



DECENTRALIZATION AND THE NEW SETTLEMENTS IN SUBURBAN AREAS OF SKOPJE

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Abstract. *By using intelligent methods of urban transformation and decentralization of the Macedonian capital, we will try to improve the life of its citizens as one of the major goals of this paper. This study will examine and analyze the northern part of the city, encircling the region of village of Bardovci. This village is consisting with old and new parts which are not communicating to each other. Therefore, our mission through this paper is to propose a new urban project, previously prepared by serious urban analyzes, defining historical and heritage values of the existing structures. In the other hand, the project will attempt to join the both (old and new) current settlements and it will try to eliminate all the negative issues of the existing situation. The new project will also introduce the radical increasing of the quality of overall structure not only by creating new public facilities, new parks and green zones, new houses with independent courtyards, but also by creating new public transport connections with the rest of Skopje. Finally, our mission of transformation and decentralization could be implemented only if we are ready to change our existing mental settings in order to improve our lives in general.*

Keywords: *decentralization, transformation, urban, settlements, public, citizens.*

1 INTRODUCTION AND BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOCATION

Good architecture ensures good interaction between public space and public life. But while architects and urban planners have been dealing with space, the other side of the coin – life – has often been forgotten. Perhaps this is because it is considerably easier to work with and communicate about form and space, while life is ephemeral and therefore difficult to describe.

This paper is a part of a bigger research considering the creation of urban plans in the existing urban areas in Skopje and around the Macedonian capital (Fig. 1)

1. Remodeling the existing urban area -“Novo Maalo” in the center of Skopje
2. Remodeling the existing suburban settlements in order to make it more independent as much as it could be - Village of Bardovci, Zlokukjani and surrounding housing- dwelling area.
3. Remodeling the existing rural settlements-Villages of Dolno Sonje and Gorno Sonje.

Why we have been chosen these areas?

The answer is: because Novo Maalo, Bardovci and Sonje have enough free space inside and around their existing boundaries which give us possibility to make interventions and to fill all the unused and uninhabited empty spaces with new public contents, new infrastructures and new building plots for new housing areas with individual private gardens and new organized public and green zones. (Fig. 2)

