

LIEPAJA BEACH THEMATIC PLAN

The long-term planning document of the city of Liepāja – **Liepāja Beach Thematic Plan**, approved in 2015 and developed on the basis of the territorial planning of the city of Liepāja. The document provides a targeted, structured and successive development of Liepāja’s city beach into a sustainable public space.

The thematic plan was developed with the aim of promoting the development of the natural and cultural-historical, including socially and economically beneficial use of resort resources, infrastructure and services of the southern and northern beaches and coasts of the city of Liepāja, while at the same time increasing the well-being of local residents and attracting tourists.

The thematic plan includes the beach and its adjacent territories (the sandy part of the beach, the dune strip and its adjacent territory with a pedestrian and bicycle path, exits to the sea, as well as 2 km into the sea).

1. Challenge/problem addressed

- In 2012, the zoning of the beach was already developed as part of the territory planning, but there was no beach development vision and a unified approach to beach improvement and infrastructure solutions.
- The existing beach landscaping and infrastructure were worn out, the quality of the existing solutions was low and did not meet modern requirements.
- The lack of a development vision and the inadequacy of the existing improvement to the demand threatened the natural values of the coast, the cultural and historical heritage.
- The interest and demand of investors to develop a commercial environment demanded by tourists on the beach increased, but the areas adjacent to the beach were not provided with engineering communications, there was outdated or no amenities at all and insufficient number of accesses to the beach, etc.

2. Main scale of governance involved: local / regional / national / international

Various levels of the public sector and specialists – local, regional and national level – were involved in the process of developing and in the process of public discussion of the document.

3. Description of what and where was done

One of the basic tasks of the thematic planning is to develop the spatial structure and visual solutions of the territory, taking into account the development potential of the Liepāja beach, Liepāja's strategic interests and cultural and historical values, which will create conditions for the development, visual solutions, placement and operation of the public outdoor space and its environmental elements.

As one of the main components of the plan are beach development concepts and design proposals.

Location: The plan covers the southern and northern beaches of the city of Liepāja (6 km southern beach and 6 km northern beach). This division was determined by the fact that between the beaches there is a channel and port areas.

The thematic planning reflects the beach and coastal development concept of the city of Liepāja, including in it:

- Functional and thematic zoning, including determining priority areas for development (defining the boundaries of various interests in the beach area, assigning a theme to each zone, ensuring the balancing of recreational and natural values).
- Connecting elements of infrastructure and landscaping, i.e. accessibility, environmental accessibility, safety, typical and special solutions. For landscaping solutions, a beach design concept and design guidelines for landscaping elements were developed. This was done with the aim of creating a functional, balanced, visually aesthetic spatial composition of the landscape that respects the cultural and historical values of the city.
- Engineering communications solutions according to functional zoning.
- Marketing strategy and management plan.

The final prepared plan divides several zones in each of the beaches (beaches of the southern and northern part of the city):

- 9 zones were allocated on the southern beach,
- 6 zones were allocated on the northern beach.

4. What sectors were involved?

The public sector, the academic sector, students, entrepreneurs in the field of services (tourism, catering, entertainment, etc.), the non-governmental sector, various interested groups of local activists

(representatives of active sports – water sports, canoeists, etc.) were involved, as well as the population was widely involved.

5. Which target/interest groups / stakeholders were reached?

The public sector and specialists of various levels, representatives of the academic environment, experts in various fields, students of spatial planning and art academy, entrepreneurs, NGOs, water sports activists (surfers, kite surfers), residents and other interested parties were involved in the development and public development of the document.

