

Case 4

● SK-Košice-Šaca: Steel District Transformation

Location: Košice-Šaca District, Eastern Slovakia

Type of site: Heavy industry + socialist housing estate

Size: approx. 800 ha industrial zone + 100 ha residential area

Ownership: Mixed - U.S. Steel Košice (global company), municipal land, small private plots

Main legacy: Integrated steel production, socialist model settlement

Period of activity: 1959-present (privatised 2000)

Main challenges: Air and soil pollution, derelict infrastructure, fragmented ownership, low civic inclusion, peripheral stigmatization: industrialised suburbs with poorer amenities.

Priority of Cluster relevance: Green Development, Public Space & Housing, Economy & Reuse

Historical Overview

The Šaca district evolved from an agricultural landscape into Slovakia's largest steel-production complex, built as a flagship of socialist industrialisation.

The creation of the VSŽ Steelworks (now U.S. Steel Košice) in the 1960s reshaped local geography – new prefabricated housing estates, transport corridors, and service centres emerged. After 1990, production declined, and privatisation brought partial modernisation but also fragmentation and contamination.

Present Condition

Today, Šaca remains an active but shrinking industrial area surrounded by partially neglected and gradually declining industrial areas and their unused spaces and infrastructures, as well as ageing housing estates and hotels

Only a fraction of land is reused; most remains vacant or underutilised.

Residents experience environmental exposure, limited mobility options, and decaying public spaces once designed for the socialist workforce.

Community life still revolves around the “Steelworkers’ Square” and informal green zones near the plant.

Governance & Actors

- Municipality of Košice-Šaca - local authority for planning and environment.
- U.S. Steel Košice - major landowner and employer as a global extraction company's local plant.
- Regional NGO (Spolka) - project partner coordinating local research and civic engagement.
- Local schools and communities - small-scale cultural and green initiatives.

Key Insights

Šaca demonstrates the double identity of many V4 industrial districts: simultaneously active and declining.

Integrating industrial ecology, housing renewal, and participatory public-space design can turn environmental burden into an opportunity for green transition.

This case highlights how micro-level participation – such as community gardening, informal recreation, and school-based projects – can anchor long-term environmental recovery.

The Šaca district offers affordable housing for young people coming to work in the Košice region, who have the potential to develop this area alongside with locals.

Leverage Points

Cooperative projects with company + community

Participatory green mapping of housing estates

Lessons Learned

CSR partnerships can fund public improvements

Citizen data improves planning legitimacy

Transferable Tools

Public-private stewardship models

Community green audit practices



Everyday life in a housing block courtyard in Šaca, where informal practices and shared outdoor spaces reflect the social textures of a postindustrial neighbourhood.

Photo: Diana Kakara Dobrescu

Part of the project **Revitalizing Postindustrial Peripheries** (PAD Foundation, 2025)

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