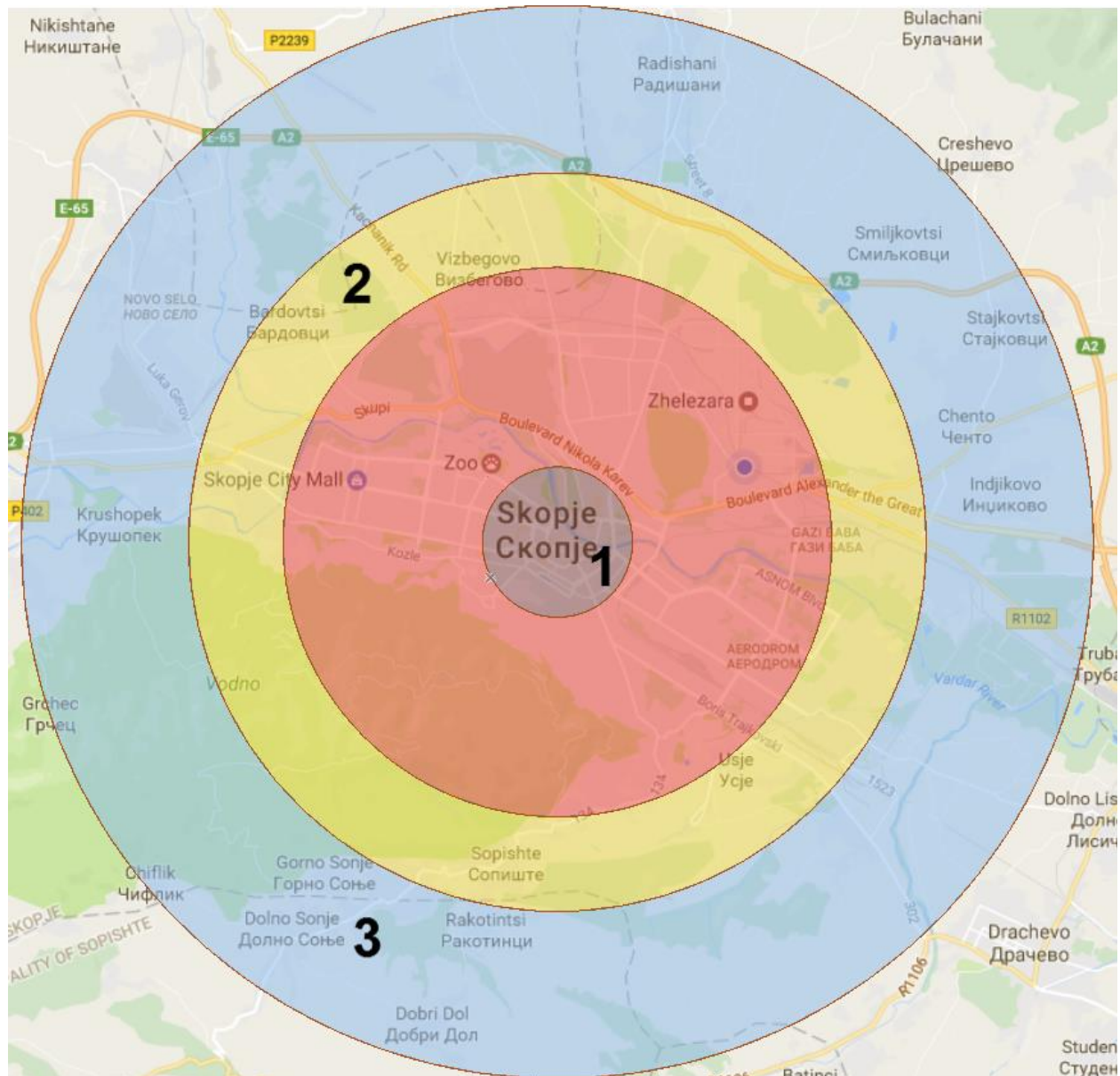


Figure 1. Locations of possible urban remodeling in Skopje

Considering the suburban areas, this study will examine and analyze the northern part of the city, encircling the region of village of Bardovci. This village is consisting with old and new parts which are not communicating to each other. Therefore, our mission through this paper is to propose a new urban project, previously prepared by serious urban analyzes, defining historical and heritage values of the existing structures. In the other hand, the project will attempt to join the both (old and new) current settlements and it will try to eliminate all the negative issues of the existing situation.



Figure 2. Photographs of possible locations for urban remodeling in Skopje

Village of Bardovci has become formally a part of a capital of Macedonia since the sudden enlargement of the city after the catastrophic earthquake in the 1963 year. Due to its favorable geomorphologic and climatic position of the settlement, and its closeness to the center of Skopje, this village represents a constant magnet for new inhabitants coming from other part of Skopje seeking for less polluted areas and calm living conditions. This tendency becomes popular especially in the nineties when the new embassy representatives and employees in the foreign missions in Macedonia were looking for a vacant residential area. This new residential district is situated as an extension to existing village of Bardovci but without any interconnections with the village in order to use the very few existing common public services. (Fig. 2, 3 and 4) Also, this new built area was created without serious urban plans for its development, without ideas for any new public facilities like: schools, stores, cultural contents. There is almost no public transport to connect the new settlement with the city as well. The first goal of this paper is to increase and stimulate the positive parameters (closeness to the center, favorable climate, high quality houses) of the existing settlements (old and new). The second objective is to eliminate all the negative segments of current structure in Bardovci and its surroundings (isolation, absence of public contents and public centers, very low quality and not frequent public transport, absence of planned urban growth) in order to establish a village that will exist independently implementing all the necessary public services, high quality and fast public transport.



