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Consideration of Environmental Law Requirements in the Process of Local-Level Territory Planning

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**Abstract:** Given the relevance of issues related to the planning, organisation, development of territories and their broad, complex nature, this publication employs methods of analysis and synthesis as well as the transition from the abstract to the concrete to elaborate on specific aspects of integrating environmental law requirements into the process of territory planning at the local level.

Based on the analysis of research findings, legislative provisions, urban planning practices and the content of certain approved territory planning documents, the article identifies the place of local-level territory planning within the system of the state regulation of territory planning; examines the specific features of reflecting environmental protection requirements and restrictions in certain types of urban planning documentation – namely, master plans of settlements and detailed plans of territories; outlines the significance of the fundamental environmental law instrument – strategic environmental assessment, through which environmental





requirements are integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes; and characterises recent legislative amendments in the field of urban development related to the need for elaborating territorial recovery programmes, as well as mechanisms for integrating environmental considerations in their preparation.

It is emphasised that environmental requirements and restrictions should be reflected at all levels of territory planning and in all types of urban planning documentation, including documentation at the local level.

The article substantiates that an effective legal instrument for incorporating environmental law requirements into territory planning is strategic environmental assessment and highlights the particular importance of active public participation in the discussion of urban planning projects. Ensuring the consideration of environmental interests is essential through broad public discussion of the content of the new programmatic document introduced in 2022 – the comprehensive recovery programmes of an oblast or the territory of a territorial community (or part thereof).

**Keywords:** urban development activities; territory planning; master plans of settlements; detailed plans of territories; comprehensive territorial recovery programmes of a territorial community; environmental law requirements; strategic environmental assessment.

# Врахування еколого-правових вимог у процесі планування територій на місцевому рівні

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**Анотація:** З огляду на актуальність проблематики планування, організації та забудови територій, її широкий, комплексний характер у цій публікації з використанням методів аналізу і синтезу, переходу від абстрактного до конкретного деталізовані окремі питання врахування екологоправових вимог у процесі планування територій на місцевому рівні.

В статті на основі аналізу результатів наукових досліджень, приписів законодавства, практики розробки містобудівної документації, змісту окремих затверджених документів територіального планування визначено місце планування територій на місцевому рівні в системі державного регулювання планування територій; розкрито особливості відображення природоохоронних вимог і обмежень в окремих видах містобудівної документації: генеральних планах населених пунктів, детальних планах території; окреслено значення основоположного еколого-правового інституту — стратегічної екологічної оцінки, за допомогою якої екологічні вимоги інтегруються в підготовку планів і програм; охарактеризовано новітні зміни до законодавства у сфері містобудування, пов'язані з необхідністю розроблення програм відновлення територій, та механізм врахування при їх підготовці природоохоронної складової.

Підкреслено, що природоохоронні вимоги та обмеження повинні знаходити відображення на всіх рівнях планування територій та в усіх видах містобудівної документації, зокрема і в містобудівній документації місцевого рівня.

Обґрунтовано, що дієвим правовим інструментом врахування екологоправових вимог у процесі планування територій є стратегічна екологічна оцінка, а особливе значення має активна участь громадськості у процесі обговорення проєктів містобудівної документації. Важливо забезпечити врахування екологічних інтересів, шляхом широкого громадського обговорення змісту новітнього програмного документу, запровадженого у





2022 році, — програм комплексного відновлення області, території територіальної громади (її частини).

**Ключові слова:** містобудівна діяльність; планування територій; генеральні плани населених пунктів; детальні плани території; програми комплексного відновлення території територіальної громади; еколого-правові вимоги; стратегічна екологічна оцінка.

**Problem Statement.** The activities of Ukrainian state authorities aimed at implementing the principle of sustainable development have necessitated substantial changes in the organisation of territories, the shaping of living spaces, the preservation of the traditional character of the environment and the creation of new engineering and transport infrastructure. A key step in this process was the adoption of legislation regulating relations in the field of territory planning, land development and urban planning. The adoption of the Laws of Ukraine "On the Principles of Town Planning", "On the General Scheme for Planning the Ukrainian Territory", "On Regulation of City Planning Activity" laid the legislative foundation for governing these relations.

