

Charles Square

PRAGUE | 2018-

Charles Square (Czech: Karlovo náměstí) was the largest town square in Medieval Europe and today is one of the largest squares in the world. Conceived in 1348 as the main square of the New Town by Emperor Charles IV (Karel IV), it was known as Dobyččí trh (Cattle Market) from the 15th century and finally named after its founder in 1848. In the 1860s the space was developed into a park, and now acts as one of the main transport hubs for the city centre.

In its' heyday the transformation of Charles Square from civic square to landscaped park was a radical gesture suited to its time. However, poor management, the introduction of new transport infrastructure and less formal attitudes to the use of public space have contributed to its' degradation.

The client (the Prague Institute of Planning and Development) sought to identify a new vision for the prominent 7ha public space and its surrounding network of streets, which harmonises pedestrian, road, tram and rail infrastructure, which also hosts the city's iconic New Town Hall, the Czech Technical University and several churches. The project aimed to transform the square into a 'versatile and high-quality public space' where existing natural and historic features are preserved.

Shortlisted as 1 of 5 teams in January 2018, Gustafson Porter + Bowman's proposals for Charles Square makes sensitive changes to the park's structure that acknowledge the changed

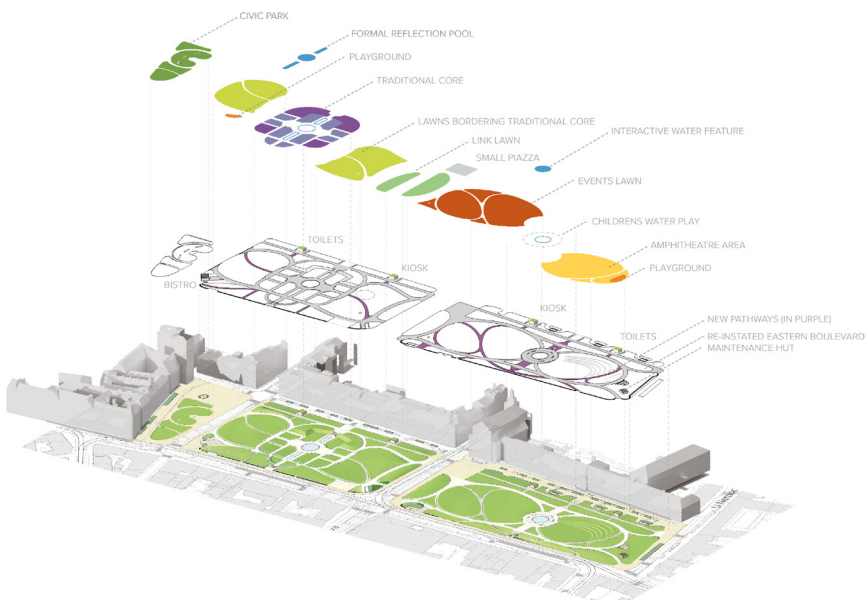
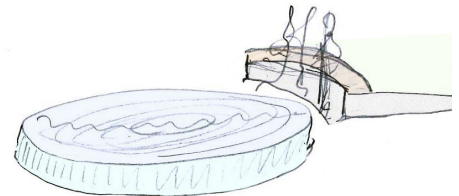
world, the needs of the city, and its population.

Just as the original design was influenced by Alphand and landscapes such as the Parc des Buttes Chaumont, we respond by introducing a denser path network in the arabesque style that will remove the mud tracks and short-cuts through planted areas. This brings its main features and spaces up to date and into use.

We wish to subtly rework the landforms to create better drainage and reintroduce some of the original features in new forms to create bolder spaces. New stone benches and lighting integrated into the landscape will help protect newly planted areas and retained trees. We will provide safe flexible surfaces for play, events and performance, but also continue to provide quiet areas for calm enjoyment and contemplation.

Lastly, we wish to create better access to the park by introducing ramped routes up the steep slopes on its long west side. We wish to extend the park's influence by introducing planted tree lined promenades on its north and south sides, with the addition of balcony views, kiosks and underground parking on its long east side.

Our aim is to transform Charles Square into the city's flexible, comfortable living room where local people and visitors choose to spend time, socialise, relax and take time out from their busy lives to be in nature.



PROJECT TITLE

Redevelopment of Charles Square, central Prague.

BUDGET

£11m

CONTRACT VALUE

£835,000

CLIENT

Prague Institute of Planning and Development

PROJECT DURATION

2018-

SIZE

70,000m²