

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.

Rehwaldt LA + BY Architects + PD Filip

The authors submitted a sophisticated and empathic proposal that uniformly interprets the four important historical layers of Charles Square and creates a clear thematic and spatial framework for the revitalisation, use and future development of the park.

The proposal expressly suggests returning to the medieval openness of the square in front of the New Town Hall and Municipal Court, providing an open space for markets and social events. Indirectly by creating a living space with a café and universal paved area in the southern section of the park. The proposal anticipates a memorial to the bygone Chapel of the Body of God in the form of a permanent light installation, whose final artistic form remains open and which can be another impetus for the revival of public interest in Charles Square. In modern language, the proposal recreates the original mid-19th century boundary of the park in the form of a promenade/avenue, creating a unifying element – a variable urban frame – comprised of widened pavements along the perimeter of the park with a new tree-lined promenade, perimeter bench, urban stairway, public restrooms, gardener's area and café. The urban frame serves as a multifaceted element, symbolically and physically delineating the park from the rush of the city. Thomayer's original concept of a closed-off green oasis is accepted by the proposal, yet adapted to the current requirements of life and pedestrian traffic on the square. The authors adopt Thomayer's fundamental matrix but modify and complement it by adding contemporary functions. The proposal more or less preserves perimeter embankments and continues Thomayer's work with plants and vegetation in the gardening tradition of the 19th century, updating the park's perception as a showcase of landscape art of its time, through, for example, exhibitions in the central part of the park, with the ambition of involving and strengthening the local communities. Modern history is reflected in the proposal in a playful manner. Visitors will be able to "read" the personal stories of the city's inhabitants in the paving (using Prague mosaic) of the perimeter promenade. (A, B, D)

Although the proposal may seem conservative at first glance, it is not. It brings a whole range of significant positive changes:

The park on Charles Square will be reinstated to its rightful place in the city's structure. The authors have succeeded in inscribing the local character and history of the locality into their proposal. However, they do not address the broader neighbourhood of Charles Square. The proposal creates a hitherto missing piazzetta in front of the New Town Hall, the Municipal Court and St. Ignatius Church, re-integrating them back into the context and space of the square. These areas, along with the central sector in the southern part of the park provide a venue for the regular organisation of events

and for the activity of important institutions based on Charles Square. The paved area with a café, seasonally adaptable fountain and additional playful elements specially designed for Charles Square, will revitalise the southern sector, offering a location with all-day sun. (A, C)

The proposal addresses issues relating to pedestrian passage through the sophisticated redesign of the existing system of paths and sidewalks. The proposal fundamentally shifts and newly formulates entry points to the park in order to facilitate more comfortable passage through the square and the park, while maintaining the integrity of the large lawns that represent a substantial value in the city centre. This decision, however, must lead to a detailed verification of operationally sensitive connectors in further stages of the project, and any modifications should not lead to a change in the spatial concept. Although the approach described above will require more robust intervention into the current structure of the park and its vegetation cover, the Committee evaluated it as highly beneficial in terms of long-term sustainability of life on the square, as it supports both through passage and relaxation in the park. (A, B, D)

With no possible change in the current traffic situation, the proposal makes the decision to widen the pavement along the western boundary of the park, which is currently inadequate due to the location of tram stops there. Also a new tree alley is planted along this wider pavement. The Committee sees the widening of this space as very beneficial in terms of movement on the square, but points out that this requires intervention in power lines owned by the Prague Transport Company (DPP, a.s.) and will affect a number of large trees along the western embankment. Given that the oldest generation of trees on Charles Square is nearing the end of their life-cycle, the removal of some of these trees opens the opportunity for the renewal of the entire segment of vegetation cover on the western perimeter. At the same time, this will allow the quicker establishment of the new tree-lined avenue, which will form a fully-fledged promenade along with the western embankment. However, such intervention will only be possible if it is sufficiently justified as part of the calculated and progressive renewal of the entire tree layer on Charles Square. (A, B, C)

The proposal has a clear idea of the composition of plant species and the internal structure of vegetation cover, which is completely in line with the Thomayer concept. For example, it focuses on the use of lilacs, which were a characteristic element of the identity of Thomayer Park. It defines the chief plant species that are to be preserved, as well as those that will be newly introduced into the park. The proposal establishes the correct ratio between see through ground cover, shrubs and tree layer, which is a key to creating a natural landscape in the park and relevant for biodiversity. (B, D)