Figure 3. Nowadays appearance of Southern Bardovci



Figure 4. Top view fragment of Northern Bardovci

2 THE PROJECT

LOCATION:

One of the most important things before the commencement of the project is to define the limits of the project. From the north, the boundary of the urban project is the current ring road and from the west there are natural limit of the location-the river Lepenec. The eastern side is limited with the existing service zone besides the “Kacanacki Pat” road and finally from the south, the location border is presented by the village of Zlokukani, current service zone along



“Skupi” street. Although the area under the current railway is less treated, the general guidelines will be given for its future development at the end of this study.

In urbanism and architecture in general, those borders, limits or boundaries does not have to be understood literary that everything ends with those limits. On the contrary, we must think about “How we are going to connect with all the surrounding areas around the future location of the project?” Therefore, our final goal is to introduce new quality for all new users of the future designed space, but even more important is to improve the quality of urban space of the existing surrounding areas and to increase the real estate value of overall territory (new + existing). The crucial element of the integration of new proposed design in the existing context is the creation of new public centers that will join the new and old. Second point is creating attractive views toward the new build area and toward the current structures from as much as possible standpoints. Next thing is to provide an “empty” unbuild but organized and landscaped public space offering a gathering space, a space for socializing and place dedicated for spontaneous meetings of people, and making save public corners for kids.

In the past thirty years this location has always been planned fragmentally and not as an integral part with the surroundings areas. The Detailed Urban Plans (DUPs) are never been treated the space in a bigger range, and they do not cover the whole structure. General Urban Plan (GUPs) is only giving the directions for the use of land, the height of the future buildings; the density of built space etc, but it doesn’t give a detailed design. The new types of “urban plans for city quarters” are not treating the suburban areas and the location of Bardovci. Therefore, one of the main goals of this study is to create a pattern of a New type of urban plans that will enable much more efficiency and bring much more life quality for the rest of the “unfinished” or untreated urban zones of Skopje and its surroundings.

IDEA:

The general idea of the project is to create two new extension settlements of current Bardovci: Upper and Lower Bardovci in the northern and eastern side of the surrounding area of the existing village. These two settlements are planned to be joined with a wide range of public contents, new green areas, new infrastructure, which will represent the crucial connection with the existing and the new planned urban area. (Fig. 5)

The main objectives of this project are:

- to create an urban plan that will define the limits of the ORGANISED future growth of Bardovci,
- designing new settlements with low-rise houses with independent courtyards,
- creating bigger free and green area around the new houses comparing to the existing Bardovci;
- introducing a full package of new public contents integrated in every part of the new settlements;
- connecting the new settlements with the rest of the town with new streets and boulevards;
- introducing new public transport – the city train and two new train stations;
- protecting the existing sites with architectural and historic values (Skupi ancient settlement and the remains of Havzi Pasha Konak)

Elements of the project:

- Dwelling zone;
- Public zone;
- Inner road infrastructure;
- Water canals;
- Green zones;
- New public transport and new stations;

