



DAS IST GERA

A Proces to activate the city.

Reality check: Gera today - a shrinking city with limited means and few private investors
 versus
 Gera tomorrow - a city with a population of 90.000+ inhabitants, a great spirit and the will to make a difference

In order to reach its ambitious plans, Gera needs a **long term vision**. A vision that comprises the entire population, and reaches beyond the edges of the City Center. Gera needs a project for the future, a project for every citizen to contribute to with his or her means, a sociable project that stands for the citizens belief in the future, a project that can turn Gera into a qualitative, livable, green and socially sustainable city for young and old. A project that makes Gera the City for and by the People; a City everyone **loves** living in; **the City citizens of Gera deserve!**

To make a difference, we have envisioned a process and the framework to unroll this future. The process is based on the founding of a task force, the activation of networks of possible ambassadors for Gera's future, the development of an icon as a first project and the start of many other projects to follow.

We have designed a condition, a condition that will allow Gera to ameliorate living conditions starting tomorrow. Stronger, we have designed a condition that will help Gera to endlessly continue improving the living condition for everyone, to become the stronghold and example for regional city life in the 21 century.

One thing: you cannot make this city without the support of what makes the city a city: the people of Gera!

Step 1: Deploy the organisation for 'new Gera' in Stadtmuseum.

The deployment of our plan necessitates a strong organization, a democratic structure of motivated citizens and officials. Therefore, the first step is the founding of a multidisciplinary **task force** of engaged community members.

This task force consists of a group of people, formed out of the many groups active in Gera's communal life, such as *Ja für Gera*, representatives of Gera's allotment communities, people active in Gera's administrative layers (City, Bundesland,...). The task force will work in close collaboration with the public, and will be responsible for **1.** setting up and activating the networks (f.e. for fundraising purposes, volunteering,...), **2.** the promotion of 'New Gera', **3.** the stimulation of good ideas, and **4.** the actual development and realization of new initiatives,... starting with the **Stadtgarten**.

Because our plan, **'the Stadtgarten'** is a story by and for the people of Gera, this story of hope and opportunities should be told in the

heart of the Center, at a place that belongs to the collective memory of Gera's citizens.

Why the 'new Gera' needs a headquarter

Situated in the new heart of the Center, on the intersection of the main pedestrian axes of the city, an historical public building known to everyone, surrounded by public domain and equipped with exhibition and gathering spaces, the Stadtmuseum is therefore the ideal place to become the beating heart of 'our plan'.

Past, present, **future!**

As a literally and virtually witness of Gera's past and present, Stadtmuseum will be endowed with an additional task: **to tell the story of Gera's future and how to get involved**. A substantial part of the museum will be dedicated to the deployment of 'our plan'. In the exhibition spaces, people will get information on the evolution of 'our plan': exhibitions on existing initiatives, the launch of new initiatives, ... **the Gera of tomorrow**.

Get involved

Gradually over time, Stadtmuseum will become a regional knowledge centre on everything related to well-being in city-environments, experienced in the involvement and activation of citizens

Part of Stadtmuseum will be used as a **'campaign office'**, not only to provide information, but as well to gather information. Stadtmuseum is to become the central gathering point for everybody who wants to subscribe in the future of Gera: engaged citizens, volunteers, professionals with good ideas that could contribute to the liveability of the City,...

Surrounded by public domain on an intersection of daily commuting and in close proximity of the existing/future event square in front of KUK, **Stadtmuseum has a prominent role and vast public domain at its disposal for promotion of initiatives and crowd funding campaigns.**

Step 2: Stadtmuseum as part of an attractive public domain.

Stadtmuseum was recently renovated and an architecture competition was held for a new gymnasium along Reichstrasse. Situated at the crossing of the main pedestrian routes in the City Centre, with an architecture of historical importance, and as the headquarters of 'our plan', the public domain around Stadtmuseum **must** be **THE example of a safe, clear and comfortable Gera**.

First intervention: the intersection

At the height of Breitscheidstrasse we propose to introduce a flower bed to clearly separate the pedestrian and cycling area from the street. This simple but elegant intervention prevents the parking of cars and heals the asphalt between our plan and the park in front of the gymnasium. (**taskforce activation:** *Berufsschule Gera-Liebschwitz* could be involved to make a

proposal for the plantingscheme of these flower beds.)

To reduce conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists, the route for cyclists will be clearly marked, by preference with another material. As a result, both pedestrians and cyclists will be well aware of each others presence.

Step 3: the Stadtgarten, as a framework for the New Gera.