A wide perimeter bench is an important element, which confirms and strengthens Thomayer's definition of the park's boundaries in relation to adjacent streets, physically defines existing and new entry points to the park and manages the flow of pedestrians, while simultaneously protecting vegetation planted on the perimeter embankment. The bench offers seating along the entire promenade. The Committee long debated the question of whether the bench did not also represent an undesirable barrier in some places, and the views in the Committee were contradictory. Therefore, the architectural detail of the bench, which must support the natural integration of the bench into the space, so that it seen as a clear and welcoming interface between the street and the park along its entire its length, and not as a barrier, will be decisive. Street furniture in the park has a clean, sparse design, utilising existing benches, new mobile stands, chairs and tables; contemporary, medium high lamps will reduce light pollution. The Committee praises the deliberate work with street furniture and small-scale architecture, which serves as an efficient instrument in clearly defining the park, the promenade and their mutual relationship. (B, C, F)

The proposal offers a traffic solution for the eastern street through well-aimed minor measures, such as a change in parking from diagonal to perpendicular, alignment of the road and pavement, and by unifying the surface in front of St. Ignatius Church. These simple measures will result in the required improvement of the 'residential' quality of the street. The proposal analyses the construction of underground parking, including the placement of ramps and parking capacity, but expressly advises against it. The 'residential' quality of perimeter streets may be further enhanced by gradually reducing the number of parking places over the next thirty years. (A, E, F)

Rainfall management is addressed schematically in the proposal. The proposed principles need to be further elaborated and verified. The lower hygrophilous layers along the outer wall of the embankment cannot be implemented in all required areas. Similarly, to the form and nature of locations designated for the retention and permeation of water in the middle of lawns. (B, E)

The proposal is also praised for its moderation, elegance and local Prague expression. It offers a clear view of how to enhance the square, the urban framework and the central park. It creatively works with typical local motifs and stories inscribed into the detail of the promenade using Prague mosaic, with playful elements in street furniture and a return to the tradition of lilacs. (A, D, F)

The strength of this proposal lies in the manner in which it was produced, resembling a manual. It is variable, and can adapt to reality well, assuming unavoidable changes in natural elements and people's requirements for the use of the park over time. By placing emphasis on a management plan and care for the park, the proposal communicates that the functioning of the park in the city centre cannot be based on strong architectural intervention alone, but must also rest on the programme within the park and adequate care. The proposal perceives the park as an open public institution which creates its programme in cooperation with local players and the general public. The authors have incorporated the proposal into a broader programme framework and declare that actual revitalisation does not begin or end with reconstruction. This approach may be considered contemporary and progressive. The authors' approach to the process, their choice of techniques and clear communication proves that they clearly understand the architect's role in the process of revitalising a heritage landscape site in the city centre to the maximum possible degree. (F, G)

The overall score is 5.86 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.

Buro Sant en Co + M1 + Promika

In terms of overall expression, the proposal is cohesive from its concept to the details – in formal, operating and aesthetic terms. Due to the formal language of choice, the authors were able to organically respond to various spatial situations within the area to be solved (e.g. preserving important trees), while still handling operating requirements. The proposal also successfully solves one of the key dilemmas: finding a way to be both a park and square in parallel, which makes it possible for the area to function as a park square. The core motif of the proposal is an effort to disrupt the park boundaries and open it towards adjoining spaces. At the same time, the authors maintain the fundamental geometric layout of the space, its axes, as well as the extensive lawns, which remain the focal point of the park. (A, D)

Formalism was one of the prominent features of the proposal, which some of the Committee members perceived as too constraining. This concept introduces a new layer to the area, which becomes dominant and, thus, indirectly pushes the historical landscape of Thomayer's design into the background. At the same time, this team is one of those that opted for a bolder intervention in Thomayer's present concept.. The proposal takes the system of pathways and sidewalks as its basic structure, which it abstracts into a system of ovals that it transforms into the basic spatial principle of the new solution. However, part of the Committee was of the opinion that this decision is inappropriate in terms of park values because it pushes Thomayer's natural topography into the background, which is the basic feature and spatial structure of the park. (A, D)

The authors placed the greatest emphasis on connecting the park to the street, which also ensures the better sustained functioning of the square in the future. The perimeter embankment is no longer a boundary but rather an interface with the qualities of a park (wild vegetation) and a city (a place for rest and relaxation). At the same time, it still meets the function of a clear park border. Thanks to the paved surface of pathways along the perimeter embankment of the park, which is of the same

Prague mosaic as that of the sidewalks, and incorporated benches, the embankment has gained an added rest and relaxation function and, at the same time, attracts people to the park. However, the Committee members also voiced opinions that the park centre would become too exposed in this way. Some of the members stated that the park perimeter was too fragmented and failed to fulfil a protective function. Nevertheless, other Committee members considered the same aspect of the park design proposal as the most successful solution to one of the key issues of the park – its connection to neighbouring areas. Frequent changes in perimeter vegetation cover will necessarily also affect the root system of trees, yet it is evident that the authors have thought about the planned paths and sidewalks thoroughly, with a view to protecting the most important trees and minimising landscape modifications connected with the implementation of new through passages. (A, B, C, D, F)

