



Sieradz
development - friendly

**THE CITY OF SIERADZ
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
FOR THE YEARS
2010-2020**

March 2010

The City of Sieradz Development Strategy for the years 2010-2020 is a document drawn up by individuals recognized for their extensive experience in strategic management and preparation of official documents outlining regional development projections and whose everyday lives are committed to academic institutions in Wrocław both on a professional and personal level.

The main advantage of the Strategy presented herein is the fact that it focuses on six priority strategic goals namely social capital, human capital, economy and infrastructure, spatial development and land management, culture-education-sport-recreation as well as the City's image. With such a streamlined approach, it avoids most common mistakes made in the process of writing such strategic documents typically covering all possible progress directions which as a result makes the implementation of such a strategy considerably difficult.

The very form of the document is cohesive, simple and transparent which in practice translates into being more user-friendly and approachable by virtually every citizen of Sieradz.

Vision, mission and strategic goals determined in the document serve as a starting point for undertakings to be launched by the authorities of Sieradz in the next ten years. The implementation of the concepts incorporated in the expansion programs and projects will contribute to numerous positive changes to take place in various operational areas of the City. With the Strategy, the vision of the City of Sieradz in the year 2020 becomes more streamlined and promising.

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Premises behind The Development Strategy of Sieradz until the year 2020

General development objectives serve as the starting point and the foundation for formulating The Development Strategy of the City of Sieradz for the years 2010-2020 which has been designed and remains in accordance with standard framework regarding other such documents. These general goals set the pattern in which the primary objective of the Strategy determines and shapes the development processes all of which ensures cohesion and consistency of the document. Mission, vision and the main purpose comprise guidelines and point out the main expansion direction which in turn defines the criteria for selection of specific development undertakings.

Furthermore, the Strategy's objectives due to their long-term future perspective play an important role acting as a source of inspiration for generating innovative development projects.

In the long run, the currently existing barriers and obstacles will have a limited impact on the future incentives. This means that there is a great potential for exploring new, promising opportunities which cannot be taken advantage of at the moment or in the short-term timeline. The key growth and development goal for Sieradz draws from the vision which clearly and synthetically illustrates the City's future image. This projection can be or rather should be idealized to some extent so that it addresses the aspirations of the Strategy's contributors and the City's inhabitants in the most thorough way.

VISION

THE CITY OFFERING CONVENIENCE AND COMFORT OF A LIFESTYLE ALONG WITH INTERESTING OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE AND GROW

SIERADZ SHOULD BE:

- FRIENDLY
- SAFE
- COLORFUL
- MODERN

SIERADZ SHOULD NOT BE:

- GREY OR GLOOMY
- DULL
- PLAIN
- LABELED AS PROVINCIAL

MISSION

THE CITY ENSURING EUROPEAN LIVING STANDARDS TO BE FOUND IN THE CENTRAL POLAND

The importance of the adequately defined mission naturally resulting from the Strategy's vision should not be underestimated since the mission statement determines in what way the City's residents will benefit from the Strategy's implementation. As long as the message included in the mission is specific and clearly presented Sieradz's residents will be reassured that the City's development is to truly meet their expectations. Otherwise, public approval of the Strategy and its mission will be impossible. At the same time, it is important that through mission the primary concept and the core of the Strategy are being conveyed in the most transparent way.

MISSION TRANSLATES INTO:

- PROSPECTS WORK PLACES AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES
- COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE OF LIVING CONDITIONS
- OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT AND VARIETY OF LEISURE TIME VENUES
- SENSE OF SAFETY & SECURITY
- ESTHETICS

MAIN PURPOSE

RESIDENTS' SATISFACTION

The primary objective of the Strategy sets the main criteria for further evaluation of the development processes. It is crucial that the objective points out those results of the progress that are truly meaningful and of value to the local community. At the same time, it is vital that such outcomes are fairly measurable which later allows to assess the achieved goals.

EXPRESSED BY:

- THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE CORE INDICATORS OF LIFE QUALITY
- SURVEYS EVALUATING SOCIAL SATISFACTION LEVEL
- LOCAL AUTHORITIES' ELECTIONS
- INCREASING NEWCOMERS' INFLOW (PARTICULARLY YOUNG PEOPLE)

STRATEGIC GOAL 1 – SOCIAL CAPITAL

The social capital and its progress with reference to Sieradz's conditions should be regarded as one of the most vital driving forces in the development process. In order to achieve that goal, **creating positive social environment and providing favorable conditions for operating and expansion of organizations, associations and local undertakings implemented in the City should become a focal point.**

The municipal authorities of Sieradz have expressed their readiness and willingness to extensively cooperate with non-governmental organizations which is demonstrated in the official document titled *Cooperation Program with non-governmental organizations and other entities conducting public benefit activities* legislated annually by the Municipality Council. The main purpose behind the above undertaking is to encourage widespread partnership between local government and institutions with such status in order to better meet the citizens' needs.

Such a collaboration does not only contribute to solving problems in a faster and more efficient way but it also generates opportunities to promote effective and innovative practice forms to be applied in the future. Each year the Municipality of Sieradz officially approves the legislative Act on budget and in the next stage an open offer bid is conducted through which a contractor is selected to implement public assignments mandated by the authorities upon adopting annual budget resolution.

For contemporary societies their capacity to efficiently meet multiple targets depends on the activity level and commitment of various social entities. In case of Polish government, there is a relevant legal regulation in the form of The Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Organizations under which local governments are required to outline cooperation schemes with non-governmental organizations. At the same time, the effectiveness of such programs is far from satisfactory. Such is the case with Sieradz where despite existence of a relatively large number of public benefit organizations with their diversity and broad range of activities, it appears that their performance standards leave a lot to desire.

Following Poland's accession into the European Union new opportunities cropped up with regard to financing non-governmental organizations' activities but regrettably those operating in Sieradz have not demonstrated much interest in obtaining the above support.

The question is whether the existing situation results from the poor functioning of the organizations themselves or maybe it is the side-effect of the local government's and administrative policy. All in all, there is a high demand for making this form of citizens' activity more dynamic which goal can be achieved through the implementation of the development project presented below:

Development projects:

- A. Stimulating undertakings of non-governmental organizations (NGO) conducting their operations in the region of Sieradz.** The abovementioned pro-active approach to be demonstrated by non-governmental institutions needs to be seen as a great value in itself which in turn should be reflected and reinforced by structural actions taken by the local authorities. Based on the experience gained so far and lessons learnt from already implemented cooperation programs with NGO, it is essential to search for a new formula that would improve the quality and effectiveness of such interactions. For that purpose the following instruments can be utilized: regional grants fund, contest for the most interesting social undertaking, devising local program for civic society development, platform for local initiatives and leaders, volunteer works center or other feasible ventures of this kind.
- B. Ensuring efficiency and functionality of the communication system between local government institutions and citizens.** One of the conditions that needs to be met to guarantee proper functioning of self-governance community is transparent interaction channel which is additionally important for residents' identification with the City along with their awareness that their opinions count and actions have impact. One of the suggested ideas is to design a network of information boards (posters) distributed in different areas of the City, all of which would constitute municipal governance system. To facilitate and improve the communication between the two parties, it would be advisable to arrange annual or quarterly meetings with the citizens who would have an opportunity to get familiar with the projected budget objectives. Another seemingly vital element concerns introducing the actual social consultancy scheme including the key functional projects of Sieradz. In order to make certain that the desired feedback is delivered, "hot-line hours" with the Mayor should be implemented with scheduling of a specific day and time during which he will

communicate with the residents via online chat or phone along through the newsletter to be sent electronically to residents or available on the Municipality's main website. The whole communication system should be supplemented by free of charge 24 hour – info/hotline that would be easily available to residents submitting their questions or concerns. The responses would be provided within 24 hours and with the recurring issues or commonly repeated questions, there would website designated area with FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) paired with corresponding answers all of which will be put into specific categories. Other forms of keeping in touch and informed within the community would utilize SMS with the City life updates or distributing subject-specific bulletins addressed to various social groups.

