



Municipality area	15 km <sup>2</sup>	Population	82 439 (2001)
GDP per inhabitant	12 323 €	Trend	decreasing
Area of green spaces	public urban green spaces: 0,53 km <sup>2</sup>		
Area of green spaces per inhabitant	6,4 m <sup>2</sup> (public urban green spaces)		

### Volos and its green structure

The Municipality and City of Volos is located in the centre of Greece at the foot of Mount Pelion (peninsular of Pelion) on the Pagasitic gulf. The city lies 326 km to the north of Athens and 215 km to the south of Thessaloniki. The northern part of the city is situated on the lower slopes of Mount Pelion, itself a tourist attraction. The southern part boasts a coastal frontage with a seaside promenade and open spaces. These provide a tourist attraction, along with many cafes and bars.

In general, however, the city only has a few green spaces and most of these are afforded a relatively low level of maintenance. Almost all districts of the city lack adequate green spaces. The 'greenest places' in the city are the cemetery and the seaside park of St. Konstantinos.

There are two rivers in the vicinity of Volos. One crosses the municipality and the other lies along its border with the municipality of Nea Ionia. The 'green space' potential of these rivers and their corridors to serve as recreational and leisure areas for the local inhabitants has not been realised. Within the city border no natural protection areas exist.



### Urban green space strategy

#### The challenges and approach to building an urban green space strategy

The most important problems to be tackled are:

- insufficient finance;
- bureaucracy;
- ineffective green planning instruments; and
- a lack of suitable concepts and strategies.

Volos has a strategic development plan but its implementation is non-statutory and thus somewhat problematic. This gives rise to considerable difficulties in ensuring the satisfactory urban development of the city.

As a result of the low budget for the development and maintenance of green spaces, only strictly necessary action is taken such as grass cutting, refuse or garbage collection, replacement of any trees, bushes, etc that are damaged by natural causes (storms, ice, etc) and general maintenance of planting (trimming, applying fertilizer, maintaining the watering system, etc). As the urban area is almost built up there are few 'open' spaces left that could be transformed into suitable green spaces.

Many street trees were planted for the 2004 Olympic Games but the present condition of many of these is not good. One direct cause is vandalism, but more indirectly the involvement and interest of the citizens in the development and maintenance of green spaces is very limited.

Volos suffers from high levels of noise and air pollution. Further problems include vandalism, litter/rubbish and dogs' excrement. The general development goals of the city include: traffic and noise reduction in the city centre, soil protection and protection of water supply sources: important for Mount Pelion -Tourism.

The Strategy Group consists of members from the four Departments of Technical Services, Town Planning, Traffic Planning and Green Spaces. The Municipal Tourism Enterprise of Volos is responsible for organising the work and meetings and the Group together with the production of the Urban Green Space Strategy. Some of the members of the Group were seconded by their heads of department, against their own will, in response to the call by the Mayor for the production of the city's Urban Green Space Strategy.

A major problem in developing an agreed green space strategy is the fact that the key actor responsible for organising the task (the Municipal Tourism Enterprise of Volos) is not a municipal bureau but a municipal enterprise with limited power and accountability.

Another problem arises from the individual priorities set by each department. These often provoke disagreement amongst the members and their departments.

## Description of the urban green space strategy

### Mission, vision and goals

Main purposes:

- To improve the quality of the green spaces in Volos,
- To increase the quantity of green within the urban fabric (as a political objective),
- To make all people aware about the role of urban green spaces for the quality of life, infrastructure, urban environment and identity of the city.

### Guidelines, recommendations, standards

There are three existing documents from which the strategy is to be built upon:

- The General Development Plan with the Land Use Map (here parks are included in the category sports/ culture);
- The Strategic Master Plan; and
- The GreenKeys documents.

It was planned to give the Urban Green Space Strategy document an important status, but this activity was stopped as a result of unfavourable political circumstances.

### Important tasks and actions

During the first phase of the project Volos was very successful and organised a lot of activities (collection of data, distribution of questionnaires, etc.). In 2007, the mayor, who supported the project, was not re-elected for a new period in the Greek municipal elections. The new mayor, whilst being sympathetic, lacked adequate support from his own cabinet and bureaucracy. Under these conditions the GreenKeys partner lost its backing and support for any further work. The formulation of an Urban Green Space Strategy in Volos ceased, therefore, at the end of 2007, due to the lack of adequate political interest and support.