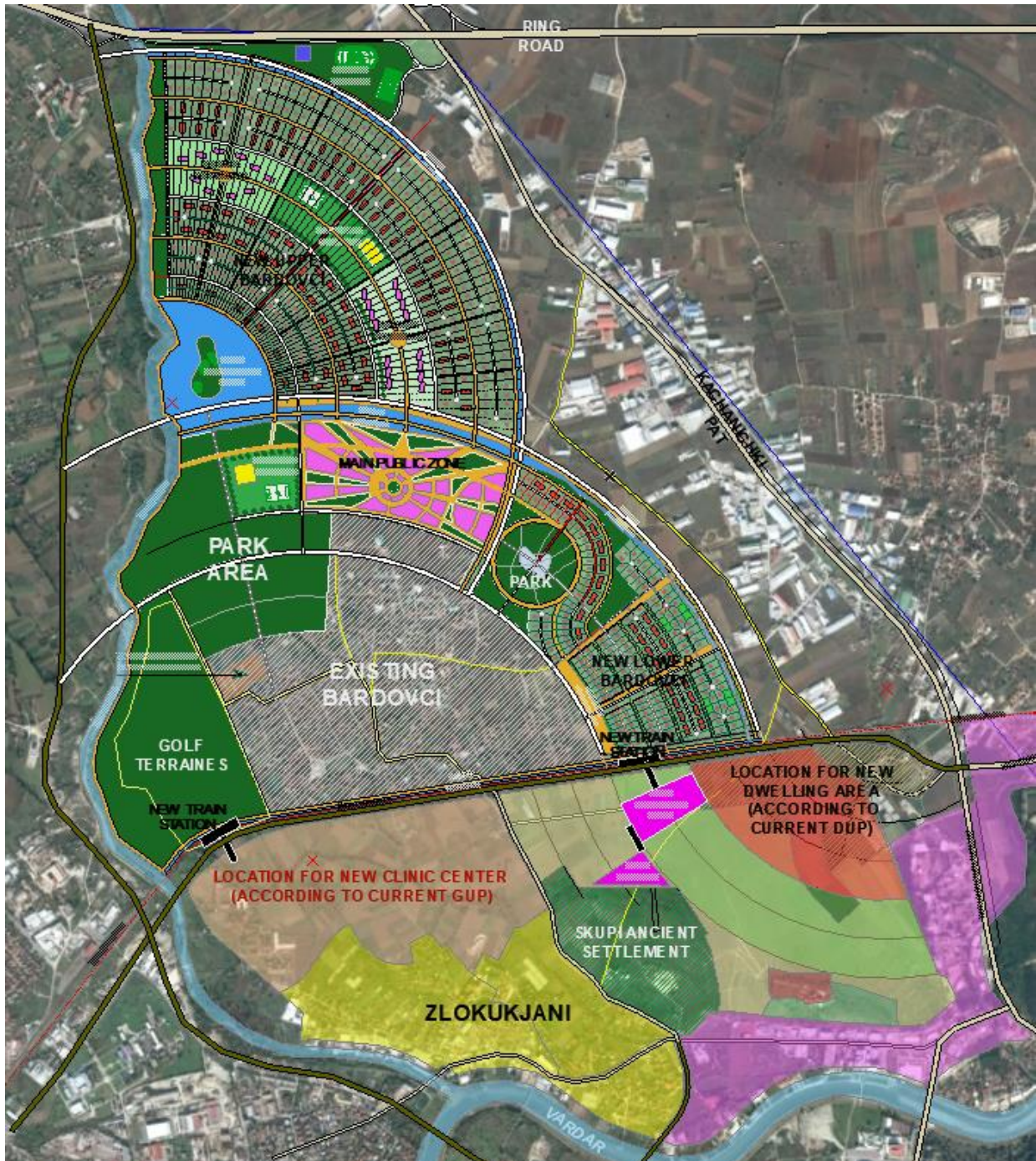


Figure 5. New proposed urban project of Bardovci and its surroundings

Dwelling zone

The basic element of this urban project is the dwelling unit represented with low-rise detached houses and multilevel row houses. The disposition of these two types of buildings is one of the most important parameters in the overall plan. There are several parameters that were taken in consideration in the creation of the dwelling zone.

- Views from and towards each dwelling unit
- Generous size of the courtyard of each individual house and of each multilevel row house.



- The minimum distance between the multilevel buildings situated one in front the other is planned to be 40 meters, and minimum distance between the low-rise houses situated one in front the other is planned to be 30 meters.
- The minimum distance between the multilevel buildings situated one next to each other is planned to be 18 meters, and minimum distance between the low-rise houses situated one next to each other is planned to be 12 meters.
- Minimum distance from the dwelling unit and the nearest public services is planned to be 300 meters.
- Parking for the inhabitants of the residence of the low-rise houses is conceived within their building plots, and parking for multilevel buildings is planned in the underground area within its plot.
- Possibility of pedestrian connections from the dwelling units towards the public services for every citizen of the new settlements.
- Possibilities of using water sports especially for those buildings that have water front (canals or artificial lake).

The current number of inhabitants of Bardovci is 1472.