- C. Creating positive atmosphere around the City's Youth Council operating in Sieradz.** One of the commune's tasks formally outlined in the *Act on the local self-government* is to support and spread the idea of self-governance. It should be noticed that it is important to promote the approach of civic activeness among youngest citizens of Sieradz who can learn to take responsibility for local community's matters. Such way of proliferating the idea of democracy and self-governance should contribute to involving young generation in the mechanism of articulating the needs of local community while broadening the perspective of their inclusion in the local strategic programs. Implementation of the project is a chance for practical application of the knowledge on self-governance education and in the long-run supplying new workforce of local political leaders. The initiatives that haven been taken by The Municipality so far, need to be extended and supplemented with other ideas, in particular the ones that intensify the desired educational results.
- D. Publishing undertakings for Sieradz (Sieradz's monography, recipe/cookbook by Sieradz's residents, City's attractions, events and people's guide).** An integral part of successful promotion and public relations policy of the City are good quality publications. Apart from serving effective publicity purposes, they should also be a part of internal advertising campaign. It tightens the bond between residents and the City at the same time raising local patriotism awareness. This could be achieved by filling the books to be released with interesting texts and making its design attractive (photography, maps, graphics). The content should include the City's historical references along with its development plans outline as well as stories/profiles of

Sieradz's well-known individuals. Such publications can also contribute to providing the local community with a deeper sense of social belonging. Such publications have a chance to contribute to building stronger ties within local community as long as they encourage the City's residents to have their input in the project (e.g. gathering local specialty products and signature dishes could be done while working on the cookbook).

E. Municipal program "Safe Sieradz" aiming at combating social pathologies. In the recent years, diminishing sense of security has been an important aspect affecting functioning of local communities in Poland. Generally, there are two methods of dealing with the danger or threat, one of which recognizes the police forces to be mainly responsible for that task whereas the other one promotes the model of "socialized" security and public order based on active involvement of local community in ensuring safety of its surroundings. In today's world, the efforts should be made in order to create the synergy among the police, local authorities and diverse social groups. The following aspects should be included in the Strategy: monitoring and surveillance of high-danger zones, the role and future scope of responsibility of Municipal Guard, time management for kids and the youth.

It has been suggested that for the purpose of the above task, previously implemented program under the name "Dialogue" along with its "Neighbor's vigilance" undertaking should be used as a good foundation for making the residents more responsible for public safety management. This initiative's objective is a close collaboration among police forces, schools, non-governmental organizations and residents. On one hand, bringing such a program into life would be an opportunity for the community's active participation and on the other hand it would help to reduce costs while increasing effectiveness of public tasks implementation. Last but not least, a vital element of the above campaign is promoting the right attitudes by granting awards and sending words of appreciation to the individuals setting good examples to follow by others.

- F. Municipal program of building civic community.** Collectively, the City's residents show considerable level of disintegration noticeable with the activities aiming at functioning their closest surroundings. To a large extent this is the side-effect of 50-year-long history with literally non-existing local self-government, scarce association movement or deficiency in creating urban entity. As the observations made during preparatory works on the Strategy indicate, there is a low level of residents' activeness paired with significant degree of disintegration or even conflicts within leaders of local social life scene. Activating and integrating the community's members should encourage attitudes marked with sense of responsibility both in the individual and collective existential dimension which would translate into economic success. The foundation of the City's social development should stem from creating dynamic, open and well-integrated local civic community. The Strategy's expert contributors have concluded that this goal can be met by creating long-term strategy aiming at socio-cultural activation of various strata groups in the City of Sieradz. The philosophy behind it would rely on applying social animation method based on treating non-governmental organizations and self-governance institutions as the "hubs of civil activeness".
- G. The power of community – good neighbors.** The most important task related to improving living standards of the residents' is building and nurturing the sense of belonging within local community along with creating opportunities for development of various social activities forms. The City should stimulate the process and encourage the residents' active involvement through organizing public debates, meetings and supporting undertakings of non-governmental institutions. The image projected outside should clearly express such qualities as **kindness, cooperation and community.**

H. Adjustment of an open labor market in order to provide the disabled with facilitated work conditions. For the project purposes the existing infrastructure should be used with the example of The Handicapped Office located within premises of the Municipal Center for Social Assistance which currently serves to: assist the disabled throughout employment process providing help with finding the potential employer and selecting the job position compatible with the handicapped person's capacities and qualifications, determining work hours and scope of responsibilities for the post held, continuous monitoring of the person's performance based on a regular and ongoing contact of the coach with the employer and the employee as well as his/her family along with assisting with potential problem solving.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2 – HUMAN CAPITAL

The main premise behind social capital development in Sieradz is that of shaping modern education system.

Development projects:

A. High standards of education at the secondary and post-secondary level.

According to the vital demographic and unemployment statistics analysis, the majority of the potential candidates to join the unemployed is recruited from middle-school graduates. To some extent, this results from the recent economic downturn but also to a large degree it depends on the upper-secondary education program offered to students. The system requires significant modifications both in terms of curriculum content and faculties or class profiles selection available. Although this area of competence lies within powiat (administrative unit above commune) scope of responsibility, the Strategy's contributors' suggestion is to outline comprehensive local government education policy which would integrate efforts of the commune, powiat and voivodship (compliance with objectives set out in the Voivodship Development Strategy document). The implementation of such a policy would contribute to creating cohesive and complete Local Education System built upon purpose-driven and effectively implemented ideas generated collectively by municipal, regional and state government administrative authorities. This should also serve as a well-defined framework for taking specific organizational and financial decisions. Such constructed scheme would have to show more flexibility in addressing and responding to the labor market needs both in the City and region.

B. High standards of public and non-public kindergartens in Sieradz with the system adequately adjusted to the community's needs. It is imperative to take make greater efforts towards launching new projects in the area of education. There is a lot of potential to be used by individuals and various organizations that have recently been given opportunities to open their own non-public daycares. Building a broader network of such establishments would greatly supplement the existing municipal

education offer. However, the initiative needs to be taken by the community members that should be strongly encouraged by the local authorities to be pro-active in the above matter.

C. High standards education system at the elementary and middle level.

Implementing top quality solutions should be a priority aspect of the local government education policy. One of the instruments to be introduced could focus on supporting and improving or modifying award and promotion system applied to all the schools standing out among others in regard to their exemplary activity, top academic performance of students and teachers alike.

D. Health promotion along with expanding healthcare network and improving its services quality.

As it has been indicated in the diagnosis, the commune of Sieradz has been continuously implementing health-focused programs. In the opinion of the Strategy's consultancy team, the fundamental healthy-lifestyle strategy to be implemented should strictly refer to the previously conducted tasks and what is more important its targets should reach beyond 2020 timeline. Based on the experience of the local authorities and community partners, an extensive social cooperation platform should be built in order to reach the strategic goal of shaping healthy society of the City of Sieradz. Consequently, it would remain in compliance with the suggestions included in the Regional Beauty & Health Center program and Healthy Lifestyle in Sieradz. Obviously, such a prevention program has a potential to generate considerable social and financial benefits. For the purpose of effective application of the above undertaking, the local authorities should put meaningful efforts into evaluating the outcomes of this particular project.

E. Scholarship scheme promoting talented youth and kids in the City of Sieradz.

Up until now, the system has been regulated by The Act XXXIII/292/2005 passed by The Municipal Council in Sieradz in 2005 and as stipulated in the said legislation, its main premise is to "provide material/financial aid to the students residing within the City's area". In the current situation, amendments should be introduced with recognition given to the young residents of Sieradz and their top education results or other achievements e.g. artistic. This could not only motivate other individuals to make

greater efforts but also promote and reward attitudes and values associated with high standard education.

