

**Title:** Agricultural and recreational development of the farm Agro CS., Veľké Dravce  
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**Date:** 10/2015  
**Investor:** AGRO CS Slovakia, a.s., Lučenec

## Site characteristics

The site is located in the southern part of Slovakia, the village of *Veľké Dravce* in *Lučenec* District. The character of the landscape is mostly mountainous and the prevailing economic activities include farming, forestry and water utilisation. Forestry plays an important role in the region, and tourism is becoming an increasingly developing sector. The village and its surroundings offer suitable conditions for the growing of traditional crops such as cereals, maize, sugar beet, soya and oil crops.

In the past, the region of *Novohrad* within which *Veľké Dravce* is situated used to boast a number of landed estates possessed by noble families such as the Forgachs, Zichis, Coburgs. The village used to be a hawker centre and its population dealt with farming, cattle raising and horse breeding. The village itself has its specific historical footprint which is reflected in its cultural and architectural heritage.

An ancient manor house can be found there that is inscribed on the national list of immovable historical monuments. It was built in 1821. The structure comprises a ground building with a portico facing the manor house yard. The rear side is decorated with a tympanum featuring a coat of arms. The farming part of the facility is composed of arcades and its architectural design follows the Classicistic style. But for now, the structure can be described as a vacated building in a dilapidated condition.

## Local development concept

As an overall characteristic, the region of *Novohrad* is one of the poorest in Slovakia, with a high unemployment rate. The proposed conceptual study offers an idea, an interesting one in both economic and development terms, of how *Novohrad* region and the village itself could focus their potential. Making the best of the opportunities stemming from the available cultural and landscape diversity, combined with the knowledge of current modern innovations in the areas of environmental approaches and ecology, is actually an inevitable responsibility. Environmentally friendly technologies that follow the principles and characteristics of sustainable development and are harmonically aligned with the essence of urban design and architectural aesthetics predetermine projects of this nature for not only autonomous viability and the dissemination of the uniqueness of Slovak regions, but also for the demonstration of the significant idea-making activity against the global background.

## Conceptual baselines of the urban study

AGRO CS Slovakia, a.s., founded in May 2000, is based in the village of *Veľké Dravce*. The company is presently the biggest producer of growing media in Slovakia. The company is the owner of a major part of the site land and has been preparing new development activities here. They are reflected in an extensive urban study that captures three conceptual planes.

## 1/ Urban and architectural plane

The overall concept comprises several functional parts that are mutually complementary, supportive and developing. They can be further particularised and elaborated into individual zones. The structural design contemplated in the urban study spatially complements the former settlement, the nearby manor house and the industrial facility of AGRO, and it remains closely tied with the surrounding characteristic landscape. The ideological objective of the study is clearly defined by the marked and unusual compositional link between the three basic components. The artistic and aesthetical concept of the design is noteworthy in how it creates and interlinks the different elements. The landscape is re-created and urbanised using traditional principles of geometry, while relying on abstract visual art as the main source of inspiration. The view of the landscape as an abstract picture allows for more freedom in creation and supports the search for understanding across the broader background of the unarticulated space, i.e. the formation of aesthetical and compositional links in a plane different from the traditionally perceived one. The artistic intention rests on the existing buildings and structures while adding a new, different artistic dimension to the landscape.

**Zone A:** area of 79 300 m<sup>2</sup>

**Facilities:** manor house, apartment house (6 residential units), kindergarten (for about 20 children), rehabilitation and physiotherapy centre

The dominant historical element in the zone is the architectural design of the existing manor house building. The rehabilitation centre complex, organically articulated with the surrounding area, provides the central geometrical motif of the site, and the complex together with the manor house define the site's entrance area. The surrounding areas comprise a system of paths and landscaping works, finished with garden house, greenhouse and aviary structures. The varied shape segments so created in the park are complemented with small plots for the growing of various herbs, plants and flowers, and their geometry is thus better incorporated into the landscape. The areas also feature lanes, alleys and blocks of tree vegetation.

The rehabilitation centre buildings (that house therapy procedures and accommodation) are followed by the apex of the landscaping works, the circular sacral area of the Calvary and chapel of the Rosary of Light, which then diffuse into the open landscape space. The urbanised part of the zone is thus interlaced with various kinds of landscaping works.

**Zone B:** area of approx. 73 300 m<sup>2</sup>.

**Facilities:** Hippo therapy facilities – horse riding, horse rider club, pinacotheca, a zoo with mostly domestic animals, open air playgrounds and an indoor playroom for children, a marketplace with a restaurant, a butcher's store, a guesthouse for 40 persons (20 rooms), an information centre, a business incubator, the House of Crafts, a wine room, a blacksmith's shops, farming facilities, a museum of traditional farming tools and machines, a flower pavilion.

This zone constitutes an operational and functional counterpart of zone A- it forms the new centre of the site. The two zones together provide a basis for the gradual merger of the villages of *Velké Dravce* and *Nové Hony*.

The overall structural and spatial arrangement is based on the repetitive nature of the existing basic, characteristic lines of the settlement. Viewed against the broader urbanisation background, it forms the entrance area of the “Novohrad-Nográd Geopark” site.