6. What methods were applied?

Different methods were used during the development of the document:

- Inventory and landscape-spatial analysis (2021, 2014), within the framework of which the shortcomings and needs that must be solved in the thematic planning of the Liepāja city beach are formulated
- Analysis of documents of different levels was carried out
- Analysis of the existing situation and SWOT analysis
- Expert analysis in various fields
- Working groups and dealing with target groups
- Before the development of the thematic plan, a competition for Liepāja beach development projects was held (it was a successful way to introduce the public and discuss the possible development of the beach)
- Students were involved in the development and solution search process
- Clarifying the opinions of entrepreneurs (potential entrepreneurs in the beach and adjacent territory)

7. Lessons learned

Since the approval of the thematic plan in 2015, activities have mainly been implemented on the southern beach – most of the exits to the sea are improved. However, practically no measures have been implemented on the northern beach due to the specifics of the situation, i.e. this part of the beach is located in the northern part of the city and generally has a poorly developed or outdated communication infrastructure, as well as many degraded areas. This part of the city is generally developing more slowly than the southern part of the city and the beach is not a priority. An important aspect is also the fact that near the northern beach inland, the Beberlini recreation park has successfully developed around the

Beberlini water body. This place has its own development document – Beberliņu Development Plan, which determines the improvement and management of this area. Active leisure park “BB Wakepark”, wake school, cafe and camping, as well as adventure park Tarzans are located there. This place is very popular not only among tourists but also among local residents.

Solutions that most likely will not be implemented (from the point of view of municipal representatives) – a pier in the sea in the central part of the southern beach, which would connect two streets important for the urban environment (Kurmajas avenue and Peldu street). Almost a decade after the plan was approved, it is clear that the pier is too ambitious an idea for several reasons – mostly due to high costs, as well as nature and environmentally friendly technical solutions.

In general, the municipality considers that the implementation of the thematic plan is slow and cumbersome due to the sensitivity of the environment and nature of the seaside, beach area, as well as due to the irregular and insufficient availability of funding for implementation.

Aspects of success worth taking over:

- Functional and thematic planning zoning of Liepāja beach has been successful. It has justified itself, judging from the implementation results. Zoning has helped separate conflicting interests (calm and active rest, locals and tourists). Accordingly, functional zoning solutions have facilitated the construction of successive exits following a unified approach, eased management issues, for example, the daily management of the walkways to the beach (the walkways have different functionality and suitable solutions).
- In general, the implementation of the plan has contributed to the development of the business environment, because the construction of the necessary communications was ensured, set clear principles for building on the beach, essential public infrastructure improvement works have been carried out (recreation areas, toilets).
- The integration of an already existing cycle path along the seaside park into the overall movement scheme has also been successfully implemented, i.e. connect the exits to the sea with a bicycle path and increase the convenience, perceptibility and safety of movement.
- Thematic planning solutions and landscaping correspond to occupancy, at least for the time being. Only one of the nine south beach exits has a visitor flow meter.

The experience gained during the implementation of the plan since 2015:

- The plan provides the creation of two wide exits on the southern beach, which are used by heavy transport (for various management works, for rescue equipment to reach the beach, etc.). The

construction of both exits has been completed, however, there are different assessments of the final result and the public is widely discussing it. There are different solutions in the creation of exits, in one case the exit is straight, wide, which promotes the blowing of beach sand grains through the air and also blowing into the nearby coastal area. Also, much more frequent cleaning of rotten sand from the outlet is required. This solution is the subject of the greatest debate and partial dissatisfaction. The other exit is designed to adapt to the natural terrain and the situation there is much better and there are no such problems.

- Some implemented environmental accessibility solutions, such as the wooden boardwalks to the sea have small curbs along the edges so that a wheelchair or a baby carriage can hit the bar. This is a safety aspect. However, it is troublesome in terms of management, because the tractor that cleans the boardwalks from the rotten sea sand cannot clean the edges.
- The implementation process of the Thematic Plan has shown that certain sections of documents are prepared in too much detail, include too many practical aspects. They will be avoided in the next document. At various stages of implementation, such detail has caused difficulties.
- An implementation plan and a ten-year timetable have been developed for planning (2015–2025), however, due to irregular financing measures are not implemented within the expected time frames. This section of the plan should be updated annually in connection with the annual municipal budget and the availability of external funding. For the time being, the attraction and implementation of funding is dependent on the availability of funding from EU funds, which is irregular.
- Thematic Plan also included beach design guidelines and marketing strategy, however, this section is not fully observed and disregarded, because in the time period after 2015, when the Thematic Plan was approved, the overall branding and marketing of the city was developed. The solutions prepared in the Thematic Plan of the beach were not taken over or they were little integrated. The Thematic Plan of the beach was also not reviewed.