The site, a central void, unique in size and situated at the heart of the center, as the face of the center and in immediate connection with Stadtmuseum, will play a prominent role in our view for a **Geras starke Mitte**. An intervention so strong that it can speak to the imagination of young and old. A project so clear, that in a glimpse it offers an insight into the new future of Gera. A plan so pure, that one feels the honest and human intentions in a second. A wonderful gesture so convincing that it will easily become part of Gera's collective memory. **An icon of Gera's new identity.**

Surrounded by a transparent walkaround colonnade, and furnished with solitary trees of different species, ages, colours and smells, the semi-enclosed (collonade) garden will serve one purpose:

a public domain by excellence,

stimulating engaged citizens to take action, to start cooperating on a better future, **to become ambassadors for 'the new Gera', our future!**

Our project, **the Stadtgarten**, will answer the challenge for a **starke Mitte** on all different scales. On the smaller scale, the enclosed garden will be conceived as **Gera's garden of (city) life**: a healthy green garden filled with hope and joy, a public domain for social encounter and exchange, a structure for the realisation of dreams and opportunities. A place where both citizens and visitors can come to rest and/or actively take part in the deployment of Gera's future, their future.

Connect

On the larger scale, the enclosed garden will serve as a green pocket, contributing to Gera as a sustainable city. In summer it will serve as a heat buffer, on rainy days as a water buffer. Within the logistical system of the city, it will serve as a green corridor for pedestrians forming a missing link between the Wiesenhofpark in the North and the green public domain in front of the new Gymnasium along the Reichstrasse. That it will be used a stepping stone for fauna and flora is even more convincing.

..and share

As public domain it will enrich the existing series of squares and commercial streets with a new typology and opportunities for young entrepreneurs. Finally, as a strong architectural gesture it will unite the different building blocks (KUK, Library, Stadtmuseum, surrounding housing blocks, Parking Space and shopping Centre) into one solid whole: the past joined into one, looking into the bright future of Gera, the new face of a **starke mitte, embedded in the existing context.**

Step 4: Activate the Stadtgarten.

On the North-West side and along the Breitscheidstrasse up to 2200 m2 of program can be realized. Partly to fund the project, but mainly to activate the park. There is space for entrepreneurs, a bio-bakery, a fruit and vegetable store with products from in and around Gera and public program like a kindergarten, daycare,.... In other words: plenty of space for active citizens to contribute to **starke Mitte**.

Step 5: More projects for Gera by Gera.

By now the new function of Stadtmuseum is well known. So while the task force is working on the Stadtgarten, citizens can come up with new ideas, from small interventions to the next big project, ideas that will be developed by the volunteers committed to Stadtmuseum.

Step 6: investors

The new Gera welcomes investors

Once developed, the Northern side of Stadtgarten will be a favourable place for housing: living in a green, social and lively environment – an ideal setting for Gera's youngest citizens to grow up. Parking can be solved within the existing parking garage, subterranean or within the plint. By now the whole self sufficient and activated park is a big welcome to any investor, within the proposed dimensions. Together with the taskforce these housing units could be developed to represent living in the 'New Gera'.



How does the architecture work?

The Colonnade: a filter, function, energy

Stadtgarten will be framed by a colonnade, a mediator between city-life and Stadtgarten, a necessary gesture to change pace in life and prepare people for a **new state of mind**. As a pure and straight architectonic gesture it serves as a **zen-like filter**, like a colonnade in a monastery. It invites people to let go of daily routine, to forget about worries, it makes people curious, it invites people to become part of the condition of stadgarten.

- The height and rhythm of the colonnade reacts upon the massive built structures that surround it. It unites the surrounding building blocks, it creates a whole out of objects, the existing structures building becoming part of Gera's future, the Stadtgarten becomes part of their structure, in use and program.

- Measuring 7m high, the colonnade introduces human scale in an environment where it does not exist today. Wider in front of Stadtmuseum and KUK and narrower in front of the parking space and Breitscheitstrasse, the colonnade reacts on public life and filters away city 'noise'.

- The lightness and openness of the structure contrasts with the heaviness of the surrounding buildings and forms a welcoming gesture to everybody: everybody is welcome to participate in Gera's future!

- The colonnade is more than a filter. As a flexible structure it will allow for covered space for activities that support 'our plan'.

- The North-West aisle of the colonnade will house space for entrepreneurs, kindergardens,... Structures can easily be built in the colonnade and even build an extra level in the space if necessary.

- The South-East aisle of the colonnade will house weekly vegetable and fruit markets, covered events or space to relax in the shadow, skateboard,...