### Good practices/lessons learnt

The process for formulation of a strategy is facing several problems:

- In general, there is a very low level of pressure from the residents concerning green space provision and maintenance. This situation is coupled to the fact that there is virtually no public participation or meaningful involvement of citizens in the planning procedures. This explains why the city authorities were able to cancel, so easily, their intention to support the formulation of a Urban Green Space Strategy.
- Existing constraints with interdepartmental cooperation, poor public involvement and awareness of the problem of green spaces development are also cited as causes of the decision to quit the formulation of an Urban Green Space Strategy.





### Green Project > Improvement of green spaces in Neapoli area

#### Key data

Area	1,5 ha
Targeted users	All residents

#### Short description of the project

The scope of this programme is to improve existing green space in Neapoli, a deprived area located on the western side of the city of Volos. The improvement of the green spaces is expected to influence the surrounding neighbourhoods. Neapoli is characterised by numerous garages and relatively low density residences. The main function of the area is the provision of specialised vehicle repairs and sales services as well as small workshops (small metal constructions, etc.). The buildings are mainly of two or three storeys in height. The streets and pavements are relatively narrow, excepting the main street that connects Neapoli with Volos city centre. The residents of Neapoli are mainly working-class families with low-incomes.

The pilot project concerns the improvement in the quality of green spaces in three locations within the area of Neapoli with the long-term future prospect of inter-connecting these sites with pathways. In terms of site characteristics, the three areas can be described as being flat. The existing vegetation is considered to be inadequate, since there is only one specific site which contains any vegetation. The rest of the existing green consists in the main of grass and a few small trees. The 3 areas are provided with only basic equipment such as benches and kiosks. Moreover, there is a football court near to one of the areas for which there are plans for improvement with a multipurpose sports facility to serve Neapoli.

In one of the three project sites the construction of a Social Centre, which is not part of this pilot project, is almost complete. In a second site a Creational Activity Centre for Children exists. In the third site there is a park that was originally created in order to educate and train children about traffic issues and behaviour.

#### Objectives and goals for the improvement

The pilot project aims to improve the quality of green space available within three different sites in the Neapoli neighbourhood.

#### Challenges and Problems

The implementation of the project had to cope with delays due to bureaucratic problems.

- Fragmentation of public administration: There has been a lack of cooperation and communication between relevant departments and with the exception of the Department of Green Space no involvement by other departments.
- There is lack of strategic management and organisation. This was especially evident in the case of the technical study. In light of the lack of communication and bad management a new technical study and a new design were prepared by an external landscape designer. The previous ones, prepared by the Department of Green Space, were not approved.
- Lack of staff to implement projects.
- Lack of experience in the Department of Green Space to handle the whole GreenKeys project.

#### Actions undertaken

In March 2007, according to the final draft of the Pilot Project document, the design phase was in progress at the Department of Green of the Municipality of Volos. The sites selected for the implementation of the project were approved by the Municipal Council, based on the social dimensions of the project. On one of the sites the construction of a Social Centre (not part of this project) has been completed. On a second site a Creational Activity Centre for Children already exists and the improvement of the space surrounding the facilities was deemed necessary.

Finally, in the third site there is a park that was originally created in order to educate and train children about traffic issues. The park will keep its original mission and the vegetation will be upgraded and enriched. Based on the latest information provided, the official study for the design and gardening of the green space has been completed.

#### Good practices/lessons learnt

- Political will, not only by the elected authorities (i.e. the mayor) but also by her/his cabinet and the whole bureaucracy is of utmost importance. This is needed in order to keep interest alive in the project, to achieve the goals and the time frame, and to organise, manage and coordinate the work.
- Intra- and inter-departmental communication and coordination are paramount ingredients for success.
- There is no tradition in Greece for PR activities and public involvement. In the first phase Volos kept the people informed, via press conferences and through the publishing of newspaper articles, brochures etc.