New Upper Bardovci is planning to house 1924 inhabitants. (Fig. 6)

New Lower Bardovci will accommodate 1048 inhabitants. (Fig. 7)

Total number of new inhabitants will be 2972, plus the currents 1471 = 4 444 inhabitants (existing + new planned)

There are two types of buildings planned in this project:

- Housing Area consisted with low-rise houses (Building plan surface: 10/15 m per unit and 1500-2500 m² for building plot including the building ground floor surface). The height of the houses is planned to be ground floor and first floor.
- Multilevel row houses (ground floor + two levels). One unit (42/10 m) has four houses.



Figure 6. New proposed urban project of Upper part of Bardovci

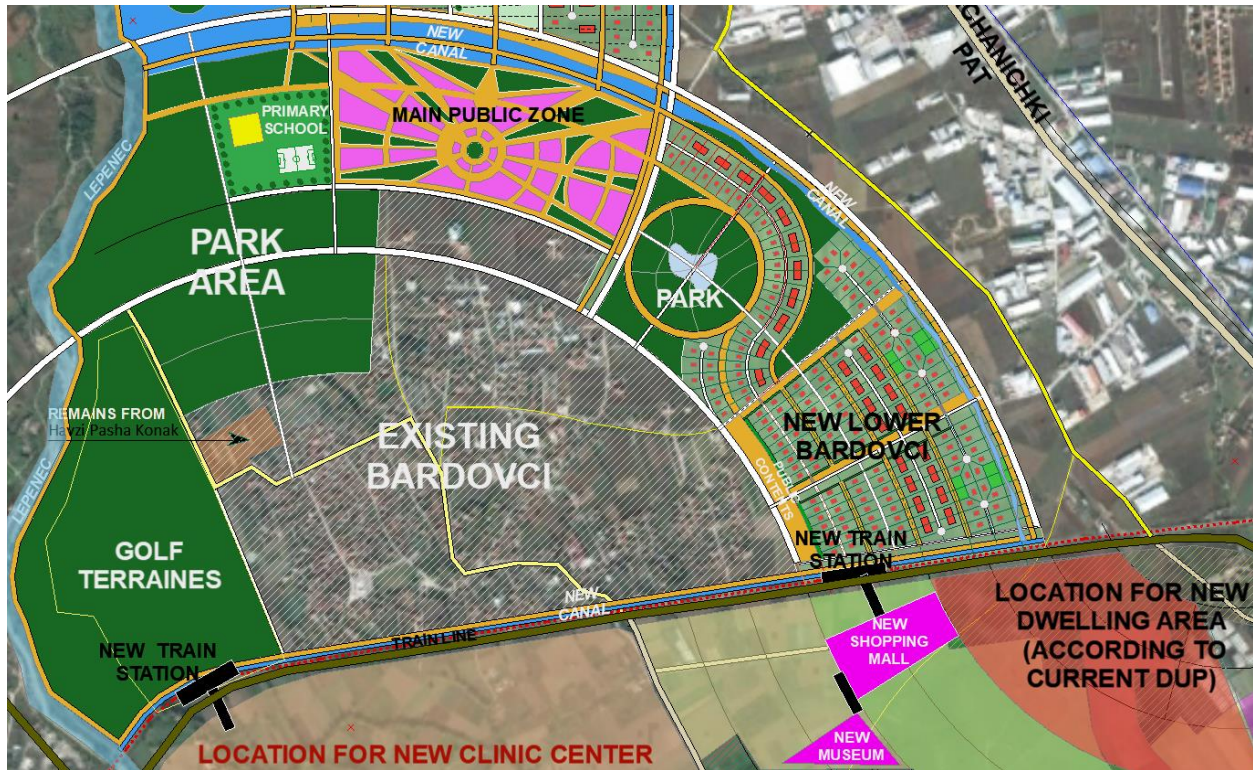


Figure 7. New proposed urban project of Lower part of Bardovci and its surroundings

Public Zone:

Public zone in this project is spread in several locations of the surrounding areas of existing village. It is integrated in the dwelling areas as public centers with lower hierarchical level (first or second degree public centers) or it could be represented as a separated public zone of third degree public center gathering the new and existing part of the village and lower and upper Bardovci from this project as well.