F. Devising an innovative offer scheme of lifelong learning (continuous education) compatible with labor market needs. Keeping in mind that the financial resources allocated for the training of the unemployed have been significantly limited, the offer should include such customized programs as:

- *professional/career development courses,*
- *language courses,*
- *entrepreneurship development courses,*
- *IT/computer courses.*

G. Regional general education program directed at diverse social groups. The objective is to design and put to the test pilot program “Walking through Sieradz” focusing on knowledge development and building the citizens’ sense of identity. Under this program another element to be incorporated would be based on encouraging students of all levels to enter competition for the best promotional campaign of the City of Sieradz with the awards awaiting the winning project.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3 – ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Supporting those economic development areas recognized as the top priority ones and having the most potential in the long-term does not exclude other economy sectors from growth and promotion. It relates to those areas of Sieradz's economy that show a large expansion potential and they already play an important role in the business processes of the City. Namely, pharmaceutical industry along with electro-technical sector, automotive or textile industries have built strong position on the market and in order to further develop those areas, collaboration with The Łódź Special Economic Zone would be recommended. Of an interest could also be drawing business and then providing post-investment care to the investors willing to use for their purposes the infrastructure planned to be significantly expanded namely building logistics platforms or diagnostic stations located alongside S8 expressway. Although Sieradz is centrally positioned on the map of Poland, this strategic location does not translate directly into the City's increased accessibility. In practice, it is the proximity to strategic transportation routes that determines how easily reachable a particular destination is.

The City of Sieradz suffers the negative consequences of both heavy freight traffic and limited capacity of the streets. On one hand, the intended reconstruction of the street arrangement should ensure a better access to the City, in particular to the investment sites and on the other hand it is meant to reroute the transit traffic away from the center which will allow to carry out more effective management operations of specific locations. The improvement process of the transportation network should also incorporate creating good conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

The main goal behind the economic development of the City of Sieradz stipulated in the Strategy is the increase of the wages of the City's residents as well as creating new, attractive work places and career opportunities through:

- *reinvestments of already operating entrepreneurs,*
- *encouraging and supporting new enterprises,*
- *supporting economic cooperation,*
- *expansion of the infrastructure serving to boost economic and entrepreneurial progress,*

- *development and promotion of the education system compatible with economic demands,*
- *attracting and winning key investors crucial for launching big-scale undertakings of a great economic impact.*

Undoubtedly, the City's competitiveness shall be increased by the following factors:

- *improving the City's accessibility in the local, regional and national dimension,*
- *expansion of the transportation network in the City and opening of easily-available investment sites,*
- *ongoing improvement of technical infrastructure and development of "info-structure",*
- *developing transportation system in the City and improving its technical conditions,*
- *improved interconnection of particular parts of the City,*
- *growth and development of public transportation,*
- *enhanced and more convenient connections with neighboring cities and Łódź.*

Operational goal 3.1 – Reinvestments of the existing enterprises

In order to alleviate the economic downturn and its consequences observed in Sieradz, the efforts should be made both towards attracting new investors and creating favorable conditions for reinvestments of already operating businesses throughout the City. The majority of the companies have difficulties gaining capital to launch investments and they also face challenges selling their goods due to lower demand-to-supply ratio. There has been a noticeable decrease in purchased products and services and it is predicted that the companies will not be hiring new employees but instead will make their best to retain current workforce at the same time searching for alternative financial resources. The City does not offer too many local aid instruments or support to the companies since these issues are regulated by Poland's government administrative bodies.

The approach taken by the City's competent authorities should be focused on local labor market layoffs projects – the area where the impact has been limited due to reduced budget resources.

Development projects:

A. Real estate tax exemption applied under „de minimis” scheme.

B. Real estate tax exemption applied under Regional Aid Program. In terms of eligibility the tax relief under the regional program shall be granted either to support new investments or workplaces created as a result of launching new undertakings which upon evaluation shall be classified as the ones generating high employment.

Operational goal 3.2 – Regional Center of Logistics

Logistically, the most strategic routes of road traffic in the vicinity of highway A1 and A2 are located within a certain distance from the City, however Sieradz is undoubtedly within the reach zone from both of the tracks. This is why it is vital for the municipal authorities to improve the conditions of the roads connecting them with the abovementioned highways. As a result, the City will be able to take best advantage of its key central location which combined with the region's proximity to the strategic track important both for Poland as well as Central Europe, can serve as a highly favorable investment location. Additionally, such an outcome will increase the chances of successful implementation of regional and state attractions outlined in the Strategy. Equally significant is the fact that both of the roads projects are already in progress and are regarded as the priority tasks for Poland's transportation expansion policy.

The location alongside projected site of expressway S8 and at the crossroads with strategic regional transit routes as well as connection with A1 and A2 highways create favorable conditions for building a dynamic distribution and exchange center. Both the access to markets and investments plots availability allow for optimistic forecast for this particular undertaking and increase chances of its successful logistic implementation. The particularly convenient accessibility serves as a great set-up for developing convention center to complement the key investment mentioned above.

Development projects:

- A. Regional high-tech logistic center.** The premise behind this project is to launch an investment aiming at designing a spacious facility that would serve both as a distribution and transport service center. The whole investment site should have a direct access to the projected S8 expressway and it would consist of warehouses, storages, distribution and segregation zones along with other transport-focused facilities ranging from import & export, forwarding and distribution supervision offices, trough insurance, finances and other related services. Additionally, the center should be equipped with other amenities such as highway rest area and service areas (RSA), hotels, services centers and recreation activity zones for long-distance drivers.
- B. Economic activity expansion.** Construction of S8 expressway translates into building a surrounding development zone which in turn generates opportunities for initiating investments related to production and transport services sectors expansion in that particular area including vehicles services and maintenance centers, diagnostics stations, car trade, resale and sale centers. Combining and merging this investment zone with the area covered by the regional logistics center would increase the chances for successful implementation of both ventures.
- C. Convention center.** With the increased site accessibility supplemented by dynamic service and product trade along with a growing people inflow, the project of building hotel and conference network center seems to be fully justified and has a great potential to succeed. Such a facility could serve as a strong link between entertainment and business the combination of which would allow to accomplish the investment goals outlined above.
- D. Means of transportation tax exemption.** In the light of plans regarding development of the logistics sector in Sieradz, passing and offering local aid schemes to transportation companies is of a great importance and would serve as an encouragement incentive addressed to potential investors. Additionally, it would build Sieradz's stronger competitive advantage in comparison to other cities in the region.

Operational goal 3.3 – National Modern Center for Eco-friendly Agricultural and Food Processing Industry

Such a concept comes forward and addresses the need of creating in Sieradz strong economic potential that would stand out on the map of Poland. This particular development direction stems from the already existing wealth of economic resources, traditions, location advantages and it also reflects the opinions expressed in the process of social consulting. Modern, agro-food processing establishment that is environment-friendly is perceived as one of the most progressive and promising sectors of today's economy. More importantly, it should be noticed that this specific area is still at a very early stage of growth in Poland and its full potential is yet to be explored.

Development projects:

- A. Entrepreneurship Incubator.** The focus on the agro-food processing industry and environment-friendly technologies with goal to attract young business-minded individuals while stimulating already operating entrepreneurs/farmers to launch new projects utilizing their resources e.g. commercial space.
- B. Cluster of companies from agro-food processing sector.** Shared location to be used by cluster's members, networking and strengthening cooperation within the group, preference-based administrative fees, commonly used commercial space.
- C. Merchandise Exchange Market & Agro-Food Trade Shows.** The purpose is to promote Sieradz as the national commercial center for agriculture and food processing serving as the exhibition space for regular trade shows as well as fully-operational merchants' market that would combine both on-site goods trade with online transactions (a good use can be made of the existing market provided necessary upgrades are applied).
- D. Tailor-made vocational education system.** The scheme would incorporate upper-secondary schools and higher education institution offering variety of faculties and profiles such as ecology, agriculture, food-manufacturing and processing

industries/technologies. Such establishments with tailored-made curricula will remain in close cooperation with local enterprises through joint ventures and research projects as well as systematic apprenticeship and training programs (for that purpose locally available infrastructure and resources can be used once necessary improvements have been made or brand new units can be built. Additionally, increasing number of day-time courses should be stressed).