- Made of **prefabricated wooden trusses**, which act as tripods for supporting the roof and architecture of the program in the North-West facade. The colonnade is sustainable in terms of materials and cost-efficient!

- The roof of the colonnade has different functions according to the aisles of the colonnade. On top of the North-West aisle, where entrepreneurs are situated, the roof could very well be a green roof, contributing to a better indoor climate for the office spaces underneath. Together with the task force we need to research these possibilities and if there are enough volunteers to maintain these gardens.

- The roof on top of the other parts of the colonnade will not only protect against sun and rain, furnished with solar panels, the roof here will become a solar battery for this icon of 'New Gera'.

the framework, a filter

A filter, to alter a state of mind is not feasible only by means of the colonnade. Also the sound, the structure, the friction, the heaviness and the colour of the paving plays an important sensorial role in introducing visitors into this new condition, Stadtgarten. Underneath the colonnade, surrounding Stadtgarten, a warm, light and clear paving will be laid out to welcome visitors to take part in Gera's future.

Compared to the speed of the asphalt and concrete paving used in the surroundings, a new rhythm of big rectangular concrete elements is being introduced to make people more conscious of their pace and introduce a new state of mind.

This concrete pavement forms a continuous carpet underneath and along the garden, allowing for comfortable pedestrian axes and accessibility for people with a physical handicap.

Underneath the north aisle of the colonnade, the paving will be a welcome surface for walking when it rains, for markets and for youngsters who like to skate. Benches along this axes allows for views over the garden.

Along this South-East aisle, the carpet stretches 2m out towards the garden, offering a boulevard in the sun.

At the height of KUK and Stadtmuseum, the stone carpet transforms into a paved event square. This easy to maintain surface will host events of any nature and for every age: cultural events, social events, festivals, holi festival, Weihnachtsmarkten, secondhandmarkets, idea-markets for sustainable entrepreneurship and commercial events (as a way to fund the garden),... This public domain will be the ideal setting for exchange between Gera's citizens, tourists and professionals. The ideal place for City promotion with events as the Gera's volunteering days, Gera's Garden Days (showcasing flowers, fruits and vegeatbales grown in Gera's allotment gardens), ... In order to guarantee the continuation of events the asphalt slab in front of KUK, the current event square, will only be demolished when the works for the new event square take a start.

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If the budget allows for it, one can imagine the power of attraction of water features on the event square for both young and old. Furthermore, the sound of falling water could add to the filtering of street noise.

Along the south aisle of the colonnade, the concrete paving forms a pathway along the facades of the entrepreneurs, located underneath the colonnade to continue along the western part of the colonnade.

VIII. Stadtgarten: a garden of life

- The garden doesn't follow a typical 'park scheme' with big investments, expensive pathways and costly maintenance schemes.

- Instead, the design of the garden is reduced to the essence, guaranteeing at the same time a maximum of experience! Therefore the planting scheme consists of three layers: lawn, small flowerbeds and solitary trees

- The first layer of the garden is very cost-efficient and makes use of what is already there. The green terrain will be the future lawn. There is no need for costly pathways, people will be free to walk wherever they want, play wherever they want, meet wherever they want and rest wherever they want. Visitors of Gera's City Center, Readers of the library, residents of the surrounding housing blocks, the entrepreneurs housed in the colonnade, passers-by, they will all have a place in the garden... a truly public garden. The existing slope of the terrain will help in managing the water runoff during rainy days. At the lowest points of the park, this water will be collected in a subterranean collector to be reused in times of water scarcity.

- The second layer is the layer of flowers. Throughout the park and following the colonnade, smaller beds of flowers will be spread in accordance with the Berufsschule Gera-Liebschwitz. Already today these students make big efforts in colouring Museumplatz. Their efforts will be rewarded with flowerbeds these can (re) design every year, creating ever changing colour patterns and giving colour to Gera

- The third layer consists of trees: a matrix of solitary conifers and a 'random' spread of differing tree species.

- The conifers, of a tree family common in and around Gera, make up the spatial frame of the garden. They give the park a human scale and support.

- In between this frame, a mix of tree species of different ages will be spread, donated by Gera's volunteers. These trees resemble the diversity of Gera's population, creating an ever-changing park, with something for everyone, a garden of life.

- Unlike a typical park scheme, the trees will appear as solitary trees, strong individuals with their own character, colour and smell. As solitary trees, space will be defined not by the trees



themselves but by the interaction between trees and humans moving alone or in group over the lawn. This will allow for personal relationship with trees on the basis of colour, smell, shadow, touch, light, ...

