

REVITALIZATION OF CHARLES SQUARE – FINAL EVALUATION

Evaluation criteria:

- A. *Solution of urbanistic relations*
- B. *Landscaping modifications and park design*
- C. *Architectonic solution and solution of public spaces*
- D. *Quality of adaptation / regeneration of listed objects*
- E. *Suitable concept of infrastructure - transport and rainwater management system*
- F. *Efficiency and economy of the solution*
- G. *Expediency in the choice of professional approach – proposed performance*

The overall average score is 1-7 points.

Agence Ter team

The proposal offers a highly sophisticated solution of the wider environment, characterised by its far-sighted incorporation into the wider landscape and urban context of the Vltava valley. The connection to the eastern street is solved with a clear strategy: to connect Vodičkova, Charles Square, U Nemocnice and Na Moráni via a tree-lined pedestrian avenue. One of the main features of the proposal is the utilisation of the difference between the western and eastern sides of the square. The eastern section utilises the elevated topography and all-day sunshine, creating a promenade based on the balcony principle that can change its mode of use during the week. It is also evident that the solution concept places primary emphasis on the sensory effects of individual elements and scenarios in the proposal, with the clarity of the overall form being of secondary importance – this differentiates it from the other proposals. (A)

The authors have taken the approach of incorporating a new contemporary layer in Thomayer's historical park. Both layers are in close dialogue; however, at times the audacity of the proposal exceeds its empathy for material heritage and the dialogue between both layers falls into discord. The authors respect Thomayer's Park in terms of the layout of pathways and sidewalks and access to vegetation. The proposal is very creative and overflows with interesting ideas, adding numerous new places to the park: terraces of various kinds, use and size, cafés, a greenhouse, wetlands, diagonal paths of concrete sleepers and an amphitheatre. These new places, which seem to hover or 'float' above the existing park along sharp horizontals, actually create a completely new layer for rest and relaxation in the park. However, they radically deviate from Thomayer's model based on fine concave and convex shapes. (D)

The authors work with the motif of a stairway for rest and relaxation in front of the New Town Hall and court building in an attempt to integrate the buildings into the square. The overall emphasis on improving the rest and relaxation qualities of the south-eastern part of the street, which poses a problem today due to parking, the lifeless parterre of the former Jesuit College, and the poor quality of vegetation was evaluated positively. Another positive is that the authors are the only team to suggest a link with the courtyard of the former Jesuit College. An interesting aspect is the extension of the capacity of the frequently used pedestrian link in the south-western part of the square, where the authors propose a wider walkway through the park to newly allow bicycles in this area; however, the Committee criticised the entry of bicycles in the park due to the possible conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. The authors also proposed a way to make the embankment accessible – incorporating terraces and playgrounds, thereby clearly defining which places people can access, while allowing them to enjoy the natural qualities of the embankment first hand. Nevertheless, the quantity of these places and their architectonic solution seems too invasive. (A, C, D)

The Committee appreciated the location of the café on the eastern side of the southern section due to its location in the sun and the need to revive this part of the street. The concept of night lighting is impressive, with sophisticated aesthetic and technical details. An interesting aspect is the creation of a community space in the form of a greenhouse. The use of floating wooden terraces on finely modelled embankments is not convincing (see above). The disadvantage of placing the main children's play area on the embankment in the south-eastern part of the street is that it is close to road traffic. On the other hand, the authors have appropriately interpreted and updated the Vítězslav Hálek Memorial with a contemporary water element and the text of a poem. (C, D)

The proposal introduces the principles of contemporary landscaping based on immediate, sensory contact between man and nature. They also work with clear measures to support biodiversity. There were mixed responses by Committee members to the prominent natural aesthetics of the park and the use of water elements (polders and wetlands) imitating nature in the very centre of Prague. On the one hand, they positively perceived the effort to establish closer contact between man and nature, in particular for its sensory and educational effects; on the other hand, the question is how well such a solution would work in a busy downtown area. The amphitheatre motif that uses the natural topography of the square was also well received. The authors have established a balance between the closed, yet open nature of the square perimeter using a shrub layer. The authors have opened views in diagonal directions, while closing them in perpendicular directions. The park has also been opened with vistas from the street into the park, while keeping the view a bit more closed in the opposite direction. (A, B)

The proposal includes an appropriate contemporary analogy for the floral parterre in the central part of the park. However, the motif of diagonal steppingstone paths through the floral parterre, aimed at bringing the floral detail closer to the public is problematic. The Committee members considered it a mistake to use such paths in places of intensive traffic, which would lead to excessive load and problematic maintenance. What's more, part of the Committee considered their morphology in the context of existing morphology in the park to be debatable. The proposal sees the herbaceous details of Thomayer's Park as a variable layer that can and should be updated in accordance with contemporary perceptions and values. (B, E)

Overall, the proposal was very well evaluated in terms of handling traffic as it reduces the number of parking places along the eastern street to the extent needed for the intended promenade with a weekend parking mode. It explores the possibility of building an underground parking facility with a capacity for 130 cars, yet it does not consider this necessary. The proposal includes a good rainwater management solution that emphasises nature-based solutions although it foresees the partial pumping of water from a retention tank and the use of automated watering. It also adds natural water bodies that are integrated into the system. (E)

In terms of efficiency, the authors have appropriately structured the reconstruction of adjoining streets and the park itself in phases, and already describe measures to protect vegetation at this stage of the proposal. The strategy for improving the condition of existing trees is also well described from a technical perspective. During the process, the team of authors has shown a very good ability to lead competitive dialogue and has shown a good understanding of the architect's role in the process of revitalising a landscape heritage site. (B, F, G)

The overall score is 5.65 points.