactive adolescent park.

As theoretical basis, we will use the local knowledge and community / program organization experience and results and multidisciplinary academic and practical knowledge of the members and supporters of Nyírpalota Society. As there is a need to intermediate among several different values (olders/youngers, highly educated / less educated people, offices / average citizens, financial / human aspects), we think that adequate level of "interpretation" and communication are of high importance. We would like to involve everybody, so we would like to offer them the time necessary to understand information and reply to them. (We must say that though block rehabilitation support program is running in Hungary within the framework of Regional Hungarian Operative program, called as Integrated and Social Town Rehabilitation, but this requires completion due to organizational and technical deficiencies - based on our professional and financial experience) We would like to make our experience public, so that future applicants develop real energy saving programs.)

2, Project implementation

Results so far:

Several initiatives and programs have marked the need to create Újpalota community. In short words: operation of Toronyhír monthly civil newspaper on local issues since 1989, its online form

since 2002, foundation of Nyírpalota Society (NGO) in 2003, social statistical survey on the family, education, income and support situation of the people living in Újpalota in 2004. Community forming programs are the following: Public call: "Let's dream a town – let's plan Újpalota for ourselves" – involvement of community in ecological and town management re-planning of the area of block of flats. Phase 1: making the main square of Újpalota into community area / space, Phase 2: planning and building a fountain onto the main square (online voting, reception of letters from local people). Invitation of Vienna architects Uschi and Dieter Schreiber in the issue of town management organized on community basis in 2005. Annual and quarterly publications in local issues.

Project implementation:

1, Further development of Toronyhír online newspaper in the issue of block rehabilitation. Completion of the existing webpage with the following buttons and functionalities: A block rehabilitation button is put next to the existing menu points. This opens a screen that contains the following submenu points: articles, forum / expert advice, programs, communities, supporting organizations. The articles cover issues, responses and solutions for block rehabilitation. The forum deals with 12 issues on the basis of people's questions and expert responses. The programs include call for applications, place and date of local events and forums. In the community part, the communities and local representatives / concierges of block of houses concerned by block rehabilitation in Hungary will be listed. The supporting organizations part will include contacts and links to homepages of companies, authorities, municipalities, application offices, and other organizations involved in block rehabilitation. In the same time, the link of Toronyhír online newspaper will also be put onto these homepages.

2008 March - May:

- making contact with companies, experts, representatives of companies, authorities, municipalities, banks, local representatives
- requesting articles and issues from experts
- requesting internet links and information materials from companies, municipalities, authorities, banks, furthermore, their invitation for conference
- requesting information on application possibilities and internet links from application offices
- participation in Regional Operative Program
- possible making contract with experts and invitation of companies dealing with selective collection of waste
- add the following functionalities to Toronyhír: community forum, internet based information, materials to be sent to local representatives, program offers (own programs and programs of other organizations related to block rehabilitation)

2008 March – 2009 February, every month

- organizing of permanent internet forum on Toronyhír homepage (12 issues, one in each month), with filtered content based on common sense, monthly summary of questions and responses, search in archives

2, Game programs, planning of interactive adolescent park, excursion to a model block of flats in Dunaújváros

2008 March:

- call for planning interactive adolescent park, where every applicant can develop an adolescent park in an interactive way, give it a name and describe it. This way, we would like to involve younger generations in the program, and to use their ideas in the rehabilitation of blocks. The game will include detailed explanation and dialogue on the analysis of the different solutions: what to do, how to do, what to avoid, at what cost, etc. The game will be hosted by Toronyhír webpage. The most innovative ideas will be introduced in a conference and in the articles of Toronyhír.

2008 April

- excursion and visit to the Solanova project at Dunaújváros (30 kms from Budapest), where a model block of flats can be seen where energy use could be reduced by 35% (solar energy use, environmental friendly isolation, etc.)

3, „Pilot project“: Promotion of energy saving way of thinking through a pilot project.

2008 May

- kick-off conference and preparation of a publication on the issues, results of the conference, and possible contacts. Experts, representatives of application offices, authorities, municipalities, companies and banks would be invited to participate at this conference, as well as representatives of local communities.
- call of other communities and their representatives to start to measure energy saving solutions during the winter of 2008-2009, agreement of measuring solutions, circumstances, features of households making the measurements. The results will be discussed in March 2009.

2008 October – 2009 March

- distribution of energy saving shower heads and bulbs for volunteers who live in block of flats and who undertake on a contractual basis to register their energy use on the water, canal and electricity use invoices and document how energy saving can be perceived. This will cover the group of 40-50 flats or households, on the basis of pattern similar to the structure of people living in Újpalota.
- these volunteers will also participate at selective collection of waste (which then serves as the creation of common interest on the basis of material interests).

2009 February - March

- collection of energy saving project results, getting information from representatives of other communities, introduction of invoices, photos, interviews, analyzing the results, involving people interested, documentation of the results in the articles of Toronyhír.

3, Key aspects of the project

Opening to public, solidarity, common aims. Slogan: We advance toward small but concrete common actions.

As it can be seen, the dialogue continues at several levels:

- increasing internal community action (Újpalota)

- information, exchange of experience, networking with other communities
- involving supporting organizations – banks, companies, other organisations
- participation at Regional Operative Program

4, Results

A direct preliminary of the project is the launch of selective collection of waste in the district from December 2003, with the support of Small Grants Program of US Embassy, Budapest.

Expected results of the projects:

With the help of internet forum of Toronyhír online, several hundred or thousand community people will be involved in willful / sober energy use. (there is a site visitor measuring tool on the homepage, so the number of visitors, the number of registered visitors, the number of question makers can be measured)

With the help of articles and contact links of Toronyhír online newspaper, we hope that more and more communities will learn about relatively simple and cheap energy saving solutions, maybe to financing and cooperation solutions.

We would like to raise the urging issue of block rehabilitation to a societal issue, and we would like to indicate the necessity for social dialogue and action, with the help of starting some networking and showing different ideas, cooperation possibilities and implementing some solutions.

5, Financing

Volunteering

Information provision, exchange of experience with other communities

Work of participating experts and colleagues

Approximately 4-6 hours / person per week, approximately 10-12 persons

Financing from applications, and sponsoring ads

- involving banks, gas company, other companies in the program
- participation in the Regional Operative Program

Some preliminary negotiations, contact making have been launched

Reports on the first winning applications and results of block rehabilitations (2006)

Note: the Regional Operative Program was not launched in 2007, so we are waiting for the call for applications in 2008 February

6, Organisational aspects

Team: 12 member NGOs of Nyírpalota Society – which is a self-organized civil community council and to so-called KÖZTÁMHÁLÓ (Network supporting community initiatives, founded by Ministry of Youth, Family and Social Matters in 2004)

Aim: make contacts, meetings, sharing self-organization patterns and experiences. Profession of membering people are journalists, photographers, engineers, teachers and last but not least community developers.

Experts

architectural ecology - Dr. Ágnes Novák, University of Industrial Arts, senior lecturer, EU-COST C16 Committee, Hungarian academic delegate

innovation theory and project management - Dr. Éva Estók, Mrs. Vörös, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Formula 400 Information Ltd., IT consultant

film as communication, media expert – Erzsé Báthory, National Film Archives

IT, webmaster – Attila Darázs, Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences, IT- Physics Departments

Official partners – Budapest municipality 15th district (especially Town Management Department, Office of Chief Architect, Officer in Civil Affairs), Ferenc Péterfi – Hungarian Education Institute – community developer, Civil Radio – founder, Hungarian Urban Society

Passive members, who add their comments, advice for several events, undertake voluntary work, organize, report on these events – they are about 100 people.