Operational goal 3.4 – Support of entrepreneurship development and self-employment

There are multiple steps and preventative measures that should be taken in order to avoid stagnation and eliminate risks getting in a way of economic development. In turn, new workplaces will be supplied, unemployment rate lowered, financial situation of families in Sieradz will be improved and small/medium enterprises sector position will grow in strength. The City's approach in the above matter should focus on stimulation of local entrepreneurship and providing administrative support. Both already operating companies and newly established business institutions should provide experienced human resources and financial support.

Development projects:

- A. Credit and guarantee fund.** The main problem encountered by the companies operating in and outside of Sieradz is their unsatisfactory financial standing which results from a weak competitive edge, technological deficiencies and with numerous companies – underqualified employees. The City's authorities, expressing their support, should make the access to external financial aid easier so that local companies are able to upgrade their technological solutions and technical infrastructure which will also facilitate investments expansion, capital increase, supply of new jobs and workforce training and competencies building. The majority of the companies in Sieradz are small-size enterprises struggling while dealing with strong competition which limits their expansion plans decisions. The investments strongly rely on obtaining capital in the form bank credits, securities or loans granted by specialized funds. Lack of access to financial resources hinders companies' development limiting the number of vacancies on the local labor market which situation applies also to

medium-size companies. Scarce employment opportunities, absence of financial liquidity and outdated technological park are among the culprits negatively affecting investment undertakings and innovative initiatives attempted so far.

B. Academic Incubator for Entrepreneurship (AIP). The purpose to be served by creating such an institution in Sieradz is to support enterprises development through facilitation in the process of setting up and expanding small and medium companies and encouraging innovative business solutions. The incubator's portfolio would include services ranging from accounting, bookkeeping and financial reporting of companies, drawing up contracts and legal consultancy through offering high potential and technology-driven assistance as well as granting financial aid and credits adjusted to individual preferences. The greatest advantage behind the incubator's concept is the reduction of start-up and operational costs on the part of an entrepreneur.

Operational goal 3.5 – Improvement of transportation accessibility in Sieradz

The enhanced transportation accessibility also applies to increasing the frequency of train's arrivals and departures first of all including long-distance and international connections which currently are not sufficient as they do not meet the City's needs. The local government in collaboration with other potential partner cities (Ostrów Wielkopolski, Kalisz, Pabianice, Łódź, Skierniewice, Żyrardów) should commit itself to advocacy aimed at improving trains' availability, frequency and travel standards along with train track modernization and restructuring.

Development projects:

A. Express road S8. The key issue that will affect the development of Sieradz is the projected route S8 that is planned to extend from Wrocław to Warsaw. The road runs through the City of Sieradz, linking two important centers and at the same serving as a bridge between the capital and the central Europe zone. The City's efforts and campaigning undertakings should be aimed intensively at accelerating the construction of this route (the expected start time of the project is 2013) and preparation of the fragment intersecting Sieradz which is considered to be the most beneficial to the region in terms of its further progress. Such a solution should guarantee a direct access

to the investment sites and significantly relieve the City center from a heavy transit traffic. Thus, it is of a great importance to implement and complete the City's ring road which will considerably contribute to the improved operating and management of Sieradz.

B. The City's ring road. In order to improve the efficiency of road transportation in Sieradz building the urban ring road should become a priority undertaking the implementation of which will connect the express road S8 with state roads 12, 14 and 83:

- **“northern ring road”** – link from state road no.12 (address: P.O.W. street) to state road 83 (address: Wojska Polskiego street/ direction: Turek),
- **“eastern ring road”** – link from express road S8 to state road 14 starting from the southern part of Sieradz located in the line with Jeziory (location: Jana Pawła II street / direction Wrocław) and connecting with state road 12 (location: P.O.W. street / direction Kalisz).

C. Connections with the City of Łódź. Łódź is an integral element of the settlement network that is of an importance both regionally and nationwide. It provides local community members with access to a wide variety of customized services and at the same time constitutes a vital source of potential clients interested in the region's offer. Keeping in mind that mutually beneficial correlation, Sieradz should aim to build and maintain strong links with Łódź with reference to roads and railways. Improvement of the above connections should be of priority importance and in order to achieve that goal necessary efforts ought to be made prior implementation newly projected road number 8 (S8). In this context, it is not only the quality but also the frequency of the connections that are of significance. Sieradz in partnership with surrounding communes interested in strengthening bonds with Łódź should support the concept of the City's agglomeration transport development by becoming incorporated into the whole system. Such strong links with Łódź translate into increasing the number of bus and rail connections available between the two cities. That is why Sieradz should get actively involved in the search for potential contractors willing to provide the above transportation services.

D. Expansion of public transportation. The majority of Sieradz's area boasts an extensive infrastructure which means that the distance between specific and already

developed parts of the region is fairly large and so the border lines run across underdeveloped sites. It is imperative to aim at increasing the volume of public transportation as it applies to the number of connections and its frequency. Equally important is the goal of strengthening public transportation links with adjacent towns and cities along with Łódź.

E. Improvement of technical infrastructure. There is a strong demand for enhancement of the City's technical infrastructure with the stress on supplying the area with sufficient sewage system. The implementation of this project determines the spatial distribution of many other investments outlined in the Strategy particularly regarding the ones where the quality of natural environment is of a great concern. The immediate positive result of building sanitary network (98% of the City's coverage) will lead to improved settlement conditions and favorable environment for individual constructions venture.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4 – SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Operational goal 4.1 – Sound policy in shaping the City's space

Properly built urban space of a City in general constitutes a vital element that is critical to the positive perception of the place by its residents and visitors. Fundamental planning tools used in outlining spatial management policy on the commune's level are local development plans along with The Study on Conditions and Spatial Development Directions. The latter document as it applies to a specific administrative district reflects local spatial policy and the rules governing land development and management remaining in line with state and other administrative units guidelines. The Study on Conditions and Spatial Development Directions serves as a core reference point to draft local development plans which under a given City's jurisdiction are classified as local legal acts.

Both the needs and demands of residents and potential investors should be factored into planning activities of the City. Also, regional expectations should be taken into consideration as well as future technical and financial capacities in terms of utilities supplied to commercial and private investment sites with respect to environmental prerequisites and sustainable growth rules. This is why it is imperative to expand the City's areas to be covered by local development plans reflecting current social and economic situation in Sieradz.

Development projects:

- A. Indication of priority sites for residential purposes.** Selecting land plots earmarked for single and multifamily housing along with outlining local development plans for the above areas.

- B. Indication of priority sites for manufacturing and services.** Selecting new land plots allocated for production and services activities along with outlining local development plans for such areas. Moreover, the existing plans documentation should be reviewed and verified so that they remain in line with current demands of investors.

C. Adjusting spatial structure of the City with its regard to natural environment's valuable resources, sanitary-health hazards and flood risks.

Operational goal 4.2 – Real estate management

The current supply of residential premises in the region does not meet local demands. Owned by the City buildings are old and out of 106 sites more than 86% were constructed prior 1970 which obviously determines technical conditions of such structures including exterior and interior space.

A lot of these buildings require thorough renovation or restructuring. The amenities and basic utilities infrastructure in the City-owned apartments leave a lot to desire. Even though all of them are equipped with electricity and heat installations, not a single one has access to gas supplies. The Old Town area is considered to be in the worst shape in terms of poor technical condition and lack of water and sewage networks access which generates undesirable situations.

Development projects:

- A. Land plots for industrial and services purposes.** There is a strong need for settlement of ownership issues applied to priority sites which can be solved through their buyout by the City. It would greatly accelerate procedures of such land acquisition by potential investors and additionally it would eliminate obstacles encountered in the situation when there is more than just one owner of the plot which typically complicates its selling process.
- B. Selecting new land plots for commercial purposes** and commencing local development plans preparation.
- C. Selecting new land plots for residential purposes** and commencing local development plans preparation.