- The surgical implantation of trees allows for the future construction of housing blocks.

- The rooftops are decorated with smaller conifers, resulting in an infinite garden. Everywhere you look, you see the green future of Gera. The colonnade becomes a crown, a jewel emphasizing the bright future of Gera.

- The development of the Garden will follow the rhythm of the crowd funding campaign. Trees will gradually appear: first the matrix of conifers (resulting in a small scale feeling), then the mix of tree species. As a result, trees will not age all the same, as usually happens, but will grow as old, young and younger trees, as if it were a family gathering, like Gera's citizens visiting the garden.

- Dr Eckner strasse will be straightened, resulting in more efficient use of space. Car traffic towards both the Parking building and the future housing blocks is inevitable. Therefore we suggest measure to reduce car speed: the car is to become a 'guest' in the garden. In accordance with Gera's mobility department, the Dr Eckner Strasse will be narrowed and landscape architectonic means as the implantation of a low hedge along the street will further result in higher security for cyclists and pedestrians. Zebra crossings will allow for a safe passage throughout the garden.

IX. STEP 3 Involving the community in all phases of the design-build-maintain-marketing process

As a kick-off project, the newly organised 'commity' will have its maiden project. Gera can already count on numerous people with a positive attitude towards change. Think of the Berufsschule Gera-Liebschwitz, today already active in shaping Museumplatz, think of Ja für Gera, active in the development of the City and think of the numerous allotment Gardens, people active in self provision and the shaping of a green environment. These and other communal groups form an enormous potential the 'Commity' could address to in realizing all different phases of this crown-jewel.

As for the Design-Build-Maintain phases, the gardeners in cooperation with Berufsschule Gera-Liebschwitz, can assist in the selection of trees, the designing of the flower beds, in the making of the garden, and in the maintenance over the years. As volunteers they will become true ambassadors of the project, guaranteeing word of mouth marketing for 'our plan'.

The enormous group of allotment gardeners could as well become the first target group to address when it comes to crowd funding: a vast group of people, who by gardening, already express their belief in green, social and self-providing Gera. These gardeners could help in material transfers (seeds, plants, trees) or help with financial contributions. Once the vegetable and flower market is set in place, the gardeners get a market place where surplus vegetables and fruits can be sold, and if well organised, generating means the entire allotment garden will benefit from over the long run. It speaks for itself that the crowdfunding campaign could be addressed to the entire city: from financial donations for street furnitures to the sponsoring of the colonnade. Functions as a reading place, playgardens,... could be sponsored for through fundraising in the library and the adjoining housing blocks. Gera construction companies could become partners in the construction of the colonnade, involving themselves in a better future for Gera, becoming preferential partners in the erection of the future profitable housing blocks.

The investment for the event square will be earned back thanks to the renting of the event space for commercial purposes. Think of an event as Gera's Garden Days, offering commercial companies the opportunity to sell the latest barbecues, garden furniture, techniques. The southern aisle of the colonnade will be refunded through the renting of spaces for entrepreneurs, etc. The northern aisle will be partly paid through fundraising and revenues earned by the renting of market space.

X. STEP 4: Programming 'our scheme'

While deploying the scheme, the 'commity' starts addressing future entrepreneurs through infomarkets in Stadtmuseum and the existing event square in front of KUK.

The southern aisle of the colonnade, along Breitscheitstrasse will house space for entrepreneurs. Envisioned are young creative entrepreneurs, eager to change the world in a sustainable way. Welcome are as well kindergardens and even schools, enjoying the garden and generating young and pleasant on a



daily basis. The garden as the breeding room of Gera's future.

The northern aisle of the colonnade will house weekly/monthly vegetable and fruit markets. With the support allotment gardeners and farmers, this market has the potential to become the central market for regionally grown and seasonal vegetables and fruits. Customers get to know where their food comes from and producers earn a fair price.

Once the new event square is in place, events of different nature, both commercial as non-commercial could be organised on the event square.

XI. STEP 5: launch a competition for the pavilion

The cherry on the cake of 'the scheme' is the competition for design of the future Gardenpavilion: the opportunity for Gera's entrepreneurs and creative to come up with ideas for the design, the name and the exploitation of Gera's Gardenpavilion of the future.

The pavilion will be the crown jewel of the event square: it will be positioned on the event square, allowing for a huge terrace area, and has a tremendous view on the garden.

A strong proposal to give Gera's citizens with little or no green fingers to contribute to the future of Gera.

