

In the latest update into sustainable development in the Region, Rosie Griffin of *ESTATES NEWS* met up with Guy Perry, President and Founding Partner of Investment Vision + Environments, to discuss the company's latest projects as well as the profile of sustainable development in the region



Eco-Update

To stay competitive, Poland needs more sustainable development according to Guy Perry

Guy, what is sustainable development?

Well I think people define it in many different ways, but for me there are several key factors. One is economic, if you don't have something which is going to continue to work economically, it doesn't have long-term viability, and will not set a good precedent. You also have to consider social sustainability, which is that you have to be creating environments where people from different backgrounds are able to co-exist. Finally there is the environmental angle, and that has to do with our ecological footprint, and trying to reduce that as much as possible to help protect the limited resources and fragile ecosystem of our planet.

Tell us about sustainable development in CEE

I would say that the demand for sustainable development is relatively light in Poland. With low energy prices, there's not yet a cost incentive for the market or for the average consumer to really conserve much and the development market is very short term in their orientation, so they are rarely concerned about whether they are creating buildings that are very efficient or not. But countries like Poland need to consider these things, because in 10 years time, when this period of easy access to capital dries up, Poland could be left with an urban environment which is less efficient and less competitive than those which have been developed in Western Europe, or other parts of the world.

Well, what about the legal difficulties of sustainability

I think that some of the legislation in Poland discourages sustainable development. Many laws relating to road building in the city are outdated. Of course you have to invest in the roads because they are in such a bad condition, but the United States have built so many roads that alternate, and more efficient modes of transport, such as

the railway, are no longer competitive. Wouldn't this be a great time to take advantage of having to restructure the railways anyway and do it right?

Can you outline Investment Vision + Environments projects in Poland?

Miasteczko Wilanow is our largest project here, but we are also working on large projects in Wroclaw. We are building communities, which include places to work, shop, go to school and parks as well as housing. We want to make sure that people aren't all forced to have two or three cars in their garage to exist. In one of the smaller developments in Wroclaw, the amenities on site are semi-public. You can walk to the amenities from the community, but they also serve the wider community of Wroclaw. All this is about reducing vehicle kilometers travelled and creating a society which is more interactive, as well as trying to respect the location and celebrate it in itself.

Is sustainable development compatible with existing Polish building and planning practices?

Perhaps surprisingly, there were certain inherent efficiencies of the way that cities were built in the Soviet era, the principle of so-called "micro-rayons" resulted in districts where houses were within walking distance of most of the day's essential amenities, and having the option to do everything on foot is something which is a fundamental part of sustainability, it doesn't mean that you will do everything on foot, but it's important to give people the option. Many of these characteristics will be built in to Miasteczko Wilanow, but they're absolutely adjusted to free market demands. Not all the schools are state schools and the retail centre is going to be much larger than it would have been in a "micro-rayon", because that aspect of consumer society is much more important today than it was then.

Finally, Guy, why is it important to



Guy Perry

implement sustainable practices?

One of the things that I think is fundamental is that for many years we thought that the free market model had a set of checks and balances that would allow us to arrive at some kind of equilibrium and continue to progress, but we have not included the environment

as part of that overall equation. We assumed that we could just throw things away, but there is no "away", it stays in the atmosphere and comes back to haunt us, so I think that we absolutely have to find a way for the free market mechanism to incorporate these issues of sustainability. •

Colliers to host sustainable development seminar in Riga

• Colliers International in cooperation with Zalas Majas and the World Wildlife Fund have announced plans for a conference entitled "Sustainable Development-Green Construction" to be held on November 22 at the Reval Hotel in Riga.

A Colliers spokesperson commented "The goal of the seminar is to promote co-operation amongst professionals and decision makers regarding the development of sustainable construction in Latvia and the Baltic States. Also, to encourage

finding solutions for the optimal utilisation of all kinds of energy for the establishment of living spaces, which would be qualitative and amenable to human health and the environment."

Mark Weintraub, due to speak at the seminar explains, "On the one hand, the move towards greater sustainability is being driven by new, more stringent regulations in Europe, on the other, it is resulting from increased social pressure and a new corporate self-consciousness." •

Miasteczko Wilanow