STRATEGIC GOAL 5 – CULTURE, EDUCATION, SPORT AND RECREATION

The focus is to increase the City's competitive edge in terms of sport, recreation, culture and education which should be achieved through:

- *creating cross-regional entertainment attraction,*
- *designing cross-regional and diversified sport-focused offer adjusted to the disciplines requiring large spaces,*
- *enriching leisure time portfolio including short-term vacation venues offered to the residents,*
- *supporting partnerships with neighboring towns and cities,*
- *pro-active approach towards organizing trainings and workshops.*

Promoting the City as a great place to live and increasing its attractiveness by:

- *preparing diversified portfolio of leisure time offers listing venues for cultural events (cinemas, media centers, culture promotion associations), entertainment happenings (open-air market, trade shows, street arts, kids' shows) and other facilities serving cultural purposes,*
- *enriching vacation and family time packages with focus on sport & fitness venues,*
- *increasing access to and number of zones in and around the City where sports can be easily practiced,*
- *healthy lifestyle promotion,*
- *development of education and training related to hospitality and leisure time services,*
- *investments of supplementary urban infrastructure – bicycle and roller-blades lanes, walk & stroll paths and fitness trails,*
- *providing more opportunities for spending time outdoors,*
- *combining recreation and entertainment offers.*

Operational goal 5.1 – Revitalizing process of The Historic Old Town District

The main premise behind renovation of the Old Town Boulevard is to trigger the process of positive economic, social and spatial changes which will help to restore the district's glorious status and regain its respect within structures of The City of Sieradz along with assignment of new cultural-tourism functions to be fulfilled by the City in the context of

its historical values and heritage. Such gradual deterioration of The Old Town and its underestimation by the City's authorities has been caused by the lack of investments in the area of technical infrastructure, road improvement and building renovation. Restricted financial resources allocated for upgrading technical conditions of historic buildings especially residential areas have led to negative social results such as poverty in The Old Town and indifference of the residents towards pro-development activities. All of the aforementioned factors have had a destructive impact on the greatest treasures of this historic area drawing its high value from vast cultural heritage. Consequently, The Old Town District has become less and less attractive both in the eyes of local community and visitors alike. Given the opportunity of using European Union funds, The City of Sieradz along with its partners has taken up the challenging mission aiming at introduction of economic, social and spatial transformation steps in order to bring back the good name and prestige of this area, strengthen its structural position and designate new cultural-tourism roles to be played by the district with the regard to its rich traditions and legacy.

The main objective of the project is to conduct restorative activities within two major areas:

1. **The Old Town** which encompasses the area of the located City marked by the trajectory of once existing borderline walls and defensive river banks including adjacent territory.
2. **Castle Hill** – in the past there was a bastion located in this area entailing part of the settlement village and defense front yard of the castle.

Development projects:

- A. Revamping of buildings located within “Royal Track”** including renovation of the church dating back to 14th century along with development of the land surrounding the church, reconstruction of the Market Square's outer hard surface and building constructions elements, amenities and other small architecture features comprising the main square's infrastructure as well as restoring pre-war historic townhouses with their partial adjustment to serve Cultural Information Center purposes, rebuilding and expansion the District Museum complex, renovation of 18th century monastery once housing Dominican convent and thermo-modernizing works on the historical building of the theatre.
- B. Renovation** of common areas in multifamily residential buildings and accommodation of the City-owned building to be used for social, non-profit residential purposes.

C. Establishment of Cultural Park located in the vicinity of the Castle Hill.

D. Public space development based on and making references to historical elements such as entrance gates and walls, restoring natural bed of the Żeglina river's oxbow, development of sport and recreation infrastructure as well as building bike & walk lanes, reconstruction and expansion of district and regional roads along with building and rebuilding waterworks and sewage systems, reconstruction of surfaces including building supply structures complemented by green areas and small architecture development.

E. Expansion of the monitoring system in the City.

Operational goal 5.2 – Entertainment Center

The ongoing, new trend of spending time away from work by taking short breaks instead of planning long vacation opens the window of opportunity for all the places that do not have too much to offer in terms of tourist attractions or their resources and cultural heritage seem scarce. With more and more people opting for weekend trips, such underprivileged areas have a chance to come up with their own, unique attraction that will allure visitors to come or even extend their stay to a day. Consequently, it would be a good idea to prepare versatile package which would be more appealing to tourists having more than just “the top attraction” to see. As an example a theme park for leisure activities would allow to considerably diversify the City's economy. The added value of this undertaking would be creating significant number of work places that would be a chance for less competent individuals to find employment. Additionally, such an extensive and comprehensive offer could serve as a strong link among particular sub-projects making them more efficient and increasing their worth.

Development projects:

A. Amusement Theme Park. The highlighted attraction of the program is the theme park stretching over a large space and meant to be a big-scale project reaching outside the region. Designed in such a way that a family can easily spend a whole day on site, it

should have a unique and unforgettable ambiance. It would act as a magnet drawing greater public attention and increasing number of visitors coming from more distant areas. To the City's benefit is its central location in Poland and relatively good accessibility once all the planned road infrastructure investments are completed. This will allow to broaden the area of influence and interest such a place could generate. In addition to the above, a great advantage are the land plots available and its broad range as well as already approved costs estimates launching an investment of this kind. Also, the City's location within vicinity of the City of Łódź boasting great cultural heritage and wealth of tangible resources additionally increases Sieradz's attractiveness in terms of the planned theme park investment.

Given the existing resources along with strong local traditions, the greatest chances to succeed have the following three types of theme parks:

Fashion & Style Park. The whole concept derives from the idea of Open Hair, outlined in *The Promotion Strategy of Sieradz for the years 2008-2013*. This particular theme park would draw from regional traditions of textile industry conventional design trends combined with new-wave of growing interest in hairdressing and creating image. Keeping in mind that there is a lack of similar offer available in the whole of Eastern Europe, it may spark up curiosity of a potential investor who will find it worthwhile. Unique nature of this undertaking paired with deeply-rooted local traditions constitute votes in favor of launching such an investment. Its impact can be even greater due to its connection with Open Hair undertaking, gallery and or museum to be added to the list of venues involved in the project.

Sarmatian Theme Park. With an added educational value, this project would make references to the historical sources and literature describing traditional lifestyle model praising conservative values born in the countryside setting and cultivated in rural mentality. This historical aspect of the investment which would allow to explore customary activities of the past such as arts and crafts or leisure time events, could facilitate the search for the right investor that would recognize the value of such an undertaking. The above concept can be complemented by or substituted with another theme festivities to take place at The Castle Hill (Wzgórze Zamkowe) or Grodzki Passage plus another option would be setting up a seasonal theme-town or Knights' Brotherhood Camp.

B. Revitalizing of the City – fun & amusement in the Historic Old Town. The main objective of a big-scale theme park is to attract large number of visitors the majority of whom will be willing to take advantage of other attractions offered by the City such as sightseeing, shopping spree, exploring local restaurants or cultural venues.(including gallery or museum related to Open Hair Festival). In order to successfully draw tourists and ensure their retention, the urban space of Sieradz will require improvement and revamping. Additionally, both accommodation and gastronomy as well as commercial portfolio offer need to be extended and enriched all of which could be achieved provided smaller investors are attracted to fulfill those needs. Undoubtedly, **modern commercial & entertainment center** will serve as a great assistance and supplement, adding variety to the project. It is important to encourage and stimulate expansion and diversification of commercial-services-entertainment offer in the City's central area. Moreover, the tourism development in Sieradz calls for opening The City's Tourist Information Center/Kiosk and another good idea would be instituting profession of municipal tourist guides (in cooperation with PTTK) as well as introducing the idea of tourist vehicle (e.g. horse carriage) which would allow visitors to sightsee most interesting places around the City taking them through picturesque routes in the area.