The Committee also expressed doubts as to how appropriate it is to place both fast-food kiosks in the western part of the park, particularly in view of the need to revitalise the south-eastern part of the park and the better views and all-day sunshine on the eastern side of the square. Nevertheless, the Committee appreciated the high quality of the architecture of cafés, reminiscent of horticultural tradition and historical bus stops. The proposal fittingly reflects the difference in traffic and perception of the representative northern end and southern end of the square, which is meant for rest and relaxation. The organisation of events on the lawn puts increased pressure on consistent maintenance. The placement of a children's playground and fitness centre at the southern tip of the perimeter embankment has been evaluated positively. (A, C, F)

The proposal presented the most sophisticated system of rainwater management. It does not primarily collect rainwater in retention tanks, but makes use of the terrain and routes the water under the eastern path in the park, from where it permeates and spreads evenly to the entire park. This is an innovative solution that has been well thought through. There is also progressive emphasis on greater bicycle parking capacities close to subway entrance points. The exploration of the possibility of building underground garages is convincing, with ramps utilising the slope of U Nemocnice Street, which makes it possible to make the ramps shorter. (E)

In terms of the efficiency of the chosen professional approach, it can be concluded that the proposal presents its approach to Horizon 2025 in a very illustrative and convincing manner, i.e. it defines phases of solution implementation in the context of future changes and measures to be adopted under Horizon 2050. The authors have fully utilised the potential of competitive dialogue; there were major changes from the draft proposal to its final version, yet the original concept was preserved. The team structure and follow-up tasks were described transparently. (F, G)

The overall score is 5.59 points.

GustafonPorter+Bowman + Šmídová LA

The Committee evaluated the proposal as a very comprehensible and harmoniously functioning unit that was convincing in its professionalism. The authors work well with Thomayer's historical heritage – they have understood the tradition and spirit in which the original park was created. The proposal fully respects Thomayer's system of paths and sidewalks and complements it with new, finer paths of a lower order. By thoughtfully restoring some of the lost parts of Thomayer's design, the authors have managed to solve the current problems of the park. This includes, for example, the solution of the northern section, which will enable the buildings of the New Town Hall and court to be re-integrated into Charles Square as a whole. In addition, the authors have renewed the entryways to the floral parterre in the central part of the western embankment, thus renewing the direct and

barrier-free connection between the parterre and the street. Among the restored elements of Thomayer's design is the shape of the main entrance in the southern part of the western embankment. Despite interventions in the perimeter embankment, the authors have managed to preserve valuable trees. (A, B, D)

However, the authors have not stopped at merely reconstructing older elements of Thomayer's design - they have also incorporated a current, contemporary layer into the park. However, the new morphology is always created with clear reference to the style of Thomayer's Park - new paths that elegantly and harmoniously complement the older layout are inspired by an analogous contemporary solution. In addition, we also find newly created areas in the proposal: for example, the piazzetta in front of St. Ignatius Church and the university building near the subway. (A, B, D)

The proposal clearly assigns a function and programme to each place in the park. The large universal meadow area was one of the valuable elements of the original park layout. However, the park, which is divided into individual units with clearly assigned functions, may prove to be less sustainable over time as the use of the park changes. The proposal can be characterised as classic, faithfully consistent with the tradition of urban parks and the best practices of landscaping; this has a clear positive side, but compared to other proposals, it also becomes evident that at the same time, it steers clear of a more daring contemporary interpretation. This fact is most prominent in the case of the maintenance-intensive central floral parterre, which raises the question of a deeper purpose of such a historicising composition. (B, D, F)

The authors unify the aesthetics of the park using the motif of a water element, which connects the past and present, creating new possibilities of use at the same time. The sculptural detail of the fountains is costly, yet of a high artistic standard; it also enables their interactive use, especially for children's games. However, placing a playground in front of Roetzl's Memorial seems inappropriate. The same applies to the preservation of the café in its current location on the corner of Žitná Street, in terms of both sunshine and location along the main traffic route. (C, D)

From a landscaping perspective, the Committee appreciated the theme of the amphitheatre, which uses the natural topography of the square. The use of a bench with a high back is a convincing solution to the problem of protecting the western and southern perimeter embankments. The proposal emphasises the feeling of safety, i.e. the ability to see under greenery, ensuring the overall transparency of the park. The proposal is sophisticated and convincing in terms of plant use and their aesthetic effect. (B)