Ukraine's rapidly evolving urban planning legislation has a multidisciplinary "residence." In its content, it encompasses norms of administrative, economic, land, civil and environmental law. The integration of environmental protection requirements and restrictions into the processes of territory planning, organisation and development is mandatory. This task is of particular importance at the local level, especially when approving master plans of settlements and detailed plans of territories. In this regard, it is essential to determine the content of environmental law prescriptions to be taken into account during planning; to identify the methods and means for their implementation in each specific case; and to employ organisational law mechanisms through which environmental requirements – and, more broadly, the environmental interests of citizens – will be incorporated.





**Literature Review.** As noted above, the legal regulation of territory planning, organisation and development is of a complex nature. Accordingly, scholarly research in this sphere of relations is multifaceted.

First and foremost, attention should be drawn to the contributions of contemporary legal doctrine on urban planning law, as reflected in the works of N.I. Petretska [1] O.O. Kvasnytska [2] and V.M. Bevzenko [3], K.O. Rybak [4] which address the constitutional law, economic law and administrative law aspects of urban development activities.

Territory planning is directly linked to the issues of land-use planning and zoning, as well as to the legal regime of land. The monographic study by Ripenko A. is devoted to complex and comprehensive research of conceptual and legal bases of land use for town – planning needs [5]. The fundamental aspects of land zoning within the boundaries of settlements are examined in I. V. Ihnatenko's monograph [6]. At present, the works of this scholar and other representatives of land law science are devoted to the legal issues of territory planning in general [7; 8].

With regard to developments in environmental law, environmental law issues of territory planning and development have traditionally been analysed within the framework of environmental safety law [9, 10]. Research on the principles of ensuring environmental safety in the planning and development of cities in Ukraine was initiated in the dissertation study of N. L. Ilina [11]. The overall system of organisational law instruments and mechanisms for taking into account environmental interests and environmental protection requirements in the conduct of various types of activities, including territory planning and development, is presented in specialised studies [12, 13].

Young researchers in the field of environmental law address the issue of territory planning within the framework of analysing the location and compliance with the legal regime of special zones, such as sanitary protection zones [14].

At the same time, as follows from the analysis of research results, such studies are either focused on specific, narrowly specialised aspects of the issue under





consideration, or they provide a generalised overview of the legal regulation of territory planning and development, which, of course, is important for a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Identification of unresolved parts of the general problem. Given the relevance of issues related to the planning, organisation, development of territories and their broad and complex nature, this publication aims – through the use of methods of analysis and synthesis and the transition from the abstract to the concrete – to elaborate on specific aspects of integrating environmental law requirements into the process of territory planning at the local level.

The aim of this article. The objectives of the study, intended to address the research topic, are as follows:

- to present the place of local-level territory planning within the system of the state regulation of territory planning;
- to examine the specific features of reflecting environmental protection requirements and restrictions in certain types of urban planning documentation, namely, master plans of settlements and detailed plans of territories;
- to determine the significance of the fundamental environmental law instrument strategic environmental assessment through which environmental requirements are integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes;
- to characterise recent legislative amendments in the field of urban development related to the need for elaborating territorial recovery programmes as well as the mechanisms for integrating environmental considerations in their preparation.