C. Festivals and fairs/open-air markets featuring theme parks activities as a supplementary offer in relation to the City of Łódź (cooperation rather than competition). Organization of events with the involvement of partners representing private sector having something in common with the “main theme” of the amusement park and also promoting with cohesion and consistency the City's image associated with fashion/tradition. Such undertakings should be marked on the annual calendar of regular events and when the days get longer and warmer, their frequency should get even higher (one-two times/bi-weekly). Moreover, the participation of expert entrepreneurs from specific sectors both nationwide and international should be strongly encouraged and ensured. Apart from the strictly commercial aspect of such happenings, its significance as the platform for experience exchange and innovation diffusion should be recognized. Also, it would help distinguish the City from others due to the niche area of activities offered.

Operational goal 5.3 – Regional sport attraction – health lifestyle in Sieradz

Sieradz does not have multi-functional and specialized sport facility nor does it have attractive leisure time offer. Given the City's good accessibility on the map of the region, its unpolluted environment and convenience of great land plots availability, it would be recommended to find investors interested in building and operating sport & recreation based infrastructure. As a result, variety of activities based on public investments will be conducted which will increase the City's attractiveness making it more alluring to its residents. Special attention should be given to thorough planning and implementing a strong network of recreation and sport routes which would ensure safety and convenience while riding a bike, skateboarding or roller-blading. It is of great importance to design such routes so that they interconnect particular attractions located outside the region. In addition to that, there should be broad access to equipment rental places to be easily available to visitors which would encourage them to stay active and explore the region.

The key aspect of the above program is creating the image of Sieradz to be perceived as the City where people take a good care of their health (prevention and treatment), promote healthy lifestyle (eating habits, rest & relaxation) and keep active while taking advantage of favorable conditions offered in the region such green areas, flowing rivers and ponds. Additional environmental value here is a relatively low level of water and air contamination. Parallel to the physical activeness promotion, the process of raising people's awareness including stressing the necessity of staying fit as well as pointing out all the great physical and psychological benefits resulting from that. The community of Sieradz should awaken its needs and find the right stimulus for spending their leisure time actively and getting more creative in terms of recreation options.

This pro-active healthy life style program should be particularly dedicated to children and teenagers as major beneficiaries. Another integral part of this project would involve healthy eating and nourishment partly based on using agricultural resources of the City (unprocessed, whole foods and eco-products). Also, the concept should be linked to and cultivate culinary traditions. Since disease prevention to large extent depends on medical services availability, local authorities should make their best efforts to prepare investment offers and adjust their policy aiming at establishing new healthcare facilities.

The integrated system of sport, recreation and culture appears to be the right scheme for incorporating into it the idea of linking The Municipal Center of Sport and Recreation with newly-built Cultural Park – “The Castle Hill” so that both sites serve mutually beneficial purposes. Additionally, artificial lake “Paradzionka” can be used for leisure time activities and overall the potential of the above areas should be used to provide new, multifunctional venues.

Development projects:

- A. Extreme sports center.** The landscape and natural resources in the central and northern part of Poland do not offer favorable conditions for climbing-related sports which increases the chances of success for building such imitation rock climbing walls, provided it is done as the first one of its kind in the region and at a professional level with good quality assured. Moreover, the region is deficient in an all-family oriented attraction offer that would encourage parents with kids and other relatives to come to visit the area. For that reason, it appears that providing the public with artificial rock-climbing option combined with rope/adventure park attraction would spark up an interest among potential visitors. It is of an importance to arrange the park in such a way that various difficulty levels are offered such as kids’ version with proper senior instructors’ supervision provided, youth and adults’ version as well as “Where eagles dare” challenge.
- B. Construction of multi-functional sport and recreation facility.** As an integral part of The Municipal Center of Sport and Recreation the undertaking includes building a multipurpose arena to accommodate 850 sport and entertainment spectators, catering amenities and outdoor pools all of which form “play and stay” recreational offer.
- C. Water sports and recreation center.** Another valuable resource of Sieradz is the river Warta including its tributaries which can be excellently used for recreation and sport activities. Integrating water recreation into the lifestyle promoted in Sieradz can also be of great assistance in regard to industrial usage of watercourses. It would be worthwhile to attract investors that would build the whole infrastructure and amenities located in a visually attractive area offering

- professional level recreational services on/off shore. For instance, some of the suggested undertakings would include building kayak harbor, organizing rafting down Warta river (e.g. Burzenin – Jeziorsko route), creating favorable conditions for fishing activities or water skiing etc. It would be advisable to turn the river bank areas into barbecue, playgrounds and picnic-friendly environment with other amenities such as cafeteria and pedestrian waterside stroll paths.
- D. Equestrian sports center.** The City's central location in Poland, its accessibility and above all large supply of urban resources and infrastructure along with vast land plots available encourage to make attempts in attracting investors specializing in horse-riding ventures. Another added value of opening horseback-riding center would be reaching back to and keeping traditional values alive (widely respected in the area) and the opportunity to map out extra recreational trails including marking the horse-riding tracks. Horseback-riding lessons would greatly complement the training and workshop offer and with well-known therapeutic horse-riding treatments it could be also a valuable addition to rehabilitation & wellness programs.
- E. Golf courses.** As it is the case with equestrian investment potential, the same justification could be applied regarding golf courses and their great chances to catch on in the region of Sieradz which has what it takes to launch such an investment. The growing popularity of this sport combined with an extensive utilization of the land zoned for that purpose allow for optimism and chances for success in reference to such a project. Another advantage here is widespread approval of sport and recreation driven investments that generate enthusiasm. This undertaking could additionally strengthen other elements of development strategy such as spatial expansion that would lead to bringing the City closer the river.
- F. Recreation in the great green outdoors.** Sieradz boasts considerably large green areas supply which are neither sufficiently used for leisure time activities of all sorts nor for healthcare purposes. This specific direction for strategic goals is meant to familiarize the regions' residents with parks, green avenues or boulevards encouraging them to actively spend their free time in such places (walk & fitness paths designed for various age groups, playgrounds for kids etc.). However, all of

such designated areas need to be properly managed and continuously improved and gradually such green zones should be expanded as a long-term objective.

Operational goal 5.4 – Regional Health & Beauty Center

The City of Sieradz has a great potential to become an important regional hub offering its residents and visitors of all ages variety of high-standard services in cosmetology, hairdressing & styling, skin care, wellness and fitness (aerobics, gymnastics). Looking towards future, healthcare system along with beauty and wellness industries are set to grow dynamically since there is a great untapped potential to be used in the years to come. They are continuously shaped by technological advancement and changing trends and thus can be broadly explored which will be especially visibly marked with spa and wellness centers, “Beauty parlors and clinics”, health resorts with variety of rehabilitation and physical appearance enhancement treatments as well as care centers for the elderly and disabled among others. There are strong indications that Sieradz has a potential to be used for growth of the above sectors. In favor of Sieradz are the following facts: its close proximity to the City of Łódź, the capital City of Warsaw, strong traditions and well-established trends in hairdressing and styling sector as well as the area’s unpolluted natural environment. It is of great importance that this development direction has been presented and discussed during social debate and consulting.

Development projects:

- A. Sieradz’s Beauty Salon.** The follow-up goal is to attract investors operating within network of various establishments (to be merged in one center in the future) which provide their customers with high-quality services in healthcare, wellness, aesthetics, beauty and hair treatments (medical centers, spas, hair salons, gyms, wellness lounges, image and appearance consultancy etc.).
- B. Rehabilitation Center.** Winning over investors for creating state-of-the-art rehabilitation center specializing in specific types of medical treatments and therapies. Of a great benefit should serve the fact of close proximity to the City of Łódź which supplies highly competent medical workforce and serves as a source of potential

clients. Also, establishing nursing homes for the elderly and/or the disabled or simply those that need some assistance as they are dependent on others' help.