The central area is designed to accommodate not only market events but cultural and social events as well. The area is delineated by a roofed colonnade of the marketplace housing various service facilities. The area is predominated by a view tower (resembling wooden bars used for nut harvesting). Another notable element is the “Lane of Crafts” which is spatially enclosed by a flower pavilion and compositionally complemented by a tree alley leading to the manor house. It encompasses the House of

Crafts and the wine bar building. The Lane of Crafts offers a space for retailers and artisans to present their own creations. Close to it is a building housing blacksmith's shops and farming facilities ("barns") as a museum of traditional farming tools and equipment. This part of the site is dedicated to the promotion and presentation of traditional farming production, allowing for the dissemination of and education on traditional production techniques and crafts.

As regards traffic, the whole site is served by a roundabout situated on the village's access road whose key function is mainly compositional and visual. Parking areas feature sculptures that provide another dimension for the articulation of this functional space and education on basic aesthetical values. The centre also has grassed parking lots to avoid the disturbance of the landscape's complexion. The site also features a system of bikeways, linked to those provided in the village and altogether constituting a part of, and supporting, the regional cycling infrastructure.

To promote innovative traffic concepts, the provision of an electric vehicle charging station is envisaged here as one of strategic hubs of the "Central European Green Corridors" network or "TESLA SUPERCHARGERS" network.

**Zone C:** area of approx. 70 200 m<sup>2</sup>.

Facilities: outdoor bio-pool for around 230 visitors, sports grounds, a lodging house, schooling facilities and athletes' changing rooms.

This zone is reserved primarily for active sporting and recreation. One of the ecological elements is an outdoor bio-pool for about 230 visitors. A separate parking area for 127 cars is planned to serve this sports area which encompasses a complex of playing fields and a lodging facility, schooling rooms and changing rooms for athletes.

**Zone D :** area of approx. 47 500 m<sup>2</sup>

Facilities: terraced houses

This zone is designed as a horizontal expansion of the former historical core of the village of *Veľké Dravce* and it completes the existing disturbed layout. The design of the terraced houses provides the transformation of historical elements into present-time externalisation. They are intended to serve the purposes of rural tourism. The aesthetical quality of housing will be provided by facades with face bricks and the natural structure of wood facing. This zone will also incorporate an organic waste collection site as a valuable contributor to the sustainability and environmental friendliness of the project. The facility will house waste separation and recycling operations and the reuse of the resulting products in a number of production processes.

**Zone E :** area of approx. 137 700 m<sup>2</sup>

Facilities: the bio-farm and production premises of AGRO CS Slovakia, a.s., a photovoltaic plant, production facilities

The architectural and functional design of the existing facilities complies with the ecological building principles, including greenery, heating, rainwater catchment, etc.

The predominating architectural, compositional and technical feature of this zone is the photovoltaic plant, having the shape of a large ring installed on piles above the roofs of the existing buildings, which is intended to serve the site's power supply needs.

**Zone G:** area of approx. 652 300 m<sup>2</sup>

Facilities: a hotel complex, a golf course, a golf club

The hotel complex concludes the entire crosswise-axis composition. The golf club building features an organic architectural design with a green roof. The building's architecture is inspired by the organic shapes of the golf course surfaces. It becomes an accenting structural element of the zone's design.

## 2/ Environmental plane

The urban study reflects the aim to have a closed system of natural cycles (of energy, materials, air and water) to reduce as much as possible demands for the conventional use of natural resources:

- a) use and control of materials
- b) solar power
- c) geothermal power
- d) passive methods of saving/obtaining energy
- e) heat recuperation
- f) rainwater
- g) compost processing
- h) waste collection and sorting
- i) facilitation of the self-supply of food

## 3/ Social plane

The manifold spectrum of activities facilitates the creation of a variety of job opportunities, scaling from secondary raw material processing and substrate production and vegetable production (including the growing of vegetables, fruits and herbs and flowers), through services, tourism, sports, recreation and culture (the conservation of the region's historical and cultural heritage), healthcare, social sphere, housing, etc.

Such a concept promotes a functioning economic and financial strategy whose focus and orientation are diversified rather than unilateral, and is able to secure the stability of the region's social and economic microsystem.

### Considered capacities:

Zone A	Representative areas, accommodation, rehabilitation, spiritual amenity – Calvary	79 300 m <sup>2</sup>
Zone B	Central zone – marketplace, services	73 300 m <sup>2</sup>
Zone C	Sports and recreation	70 300 m <sup>2</sup>
Zone D	Housing areas, services	47 500 m <sup>2</sup>
Zone E	Bio-farm and AGRO CS Slovakia, a.s.	137 700 m <sup>2</sup>
	Fish pond	20 700 m <sup>2</sup>
Zone G	Golf courses, accommodation facilities	652 300 m <sup>2</sup>
	Parking site	890 parking spaces
	Photovoltaic plant	8047 m <sup>2</sup> 800kWh
	Accommodation capacity	approx. 214 beds
	Detached residential houses	29
	Flats	25
	Water bodies (rainwater catchment)	2500 m <sup>2</sup>
	Services	5800 m <sup>2</sup>
	Public space area	12000 m <sup>2</sup>
	New road area	21300 m <sup>2</sup>
	New production greenery area	34800 m <sup>2</sup>