8. To which Multi-level Governance steps this valuable practice contributes

- Stakeholder involvement
- Solutions and implementation

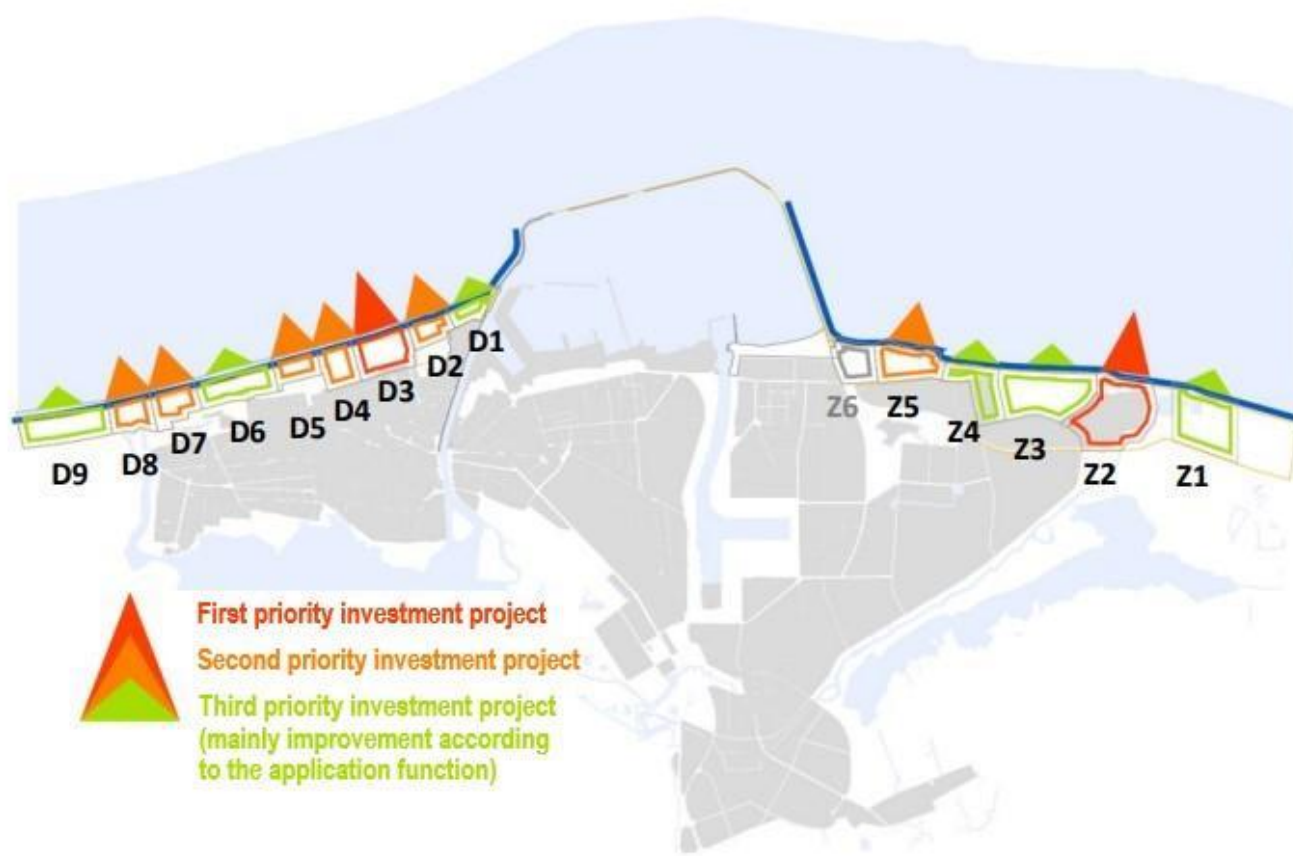
9. Links to further information about the practice/case