- C. Trade shows and festivals with hairdressing and cosmetics themes.** With a regularly held hairdressing & styling competition it would be also possible to enrich such an event with cosmetics trade shows taking place on a regular basis. This way a platform would be created where not only new trends are set, various products are promoted or sold but at the same time good practices and experience are exchanged.
- D. Health-driven network.** Attracting and winning investors for establishing spa and wellness centers, health & beauty parlors, rehabilitation and healthcare resorts with special consideration given to the elderly and disabled etc. As an incentive to draw such entrepreneurs substantial support should be provided such as preferred terms, tax breaks, promotional campaigns or supplying competent workforce.
- E. Specialized and tailor-made education system.** Junior/senior and upper high school education curricula offering (regarding also State Higher Education Vocational School) programs in rehabilitation, physical therapy, cosmetology, food and nutrition technologies. Such education and training institutions would closely cooperate and network with existing and locally emerging business establishments with the objective of long-term joint ventures and research projects (apprenticeship and training schemes, scholarships, tailor-made curricula meeting potential employers' needs, also focusing on increasing day-time courses for full-time students).
- F. Sport and cultural events.** Designing an extensive portfolio/calendar of events to be organized in the City combined with an effective promotion campaign while making a good use of already well-established MOSiR resources (The Municipal Center of Sport and Recreation) and facilities which has a potential to grow to be used in the long-term.

Operational goal 5.5 – Local Center of Residential Services

In order to provide European living standards to the citizens it is necessary to create suitable services offer which at the moment requires improving its quality in the first place.

Consequently, it is vital to coordinate development processes and streamline them so they concentrate on selected areas which in turn will bring spectacular results.

Development projects:

- A. Fun and amusement in the Historic Old Town.** As a part of the revitalization scheme of the Old Town the purpose here would be to bring a variety of restaurants into this entertainment district as well as clubs, bars, lounges with outdoors/patios sitting. Those establishments would stay open late but at the same time safety, monitoring and police watch would be assured.
- B. Modern shopping & entertainment center.** Launching such an investment undertaking would create a space large enough to serve commercial purposes (shopping mall with popular brand name stores) and would also house leisure time facilities such as cinema or theater stage.

Operational goal 5.6 – Recreational track & trail network development

Transportation system expansion applies not only to road network but also to recreational tracks development including bicycle and roller-blade lanes as well as pedestrian walk & jog paths. Outlining and putting the above project into effect is significant both with reference to improving the life quality in the City and raising its attractiveness as it refers to and affects launching the investments described in the Strategy.

Development projects:

- A. Get healthier on a bicycle-cycling lanes development.** Bike-riding routes promoted as an alternative form of moving in and around the City as well as highly health-beneficial physical activity. This could be also an optional solution to the transportation problems that the City has to deal with and if such obstacles continue to last for years, applying other substitutes will be a must. Such burden situation can be turned into the advantageous one and target-destination trips (school, work, shopping) can gain added value with recreation & fitness element provided bike trail network is expanded for that purpose. This way, fast and safe traveling within City's limits will be ensured bypassing rush hour traffic or heavily congested urban zones. In addition, getting out of the City will be facilitated through making access to the suburban more

convenient. All the green areas in the City can be utilized for spreading bicycle trend around and getting some active rest on two wheels.

B. Urban bicycle system. It would be worth considering to introduce an urban bicycle system in the City of Sieradz. The most efficient way of utilizing such solution would be short-time bike ride (up to 20 minutes) available free of charge. This way a greater turnover would be assured while using the system in the most productive manner possible.

Operational goal 5.7 – Building local community's sense of identity through education

Development project:

A. The spirit of youth takes the lead – children's potential. Numerous growth and development undertakings cater to kids' needs. It applies both to investments ventures and improvement of life quality in the City. It is crucial to incorporate into this process and implement pre-school education program which will encourage children and spark their curiosity to learn some history and traditions of Sieradz in an inspiring way. The efforts should be made towards writing a book on history and culture of the City dedicated to young readers. Another incentive that would stimulate and inspire young people to explore Sieradz's legacy should focus on organizing annual contest testing how well junior residents know their City.

OPERATIONAL GOAL 6 – THE CITY'S IMAGE – DEVELOPMENT-FRIENDLY SIERADZ

The image of the place is of a great importance to its local community for a lot of different reasons. Projection of the City's positive picture is not only to serve as a magnet to attract investors and tourists (although it is obviously its important task) but it has a vital role to play in uniting local citizens so that they can share a closer bond with the place that they are proud to live in while nurturing the sense of belonging. The City's image does not simply come down to a graphic mark such as its logo or a coat of arms or a commercial tagline – it goes beyond that identified as cohesive sequence of specific activities that defines a particular City, distinguishing it from others and making it recognizable for specific values.

In that sense, the projected image is not solely an integral element of visual identification which is indeed crucial but it is also an expression form of well-coordinated policy linking local values with growth and development. On one hand, we are all citizens of a global village bearing in our heads a general picture of the whole world and on the other hand we have grown accustomed and loyal to our local value system reflected in the landscape, culture, history and lifestyle.

The community of Sieradz holds in high regard its “unique urban ambiance” associated with peace, safety, tradition and unhurried life pace. Local values serve as a basis for preparation of investment offers targeting social and economic development. Nowadays, tradition and history have an important role to play from the developmental point of view since they channel through the values and priorities applicable to the economical development as well. Among highly recognized and are traditional and reliable productions methods as well as experience in providing services while ensuring top quality standards. On one hand and with all the above in mind, Sieradz should build its image based on its traditions deeply rooted in the long history and instilled in the local community's mentality. On the other hand the City should become open-minded and more receptive towards innovative solutions while displaying its hospitality and friendly approach towards newcomers.

The process of creating the City's Strategy with the focus on the image projected outside needs to draw from the broadly recognized and approved values that bridge the past and traditions with the future. In the end, both shaping good future perspectives and securing children's welfare are forms of showing care and respect for commonly treasured family and

home. The programs designed to create **the image of Sieradz as development-friendly City** are a natural consequence of the whole concept of The Strategy.

Stressing the importance of hospitality for progress should be reflected in all promotional campaigns carried out by the City as well as during special events that will serve as opportunities to reinforce such perception of Sieradz. Meetings and festivals should be organized on regular basis so that elements of visual presentation of the City are strengthened as often as possible. This particular aspect should be also highlighted in other undertakings such as “Open Hair Festival” or during annually held “Days of Sieradz”. Initiatives should be taken in order to emphasize such attributes of the City as **hospitality** (towards residents, tourists, investors and visitors), **cordiality, consideration, friendliness, involvement, cooperation openness, readiness for expansion, unique and innovative use of traditions.**

The Promotion Strategy of Sieradz for the years 2008-2013 document contains detailed activities to be conducted by the local authorities in the process of creating Sieradz's image. In the opinion of The Development Strategy authors, it is vital that both documents complement each other following specific policy guidelines remaining in line with the City's branding concept. Consistency and determination of the strategic operations will contribute to building most desirable image of the City recognized as a place that welcomes new investment while respecting sustainable growth rules and constantly aiming at improving living standards of the residents through making use of historical and cultural resources and well-developed infrastructure.