Presentation of the main research material. The legislative definition of the concept of "territory planning and development" is enshrined in Part 1 of Article 2 of the Law of Ukraine "On Regulation of City Planning Activity" [15]. Territory planning and development shall be an activity of state bodies, bodies of local self-government, legal entities and individuals that entails: 1) forecasting territory development; 2) ensuring rational displacement of population and determining





directions of sustainable territory development; 3) substantiating land distribution by its intended purpose; 4) mutual coordination of state, community and private interests during territory zoning and development; 5) determining and reasonable mutual placement of residential and civil areas, industrial, recreational, environmental, healthcare, historical and cultural, and other zones and objects; 6) determining development regimes for territories on which city planning activity is envisaged; 7) elaboration of city planning and project documentation, constructing objects; 8) reconstructing the existing buildings and territories; 9) preserving, creating and restoring recreational, environmental and healthcare territories and objects, landscapes, forests, parks, mini parks and separate vegetation sites; 10) creating and developing engineering and transport infrastructure; 10) creating an unhindered living environment for people with disabilities and other low-mobility groups of the population; 11) monitoring of development; 12) maintaining the city planning cadastre; 13) exercising control in the sphere of city planning.

I. Ignatenko and L. Leiba emphasise that spatial planning, as opposed to the arbitrary placement of buildings and infrastructure, makes it possible to systematically account for environmental impacts and to consider them as an important factor in decision-making. Furthermore, spatial planning may also include measures to improve infrastructure, ensure access to green spaces and establish environmental standards for construction and land use. These measures contribute to environmental quality improvement and help create a comfortable and healthy living environment for residents [7, p. 356].

According to the Law of Ukraine "On Regulation of City Planning Activity", territory planning is carried out at the state, regional and local levels through:

- the development and approval, in accordance with the law, of the General Scheme for Planning the Territory of Ukraine and planning schemes for certain parts of the territory of Ukraine, as well as amendments thereto (state level);
- the development of planning schemes for the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, oblasts and districts (regional level);





- the development and approval of comprehensive plans for the spatial development of the territories of territorial communities, master plans of settlements, and detailed plans of territories, as well as their updates and amendments (local level).

An instrument of state regulation in the sphere of territory planning is urban planning documentation, which is classified into documentation of the state, regional and local levels.

Environmental protection requirements and restrictions – ultimately aimed at ensuring the realisation of citizens' environmental interests – must be reflected at all levels of territory planning and in all types of urban planning documentation.

According to Part 1 of Article 16 of the Law of Ukraine "On Regulation of City Planning Activity" territory planning at the local level shall be carried out by elaborating and approving general schemes of localities, territory zoning plans and detailed territory plans, as well as updating and amending thereof. The territory's detailed plan shall mean the city planning documentation defining the planning organisation and development of the territory.

In particular, a component of a settlement's master plan that determines the conditions and restrictions on land use within designated functional zones is the zoning plan. At the same time, the latest requirements and rules for territorial zoning, as well as the consideration of urban planning conditions and restrictions, can be fully applied to new land development plans. Existing urban or rural developments, however, often do not comply with environmental and sanitary requirements, and the regime for the use of functional zones and individual land plots objectively cannot be fully observed.

In this context, the issue of locating, organising and optimising sanitary protection zones acquires particular importance. Researchers define sanitary protection zone as a territory with a special mode of use, a land plot (piece of land) around a potentially dangerous object which is a source of negative impact on the human environment and is established with the aim to reduce this impact on people,





the environment, adjacent lands, other natural objects and to prevent harm to the health of the population [16, p. 25]. In examining the representation of sanitary protection zones in the organisation of territorial zoning, I.V. Velmyseva concludes that, in accordance with regulatory requirements, sanitary protection zones form part of industrial zones. At the same time, the analysis of certain approved zoning plans of settlements has shown that, while recording the actual state of sanitary protection zone placement, they designate within the residential zone so-called "zones of detached, terraced or multi-apartment residential development located within the sanitary protection zones of industrial, utility and warehouse areas and facilities," which may contain existing residential buildings with household plots. This directly contradicts the legal regime requirements for sanitary protection zones [14, p. 38]. Violations of the requirements for the placement of sanitary protection zones give rise to numerous court disputes concerning the protection of the right to an environment safe for life and health.