. A problematic part of the proposal is that part of the eastern street between Ječná and Žitná, including the newly proposed kiosks and avenues, cannot be solved within the framework of Horizon 2025. The team's proposal includes the attractive idea of stackers in underground garages; however, their assessment was not clearly positive. Although this is a financially cost-effective solution, it reinforces the current sense of isolation, marginality and difficult use of the part of the square along the Jesuit College for rest and relaxation. Although parking places will disappear from the area, garage lifts will create a new barrier that occupies nearly a third of the intersection between the park and the eastern street. The authors have met the requirement of barrier-free access and better accessibility of the park. Aside from traffic issues, the authors have not addressed the wider neighbourhood of Charles Square. (A, E, F)

In terms of efficiency and economy of the solution, the Committee believes that, of all the proposals presented, this one requires the most intensive care and maintenance (e.g. a demanding floral

parterre). As the authors themselves declare, the idea of using lawns for various events entails the need for good event management, including contractual provisions ensuring that the area will be restored to its original condition. The creative team showed a very good ability to use competitive dialogue during the process. (F, G)

The overall score is 5.49 points.

New Visit

The authors have based their concept on an integrated space spanning from façade to façade, which differentiates them from all other proposals. Their effort to attain the atmosphere of one integrated square space has led to a major deviation from the identity of historical Thomayer's Park, which is formed by, among other things, large rest & relaxation lawns protected by a perimeter embankment and fine work with park topography. The authors have created a completely new concept of the park square, which enables them to re-integrate buildings into the square space – which was evaluated positively. However, unlike other proposals, the team of authors has not been able to preserve the park qualities that are subject to heritage protection. The authors criticise the closed nature of Thomayer's Park and deliberately disrupt this concept. Only the park trees represent heritage to them. The authors also mention their idea of maintaining the longitudinal axis of the park, relying on the assumption that this will remain intelligible and discernible due to the mass of trees; nevertheless, due to the absence of any visual or symbolic boundaries, it is the diagonal pedestrian pathways that will become the key axes. The authors have avoided looking for a balance between the closed, yet open nature of the park square and have given preference to creating a single space open in all directions, which presents a problem in terms of overall impression. (A, D)

The authors have attempted to adapt the existing system of pathways and sidewalks and managed to preserve some of its segments. Thus, their proposal maintains a certain touch of Thomayer's Park, yet this is no longer clearly discernible under the obvious predominance of the newly created basic structure. Only fragments of Thomayer's fine convex-concave landscape model remain. The authors have analogously removed the central pools, which eliminates the original central points of the park space. Similarly, the authors have not accepted the challenge to handle the issue of taller shrubs in the city centre, which was typical for Thomayer and which may also be a benefit in terms of biodiversity. (A, B, D)

The team of authors presents a broader concept of pedestrian through passage through the centre with the prospective establishment of backbone pedestrian zones in the New Town (Town Wall Perimeter, Spálená, Vodičkova – Jindřišská, Na Moráni). This consideration makes sense in terms of life in the city centre, yet it has not been explored in terms of traffic. Similarly, to the other teams, the authors have created a promenade linked to Vodičkova Street in the eastern part of the park, which is appropriate in terms of the broader context and relations. Moreover, they were the only team to renew the tree-lined avenue along the eastern side of the square, which is evaluated positively. Overall, their proposal has solved the issues connected with through pedestrian traffic. (A)

In terms of the architectonic solution, their proposal lacks the integration of surfaces into one type of fine detail and eliminates the various layers created over the course of historical development. The details of street furniture were well thought out and they were the only team to commemorate the events of World War II, which was evaluated positively. (C, D)

In their proposal, the authors envisage the largest quantity of paved areas by far, which has negative effects on rainwater management and the minimisation of damage to and sustainability of existing trees. Proposed paving with a retention gap allows rainwater permeation, yet to a much lesser degree than non-paved surfaces. Of all the proposals, the proposed rainwater management system uses the fewest options close to nature. The Committee feels that it is possible to ensure the square remains a living urban space by using a significantly smaller extent of paved areas, which is evident from the comparison with other proposals. The high ratio of paved areas also increases the total costs of implementation. The proposed elimination of a tram stop in the centre of the square fails to meet the operating and traffic needs of the city. *(E, F)*

In terms of the appropriate choice of professional approach, the Committee has concluded that the authors found it difficult to accept the given limitations stemming from the current situation. The Committee is of the opinion that, compared to other participants, this team did not sufficiently use the feedback on their proposal provided by the Contracting Authority during the proceedings. *(G)*

The overall score is 3.05 points.