The Main Public zone is situated in the middle of the location of the project gathering the two new settlements and the current village.

The main Public zone has complex of low-rise buildings including:

- Shops (grocery, pet-store, flower market)
- Restaurants
- Café bars
- Banks
- Post office
- Police
- Primary School
- Sport Facilities
- Supermarket
- Cinema

Besides its basic role to connect old and new, gathering both parts of the new project as well, this Main Public center has a significant functions providing: social inclusion - making all groups of people within a settlement feel valued and important; enabling secure open public space for everyone; creating unique identity of the Bardovci that will make people proud and happy being part of this settlement; and making a healthy public space that will ensure clean air, abundance of sun, to be naturally ventilated, and to enable serenity of spirit.

The other, northern public zone is represented with Sport center in the farthest northern side of the location. It includes:



- Outdoor and indoor swimming pools
- Football terrain
- Tennis courts
- Basketball fields
- Running track all over the sport's center

This public center of fifth degree could serve not only for the residents of Bardovci, but also for the rest of the citizens of Skopje. This recreational public spot will play a significant role in a public life of Macedonian capital in general. Of course, local residents will have priorities (they will have much lower price for using its facilities) not only because the center is part of their settlement, but also to encourage other parts of the city to promote their own local sport's centers in order to establish a balance in every part of the city and to enable sport to be for everyone and to be close to everyone. Other reasons for these advantages for the local citizens having lower costs of using the sport center are in order to strengthen the social life in Bardovci and also to avoid possible safety issues coming from its outside users.

There are planned two public centers in the middle part of the Upper Bardovci including a new primary school. Lower Bardovci has two smaller public contents because of the proximity of new planned Shopping mall (planned with this study) in the near southern area of existing Bardovci and because of the proximity of an existing primary school in the current village.

In these public contents zone there are planned:

- Smaller food markets
- Bakery
- Barber Shop
- Small Libraries
- Kid's entertainment

Inner road infrastructure:

The local roads for vehicles are designed in order to reach easily each residence of the settlement, providing efficient communication between the housing, the exits of Bardovci and the surrounding boulevards that connects the rest of the city.

In general, the traffic network of the plan is consisted with separate tracks, separate drive ways for its every user. Inner infrastructure is conceived to serve its pedestrians, its car drivers, its bike riders and therefore this separation of paths in different locations allowing different type of traffic flow to function, will just increase the quality of inner infrastructure.

There are planned separate bike lanes, pedestrian paths and car roads through the new settlements.

Most of the local car roads are finishing with "dead ends" which enables creating a calm dwelling neighborhoods and more privacy to its users.

We are planning to use the current infrastructure of Bardovci village with the new proposed settlements in order to connect the existing houses with the new public contents which will serve also the current settlements.

Water canals:

The general idea of making new canals is using the water from Lepenec to create new alternative connection through the new settlements, introducing water sports like kayaking and increasing the landscape design and total image of the overall project. Also, the new canal serves as new natural boundary between the planned urban area and the surrounding existing zones.

Green Zones:

The green zones are one of the biggest trumps of the future project.

If we are avoiding the city traffic, city pollution, and we are in seek for nature, we cannot avoid planning a huge area dedicated for greenery and park zones.

First of all, each house has its own courtyard which makes part of overall greenery.

Second, green zone is also making part of public open spaces which are combined with parks.

Western part of the location, along the river Lepenec, is planned to be a green zone, attractive for different recreation sports activities like: biking, jogging etc. Also, between Existing Bardovci and river Lepenec, there are planned a park area with golf terrains with the size of its territory as the current village (around 90 hectares).

Other bigger green zone we can find as a part of the Lower Bardovci is the junction area situated between the Main Public Zone and the Dwelling area.

The last green area is conceived as a part of a Sport Center situated in the northern limits of the location, near the existing Ring Road.