In the process of developing a territory's detailed plan, it is also critically important to take into account environmental protection restrictions, the specific features of the legal regime of territories and sites, and the presence of valuable natural complexes. Failure to consider such factors may lead to an intensification of negative anthropogenic impacts on the environment. Scholars, analysing the challenges in implementing spatial planning for communities, identify a set of issues related to the limited consideration of environmental factors during the approval of urban planning documentation and the absence of a focus on addressing the environmental problems of territorial communities. One aspect of this problem lies in the fact that, in planning territorial development, economic factors – such as investment attractiveness – are most often taken into account [8, p. 16].

The risks of destroying valuable ecosystems of the Carpathians associated with the construction of a resort on one of the largest and highest mountain ranges of the Ukrainian Carpathians – Svydovtsi [17] – prompted a Ukrainian environmental law organisation to file a lawsuit seeking to declare unlawful and





annul Order No. 214 of 31 May 2017 of the Head of the Tyachiv District State Administration "On Approval of the Detailed Plan of the Territory" and Order No. 135 of 15 May 2017 of the Head of the Rakhiv District State Administration "On Approval of the Detailed Plan of the Territory of the Svydivets Tourist and Recreational Complex Outside the Boundaries of Settlements".

In its final judgment in this case, the Supreme Court stated that, when approving detailed territory plans, both state and regional interests must be taken into account. The contested orders approving the detailed territory plans failed to consider that the territories covered by these plans (located outside the boundaries of settlements) belong to a specific part of the territory of Ukraine, the planning of which is carried out at the state level (Article 12 of the Law of Ukraine "On Regulation of City Planning Activity"). The detailed plan of the specified territory must be developed on the basis of the Planning Scheme for this particular mountainous area of the Carpathians, which, in turn, is prepared pursuant to a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and not on the basis of the Planning Scheme for the territory of Zakarpattia Oblast. However, at the time of developing the approved detailed territory plan, there was no Planning Scheme for the specified mountainous area of the Carpathians [18].

Pursuant to Part 4 of Article 2 of the Law of Ukraine "On Regulation of City Planning Activity", urban planning documentation is subject to strategic environmental assessment, which is conducted at all levels – state, regional and local. Therefore, urban planning documentation at the state level, integrated plans, master plans of settlements, zoning plans and detailed territory plans are all subject to such assessment.

The procedure for conducting a strategic environmental assessment is regulated by the Law of Ukraine "On Strategic Environmental Assessment" [19]. According to paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Strategic Environmental Assessment", strategic environmental assessment shall be defined as a procedure for determining, describing and assessing the effects of the execution of





state planning documents on the environment, as well as on public health, justified alternatives, development of preventive measures to reduce and mitigate possible negative impacts, including determining the scope of strategic environmental assessment, drafting the report on strategic environmental assessment, public discussions and consultations (transboundary consultations, if necessary), taking into account the report on strategic environmental assessment within the state planning document, the results of public discussions and consultations, information on the approval of the state planning document shall be provided in the manner prescribed by this Law.

As noted in the literature, strategic environmental assessment is a process whereby environmental considerations must be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes prior to their final adoption [20, p. 7]. The "strategic" nature of environmental assessment lies in the fact that the evaluation process begins at the stage of initiating the development of a strategy (plan or programme) and is integrated into the process of preparing such plans and programmes. This ensures that the results of environmental assessment are decisive for making key decisions regarding the selection of the territory where the proposal will be implemented, as well as the mechanisms, instruments and technologies that will secure the achievement of strategic objectives. The purpose of strategic environmental assessment is to promote sustainable development by ensuring environmental protection, the safety of human life and health and the integration of environmental requirements into the preparation and approval of state planning documents [9, p. 373].

The analysis of strategic environmental assessment reports confirms that they reflect a system of measures aimed at preserving and improving the environment. For example, the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report for the state planning document – amendments to the detailed plan of the territory along the left bank of the Ros River in the area of Yarovyi Lane, Richkova, Zaporizka and Vodopiina Streets in the city of Bila Tserkva, Kyiv oblast – contains a list and brief description





of project solutions. This set of measures includes: resource-saving measures – preservation and rational use of land and water resources, their reuse; planning measures – functional zoning, establishment of sanitary protection zones and sanitary gaps, landscaping; restoration measures – technical and biological reclamation, normalisation of the condition of individual environmental components, etc.; protective measures [21].

