

## Welcome in My Brussels Yard

### A. Welcome in My Brussels Yard

The WiMBY park is based on ten principals. Together they constitute the WiMBY vision for a new park located on Anspach Boulevard, stretching from Brouckère square to Fontainas square. The park is a welcoming zone that induces a new behavior, a more green urban living pattern and social space in touch with the cycle's of natural systems. A Yard for Brussels city centre.

#### **1. no car park , no tree park**

The choice to cut the central boulevard from thru traffic induces a car-free zone. No more cars, no more parking, but we also say no more trees. At least no more small trees! Given the crowded underground with subway and passages, we take out the dwarf trees in their large pots.

#### **2. pocket parks**

Large trees with ample root space can grow in pocket parks behind the former facades. Additional light and dense vegetation are inserted, transforming the century old housing compounds. Once designed as a social cross section of society, the boulevard apartment building has become more and more a mono-functional stacking of narrow dark apartments. The pocket parks are a small loss in housing surface, but a big gain in living quality.

#### **3. balcony farms**

Advocating short-chain food consumption and inner city agriculture, the balcony farms are designed to plug in existing facades and balconies of the Haussmann buildings. Like the satellites that connect to remote countries and their television cultures, the balcony farms reconnect the residents with the cycle's of nature and diverse edible cultures. And all of this powered by local sunlight and rainwater containers.

#### **4. roof gardens**

Taking modernism serious, the tower and base model of some of the younger boulevard additions will become part of the park. New planted roof gardens are connected with the street level (or park level) by spectacular public stairs and elevators. The roof of the city of Brussels administration is an ideal front garden of a new kind of relation between the civilian and it's public representation.

#### **5. a pedestrian carpet**

Now cars and large vegetation have been dealt with elsewhere, the former boulevard is redesigned as a pedestrian carpet. Consistent paving arranges the transition between commercial ground floor program and the grass carpet stretching along the complete length of the new park. Subtle variations in species of grass delineate the different zones for lawns, meadows, walking paths, hay lands and low shrub.

## **6. like a flower carpet**

The Grand Place famous for its flower carpets finds a sibling in the new park. The grass carpet is seeded with numerous flowers that bloom in different colors and at different moments throughout the seasons, creating a permanent yet slow spectacle of nature finest heralds.

## **7. the River Zenne**

The River Zenne does not flow through the center nor the former tubes underneath the boulevard. A symbolic reference is made through a forest of posts, that serve several purposes. General lighting, shade covers, way finding and occasional water mystifiers or fountain nozzles are attached to the posts that follow the former Zenne trajectory. The run off water and storm water buffers feed the park irrigation.

## **8. sunny underground**

Small changes in topography of the grass carpet allows several edges to be more pronounced or even create benches. Alongside the subway entrances the carpet folds down to create large light wells that add sun and air to the often gloomy subway stations and underground shopping malls.

## **9. three bodies of trees**

The park spans from Brouckere over Bourse/Beurs square to Fontainas. Each of these special spaces is marked by a body of trees. The Zenne Forrest links Anneessens park to the Anspachpark; a plinth of trees wraps around the Stock Exchange and the Brouckere square receives a car lock of trees.

## **10. Welcome In My Brussels Yard**

The new park introduces the Boulevard into the 21<sup>st</sup> century: an era of green public space that functions as a social infrastructure as well as an ecological machine. This park is not only an esthetic improvement, it aims at transforming the culture of its users and residents, towards a more conscious and social future of urban living at its best.

## **B. Water Strategy**

The water of the WIMBY park is treated differently than the current system, more sustainable let's say. Irrigation of the vegetation comes from retaining rainwater and run off water as much as possible on the site itself. First of all we disconnect grey water from the sewer system. Existing roof drainage pipes and street gutters are disconnected and redirected towards an underground collector. The old Zenne tubes can serve for this purpose together with their use as storm water retention. This water will be used for irrigation in dry periods, saving loads of precious tap water.

## **C. Vegetation Strategy**

The pocket parks are planted with climbing plants and trees. In their search for daylight they will quickly grow high

against the walls and through the openings in the park facade, creating a small vertical urban jungle.

Parts of the grass carpet are mowed in an extensive way, allowing the grass to grow higher and field flowers to settle. Some parts are planted with prairie flowers. These flowers, often used on roof gardens, can survive a temporarily dry soil and thrive well in the dry and warm city air. Some of them are known for attracting wildlife of bees and butterflies, thus contributing to a richer urban ecosystem.

Trees are planted in different ways according to the variety in streetscape surrounding the park. The informal winding streets based on the medieval layout of the inner city core, are sparsely planted with solitary trees. Where street crossings allow more space and create visibility, small groups of trees can occur. The Boulevards Adolphe Max, Emile Jacqmain and Lemonnier, as well as Rue Dansaert, created in the nineteenth century, are planted in a formal way, with regular alignments of trees. The more recent streets, around Les Halles, are planted with rows of smaller trees, in order to enliven the streets and soften the flat and less interesting facades.

#### D. Three squares in the WiMBY park.

Each of the three public squares along the WiMBY park will be designed as strong recognizable and fairly empty spaces. They invite the park visitors and residents to stage their own uses on the square, from concerts to pick nick, from manifestation to performance. All three squares relate to one of the strong elements of Brussels history, that can complement the visionary Anspach intervention of the Haussmann Boulevards.

##### **BROUCKERE square: an expo 58 celebration**

The car free Brouckère square is flanked with a tree lock for cars. Large circular raised lawns give root space for the goldenrain trees and mark the transition between car city and the WiMBY park. The open space behind it features a replica of the former expo58 pavilion, celebrating one of the highlights of Brussels, the world expo in 1958. The rest of the square serves as an incubator for social manifestations, events and large terraces. The Metropole terrace is given some breathing space and is not longer separated from the square by a sea of parked cars and taxi's.

##### **BEURS – BOURSE square: the 'broeckzele' fountain**

The eclectic architecture of the Stock Exchange Building is complemented with a green pedestal. A densely vegetated strip is wrapped around the building, extending the building's base into the public space. The new pedestal consists of cherry trees with a grass meadow underneath, inviting people to dwell under the foliage and blossoms, much closer to the building than its more formal entrance and stairs.

The square in front of the Beurs/Bourse is the one spot where the symbolic representation of the river Zenne becomes tangible in a water feature. A subtle tilt of the square's surface aligned with the old trajectory of the river Zenne, supports a field of water nozzles. They can be programmed as a playful water fountain but could just as well follow a more artistic interpretation of the actual underground water volume passing through the Zenne tubes. Filling up and emptying the crease in the surface as if breathing the spirit of the former Zenne. The symbolic meaning of the water

feature that might be hard to cross at times, refers to the Broeck- Zele etymology, a space to cross the water, right at the heart of the WiMBY park.

**FONTAINAS square: the Zenne forest**

At the other end of WiMBY park a third theme of Brussels is introduced. The Zoniën Forest is recreated stretching from Anneessenspark towards the Fontainas Square. Much less formal as the Brouckère square, this urban forest is catering towards local residents, which is the main occupant of the southern part of WiMBY park. The mixture of trees and Zenne posts creates a specific light quality both during day time and night time. The forest also serves as a clear demarcation of the start of the car free zone, a border that is perceived from a sufficient distance.