Increasing the City's competitive edge by:

- *nurturing the feeling of pride as it regards the place, the people and the history,*
- *creating distinct and recognizable image of the City,*
- *selecting and promoting most prominent features of the City and its valuable attributes,*
- *designing a system of visual identification,*
- *reinforcing the City's image via organization of theme events and festivities.*

Raising the City's attractiveness promoted as a good place to live in through:

- *increasing local patriotism so that community identifies more with the City,*
- *creating the City's visual identification in harmony with the preferred lifestyle model,*
- *getting the citizens more involved in the municipal affairs,*
- *reinforcing the sense of community,*
- *incorporating the City's symbols and brands into everyday life.*

Operational goal 6.1 – Open Hair brand name

The flagship brand to be highlighted in the image building process and PR campaign of the City is the tourism brand “Open Hair” the concept of which is directly linked with a hairdressing icon and a genius in his artistic trade – Antoni Cierplikowski also known as Antoine. The brand has been classified as “mass urban event” meaning addressed to broad audience – OPEN and associated with Antoni Cierplikowski as its patron and unique personality behind the brand – HAIR. Combining those two elements is to lead to the design of the brand based on innovative ideas and events aiming at CREATIVE FUN WITH HAIR/HAIRDOS. Open Hair is a diverse and progressive brand featuring variety of products (events, venues, happenings and cultural festivals among others). Among the core values of the brand name are resourcefulness, creativity, inspiration and uniqueness. The focal point idea is to attract crowds of people to have a great time playing with hair (but also clothes, fashion and body adornment) while enjoying doing in outdoors, in the urban space – the ambiance marked with joyful shows, thrilling contests, parades m concerts etc. Another aspect would be to extend the hair theme to fashion, pop music and pop art.

Development projects:

- A. Sieradz Open Hair Festival.** One of its kind undertaking in Poland that promotes the idea of urban leisure time fun to be enjoyed under the open sky with the core activities focused on individual and imaginative ways of creating and presenting hairdos and hairstyles. The main event will be enriched by a lot of other meetings and festivities.

- B. Open Hair Cafe.** The club is to be more like a pub filled with gadgets, supplies and other craftsmanship elements directly related to hairdressing, styling, hairdos, the profession and additionally it will be featuring extensive collection of artefacts of different historical origin along with modern art pieces of young artists. The main theme of the interior design style of the club is hairdressing salon which the place furnished with swivel chairs, mirrors etc. is to resemble.
- C. Open Hair Gallery.** In the long run Open Hair Gallery is to be a place where all kinds of exhibits displaying exemplary creative hairstyles from all the world can be found or showing artistic works linked to hair theme and its cultural reference. The gallery collection shall include various art pieces ranging from painting, sculpture, photography, drawing and literature inter alia. Those different artistic genres are to be directly associated with creative hairdressing and hair theme recurring in Polish, European and international culture. The collection should be progressively expanded by diverse exhibits (pictures, memorabilia, sculptors) supplied via consecutive editions of Sieradz Open Hair Festival and delivered by its participants both amateurs and specially invited guests.
- D. Maestro Antoine Open Hair Museum.** Antoni Cierplikowski is the main source of inspiration and the most recognized person behind Open Hair brand name. It was his personality, life and above all work – his legacy that have contributed to the birth of the brand and today he is considered to be its Godfather. This is why, it would be desirable to establish a place devoted to this hairdressing icon and distinctive personality as it would serve to commemorate his life and achievements. Naturally, the location selected for this purpose should be immediately associated with Antoni Cierplikowski and the museum collection should feature all kinds of artefacts and memorabilia related to this unique individual. Another suggested undertaking would focus on organizing variety of exhibitions held on a regular basis (permanently marked in the event calendar) and the temporary ones both of which would be a direct tribute to Antoni Cierplikowski at the same time illustrating his life and craftsmanship (trends in hairdressing industry back in his lifetime, fashion styles, his friends and famous people whose lives were marked by Antoine's presence).

E. Open Hair Art. At the core of the project is editorial and publication collection including both unique photographs capturing the ambiance of the historical times Antoni Cierplikowski live in and contemporary pictures inspired by cultural trends followed in the lifetime of Antoine which have had an impact on today's civilization. The photographs are to be one of a kind and giving testimony to the distinctively quaint ambiance of that period identified by its hair and fashion styles with depicted culture, film and music industry celebrities. Based on that there will be series of albums published (for instance "Women in life of Maestro Antoine" featuring pictures of famous women – customers of Cierplikowski; "Women à la Cierplikowski" etc.) along with unique post cards, posters among others all of which will be either sold directly to the public in the forms of souvenirs or as promotion materials of the City.

Operational goal 6.2 – EURO 2012 of Uniformed Services

The main idea behind this project is to organize European Soccer Championship under the name „EURO 2012 of Uniformed Services” – the event that would be held in 2012 in selected Polish cities such as **Sieradz**, Bełchatów, Pabianice, Wieluń all of which are part of Łódzki voivodship in terms of administrative division on the map of Poland. This football tournament makes direct reference to the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship scheduled to take place in Poland and Ukraine in 2012 .The Uniformed Services teams will be selected out of the countries' national representations qualified to play in the main championship hosted by the two countries mentioned above. The teams division will be based on the exact same groups formed after the drawing before EURO 2012 and each team will play its game in one of the aforementioned cities. Due to the fact that it is the City of Sieradz to have come up with this particular idea, naturally the grand opening game along with the final game will be held in this City. The remaining football matches including quarter-finals, semi-finals and the third place game will take place in other host cities on the list.

Operational goal 6.3 – Development of „Info-structure” and The City’s Tourist Information Center

Sieradz as a City that intends to keep on attracting both investments and tourists needs to be well-equipped with reliable “info-structure” comprising public transportation network, internet connections system, wireless access zones. In order to built competitive advantage, there should be unlimited internet access available throughout most frequently visited parts of the City as well as the in the areas marked as top tourists attractions. Overall, long-term goal is to gradually expand the zones of public access to internet.

Operational goal 6.4 – Cooperation with partner cities

As an integral part of the local authorities policy, partnership-based collaboration with other cities plays a vital role in this process. For the past few years Sieradz has been successfully cooperating with two cities: Gaggenau (located in Baden-Wittenberg in Germany) and Annemasse (located in Rhone-Alpes in France). Moreover, there are few other partner cities remaining in close relations with Sieradz and they include Gospić and Novalije (Croatia) and Jambol (Bulgaria) and Saransk (Russia).

Joint projects implemented by partner cities focus on organizing numerous exciting cultural and sport events involving youth and students’ exchange. However, it would be strongly recommended that the City targets and expands its economic cooperation the potential of which has not been tapped so far. Additionally, in order to go internationally with the promotional campaign of Sieradz so that is recognized outside of Poland broader-range activities should be introduced which will build closer ties with other foreign cities of similar size and ambiance.

Prerequisites for effective implementation of The Strategy in Sieradz

The implementation process of strategy is in each case considered to be a pivotal stage of strategic management. Without a doubt, this phase appears to be more challenging and complex than the actual creation of a strategy since it does not only require convincing people to get involved in fulfilling development assignments but it also means breaking barriers and resistance towards change and successful search for financial and material resources necessary for that purpose. It is particularly difficult to stay determined while implementing long-term and far-reaching concepts. The task gets even more demanding when attempts are made to fit it into the framework of ongoing, day-to-day management responsibilities. In fact, the majority of organizations' strategies at this particular stage result in failures.

On the other hand, the whole application procedure of strategy serves as a verification and measurement tool for effective strategic management which so long serves its purpose as it actually brings feasible development results to be used in real life. Most definitely, the preferred approach is to be consistent with implementing even far from perfect strategic solutions rather than creating ideal tools without ensuring suitable conditions for their practical application.

The key to the successful implementation of the Strategy of Sieradz is as follows:

- applying project management procedure for completing priority development tasks which translates into appointment of project leaders to manage strategic teams whose work and assignments will be aligned with outlined plan of action (time line, scope of responsibilities, goals),
- introducing the Strategy's monitoring system which would be based on keeping track of the implementation progress of the Strategy and its outcomes. The tool would allow for a continuous review and supervisory work carried out as a part of standard management process of the City,

- applying the Strategy's revision method aiming at analysis (to be done at least once a year) of the outlined strategic goals and the measurable results, updating strategic diagnosis along with appropriate modification of the development concept.

The implementation process of the Strategy requires the local government to commit itself to a full participation in the whole undertaking even though oftentimes there will be outside experts involved in the course of creating and executing suitable procedures as well as applying corrections to the Strategy, however their role should be more of an assistance rather than the one of a leader.