New Public Transport and New Stations:

The role of public transport in a city has a crucial significance in a city in general. Its quality, its degree of network development, its frequency, its proximity to the citizen's destinations and their homes, its comfort, its safety, its prices, ... The new City Train should connect the new settlements and the rest of the city. (Fig. 8)

The possible stations:

- Volkovo
- Bardovci1 and 2
- Vizbegovo
- Butel1 and 2
- Zelezara
- Jane Sandanski Sport Center
- Skopje Fair
- Transport Center
- Kisela Voda 1 and 2
- 11 Octomvri District
- Lisice
- Dracevo

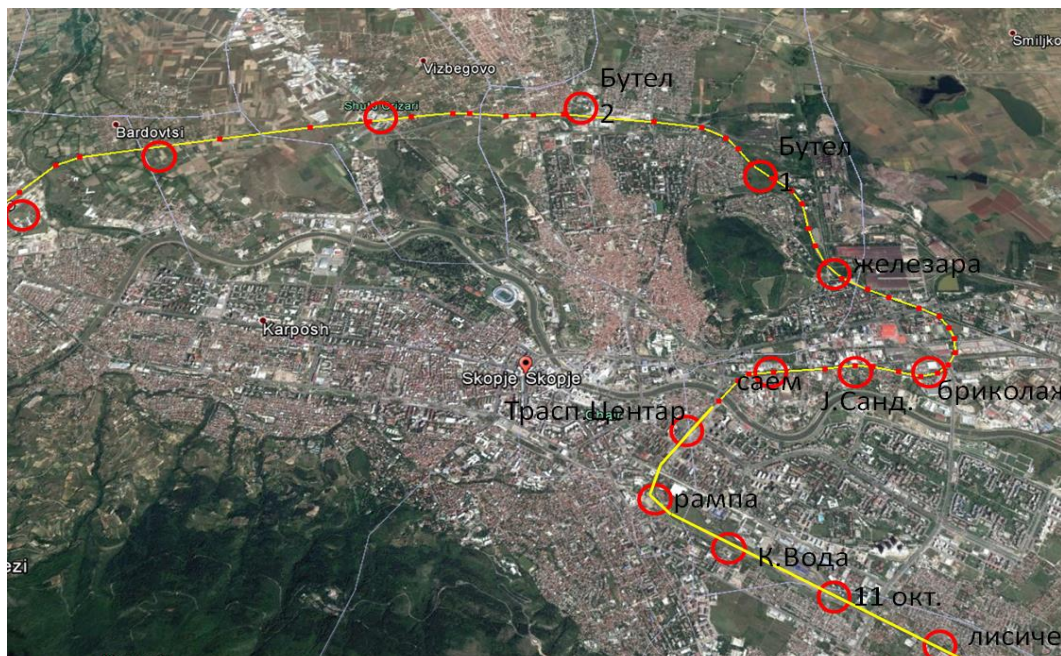


Figure 8. New proposed public transport network in Skopje

The new stations in our project are Bardovci 1, at the New Clinic Center and Bardovci 2 (east of the location) at the New Planned Shopping Mall (west of the location).

3 THE SOUTHERN SURROUNDING AREA

We have ONLY general guidelines for the future development of the southern surrounding area (between the railway line and “Skupi” street). (Fig. 9)

This empty area has some plan in the GUP and DUP, and some of them are compatible with our proposed project. We are respecting in the overall urban design the position of the future new Clinic Center and we are planning to integrate it with our project. On the right site there are one current DUP (dwelling zone with very few public contents) which is also compatible with our project, regardless its different shape comparing to ours. However, we are proposing here a big Shopping Mall, a New Museum right next to the Skupi archeological and touristic “must see” destination for every new visitor of Skopje. Then, probably the most important thing which is equally important to a new project, are the New transport (City Train) stations, one at the Clinic Center Location, and the other between the southeast of the new project and the New Shopping mall.