The document is available in Latvian on the website of Liepāja Municipality:

<https://www.liepaja.lv/tematiskie-planojumi/>

Presentation about Liepāja Beach Thematic Plan with more visualisation (in Latvian):
https://faili.liepaja.lv/pludmales_planojums_prezentacija.pdf

Contact person for additional information: Arvīds Vitals (arvids.vitals@liepaja.lv), Head of the construction board

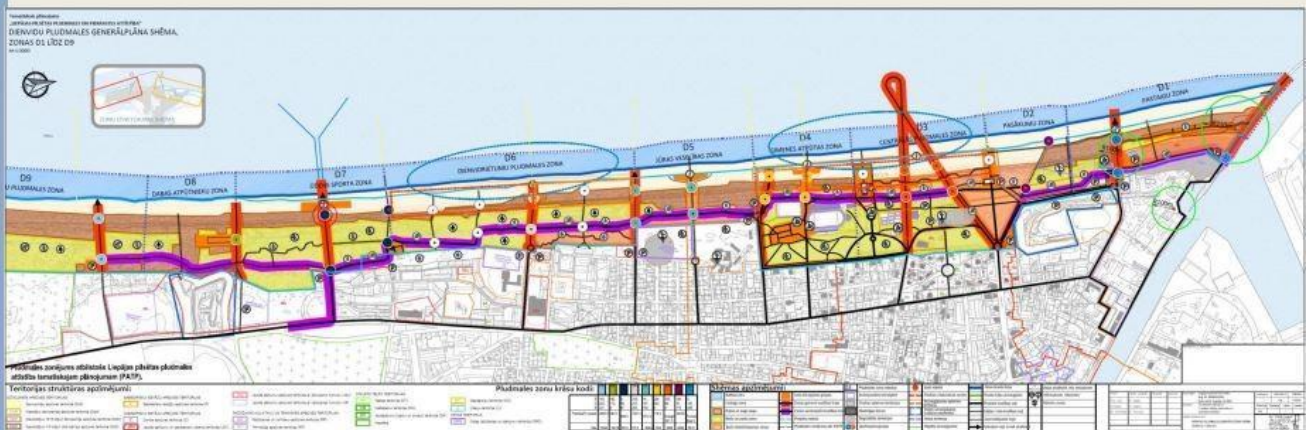


Functional zoning of Liepāja beach (map by Municipality of Liepāja)

SOUTHERN BEACH - PLANNED

- D1 – Walking area
- D2 – Events area
- D3 – Central beach area (Blue Flag swimming area)
- D4 – Family recreation area (Blue Flag swimming area)
- D5 – Marine Health Zone
- D6 – SW beach area (Blue Flag swimming area)
- D7 – Water sports activities area
- D8 – Nature recreation area
- D9 – Nudist beach area

PASSIVE AND ACTIVE RECREATION ZONES



Liepāja beach zoning – southern beach (map by Municipality of Liepāja)

NORTHERN BEACH - PLANNED

- **Z1** – Northern natural energy resource park
- **Z2** – Z Forts Military Heritage Area (Battery No. 1 and 23)
- **Z3** – Adventure and forest park zone
- **Z4** – Quiet beach area
- **Z5** – Z forts military heritage area (Battery No. 3.)
- **Z6** – Prospective recreation area

PASSIVE AND ACTIVE RECREATION ZONES



Liepaja beach zoning – northern beach (map by Municipality of Liepaja)