Think of a commercial pavilion where recipes are served, created by Gera's citizens, where meals are cooked with locally grown fruits and vegetables, local beers,...

Once the gardenpavilion is set in place, it will generate serious means on a daily basis, means that could be used for future initiatives of 'our plan' in and around Gera!

When events are to be organised on the event square, the pavilion could become the centre piece in providing supporting facilities like drinks, meals, toilet facilities,...

XII. STEP 5: Living in Stadtgarten (phase 3) (behoeft eigenlijk nauwelijks teksts, eerder schema's)

"Invest in Gera's identity, strengthen the community in a socially sustainable way and attract investors over the long run"

With Stadtgarten up and running, growing to become a warm and mature garden, Gera's City Center has become a destination with a strong identity. With variety of commercial and cultural functions, nearby access to public transport and pedestrian and cycle pathways and a superb green and maturing Stadtgarten on a very limited surface in the heart of Gera, the City Center guarantees a very high-quality of living! Attracted

by the positive urban effects of the continuous deployment of 'our plan', Gera has become a regional destination for new families. Living in Stadtgarten becomes the opportunity for all ages to live this high-quality life!

Living in Stadtgarten is possible in small housing towers on the north side of the Dr Eckner Strasse. As individual towers, the erection of these housing blocks can be implemented in phases, responding to market demand.

Rectangular light towers, reacting upon the architecture of the colonnade and placed within the garden will provide for the necessary living space. These housing towers are welcome guests in Stadtgarten. To stress the public character of the garden, the towers are limited in size and have a transparent character. Placed on top of a plinth, the necessary transition of public to private domain is marked: Stadtgarten stays public for visitors while inhabitants of the towers will have the feeling to live in a wonderful garden. Living in Stadtgarten, the colonnade and Stadtgarten become one integrated whole!

The dimensions of the towers could vary between 14x14m and 20x20m with varying heights, offering opportunities for generous living spaces in the center of the city. The floorplans are rectangular with a central core for vertical circulation. This flexible floorplan allows for a division of the floorplan in one, two or four apartments, according to the market demand and allowing or spaces to respond to the needs of people of different ages. The flexibility of the floorplan generates as well the opportunity to house a mixed program: housing, offices,.... The maximum heights of the towers correspond and react upon the neighbouring building blocks and the garden.

Future inhabitants who don't make use of public transport or the cycle pathways, could rent parking space within the nearby parking buildings (if the parking building allows for it). If not, parking space could be integrated in the plinth or even underground (if the terrain allows for it). These parking space will be reached through Dr Eckner Strasse.

Advertentie 1

Weihnachtsmarkt Gera
On the 27th of November the streets, squares and garden between the historical Municipality building, the Johannisstraße, Bachgasse, Schloßstraße and Stadtgarten in a winter Weihnachts-Märchen-Markt!
This year the beloved Christmas market will be enriched with a new market in the colonnade and the event square. The colonnade will host a Christmas market, offering flower-pieces, decoration and toys, all handmade and sprouting from Gera's community of volunteers. The event square will host events for young and old. Christmas stories for the young and music and food for the elder, will guarantee a unique Christmas Market.

For the culturally interested, Stadtmuseum will open its doors until 00.00 offering a range of guided tours along the latest exhibitions on Christmas-decorated allotment gardens. On for those who like a 'green' Christmas, the Stadtgarten's trees will be decorated with candles and colourful lights!

See you all on the 27. November for this unforgettable Christmas market!
Onderteken door Gera's Stadtmuseum committee

Advertentie 2: Living in Stadtgarten (een foto)
Now available, flexible and green spaces for living, for all ages, in the City Center and with a tremendous view on Stadtgarten!

Advertentie 3: Testimony of the Citizens of Gera
A few years ago, I had a car accident, which made it impossible for me to maintain my front garden. When I discovered 'our plan', I went to Stadtgarten and found a willing group of people, representing an entire network of volunteers in and around Gera. Since then, every summer, two gardeners pass by on a weekly basis to maintain my garden

I am a director at a local school in Gera. Our schoolchildren love to learn about nature. Since our environment is shifting towards a more ecological approach, our teachers and I wanted to transform our school garden in an eco-friendly playgarden. Unfortunately we have no green fingers. Since we heard about 'our plan', I made an appointment and within a month, our new garden was born. The volunteers explained us as well how to maintain the garden in the future. Since we are no gardeners, but good cooks, in return, we offered our help to make a pop-up restaurant with locally grown fruits and vegetables during next Christmas Market. The earnings will go to the further deployment of 'our plan'!