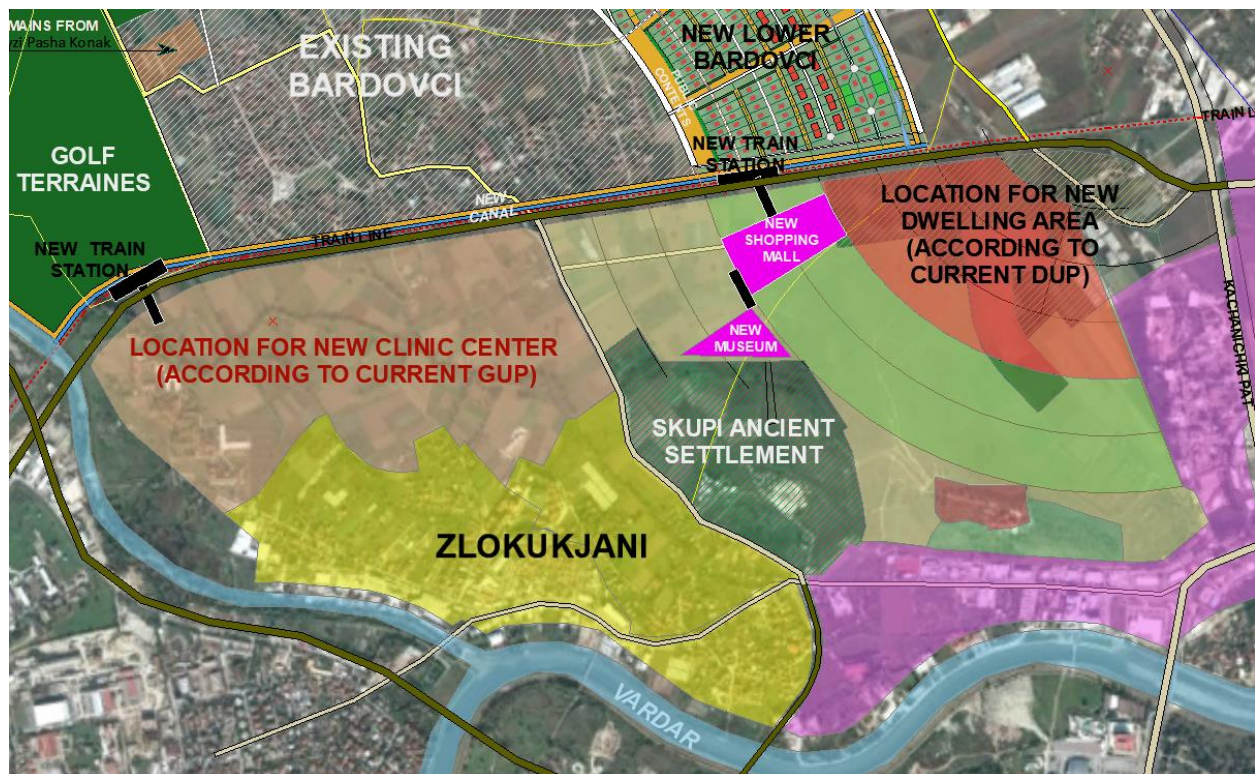


Figure 9. The Southern surrounding area of the proposed urban project and its development

4 CONCLUSION

As we said in the beginning of the presentation, this project is inspired as a part of a bigger research which includes urban interventions in urban, suburban and rural and not populated areas.

Choosing the village of Bardovci we have tried to create a project that will fortify all the week points in the sense of proposing different public facilities and organized open spaces. Finally, we are trying to stop the spontaneous growth of this attractive part of the city proposing a clear vision of how this settlement should be developed in the future.



Because, the current unplanned growth means, no public zones, absence of infrastructure, isolation from the rest of the city....

With this project, we strongly believe that this concept of planning bigger areas than DUPs, thinking as well of the connection with its surroundings in every way (transport, joining public and green zones).

The final plan should be: The achievement of complete independence from the city in one hand (regarding the public contents and the new public center) and much better integration and connection with the rest of the city in the other hand (using the Ring road, The extension of Boulevard Ilinden, the extension of Slovenia Boulevard, The new proposed City Train and the two New Train station in western and eastern part of the location of the project).

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