The Law of Ukraine of 12 May 2022 No. 2254-IX "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding Priority Measures for Reforming the Field of Urban Planning" introduced a number of significant amendments to urban planning legislation aimed at ensuring the implementation of the principle of sustainable development of territories and proportional consideration of the economic, social and environmental interests of communities. In particular, this Law introduced a new type of programme document in the field of urban planning – a programme for the comprehensive recovery of an oblast or of the territory of a territorial community (or part thereof). This is a regional or local programme for the recovery of territories which defines the main spatial, urban planning and socio-economic priorities of recovery policy and includes a set of measures to ensure the recovery of the territory of the relevant oblast or the territory of a territorial community (or part thereof) affected by armed aggression against Ukraine or experiencing concentrated socioeconomic, infrastructural, environmental or other crisis phenomena (Paragraph 9-1 of Part 1 of Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Regulation of City Planning Activity").

As defined by the law, this document does not belong to the category of urban planning documentation; however, it is of exceptional importance in ensuring the effective recovery of affected territories. "This is about optimising urban planning documentation and replacing it with more flexible urban planning documents that can be transformed depending on people's needs and selected special urban planning programmes while remaining static within sanitary, water protection and environmental restrictions" [22, pp. 67–68].





Consideration of environmental factors in the process of restoring Ukrainian territories, including the rehabilitation of destroyed ecosystems and the creation of an environmentally favorable living space, is a pressing task for state authorities and civil society. The scientific community and environmentally conscious public are actively developing proposals in this regard [23; 24].

For instance, the *Comprehensive Programme for the Restoration of the Kyiv Oblast for 2023–2027*, approved by the decision of the Kyiv Regional Council on 17 October 2023, No. 726-21-VIII, includes Section 1.8 "Proposals for the Restoration of the Natural Environment, Preservation and Development of Protected Areas and Sites." One of the priority directions of environmental protection activities identified therein is the improvement and development of the network of nature reserves and protected areas in the oblast [25].

It is important to emphasise that, according to the law, comprehensive programmes for the restoration of an oblast or the territory of a territorial community (or part thereof) are not subject to strategic environmental assessment. However, they must be made publicly available, undergo public discussion and review and be subject to analysis and coordination of public proposals.

Conclusions. The organisation of spatial planning at the local level constitutes a specific type of governmental activity carried out at the level of oblasts, territorial communities and settlements. The results of this activity are reflected in local-level urban planning documentation, including comprehensive spatial development plans for territorial communities, general plans of settlements and detailed territory plans.

Environmental protection requirements and restrictions must be incorporated at all levels of spatial planning and in all types of urban planning documentation.

The analysis of the legal framework, approval practices and the content of certain types of local-level urban planning documentation has revealed a number of issues. These include, in particular, the inability to ensure proper organisation and establishment of sanitary protection zones when approving general plans of settlements and the failure to take into account the special environmental protection





regime of territories when adopting decisions on the approval of detailed territory plans.

Strategic environmental assessment is an effective legal instrument for integrating environmental law requirements into the spatial planning process, including at the local level. Public participation in the discussion of urban planning documentation projects plays a particularly important role in this process.

In 2022, a new type of programme document was introduced into the system of such documentation – the programme for the comprehensive restoration of an oblast or a territorial community (or part thereof). The inclusion of crisis-related environmental phenomena resulting from the armed aggression of Russia is legally required in the development of such programmes. Although these programmes are excluded from the scope of strategic environmental assessment, the incorporation of environmental interests may nonetheless be ensured through the mandatory participation of the public in discussions of project drafts.

Thus, the objectives identified in the preparation of this publication have been achieved. At the same time, the aspects of incorporating environmental law requirements into the spatial planning process may serve as a basis for further indepth legal and scholarly analysis of specific types of urban planning documentation, the content of environmental protection requirements and the mechanisms for integrating them into activities related to the planning, organisation and development of territories.

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