

Couvet - Switzerland - european 12 DUBIED-SITE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AREUSE RIVER



View over the Dubied Site from the Chemin des Prises (Path of the Prises).

CATEGORY Industrial / landscape / architecture

TEAM REPRESENTATIVE Architect, Urban Planner, Landscaper

LOCATION Couvet/NE - Area: Dubied-site on both sides of the Areuse River
POPULATION 2,760 inhabitants in the village of Couvet and 12,000 inhabitants in the Municipality

STUDY SITE 67 ha

SITE OF 67 9 ha

SITE PROPOSED BY The Municipality of Val-de-Travers in partnership with the State of Neuchâtel

OWNERS OF THE SITE Private owners, town of Val-de-Travers and Canton of Neuchâtel

COMMISSION AFTER COMPETITION

Mandate for project development in the Dubied sector, the industrial area and the village center.

HOW THE SITE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE ADAPTABLE CITY?

The site was built gradually starting from the mid-nineteenth century, as a piecemeal response to the needs of the Dubied Company, a large company, which produced knitting machines and employed up to 2,000 employees. It left some lasting memories and played a major role in the local history. It also had a strong influence on the lives and psyche of the people of the region. It is the Dubied Company that set the development pace of the whole town of Couvet for a century and a half, before closing down in 1988.

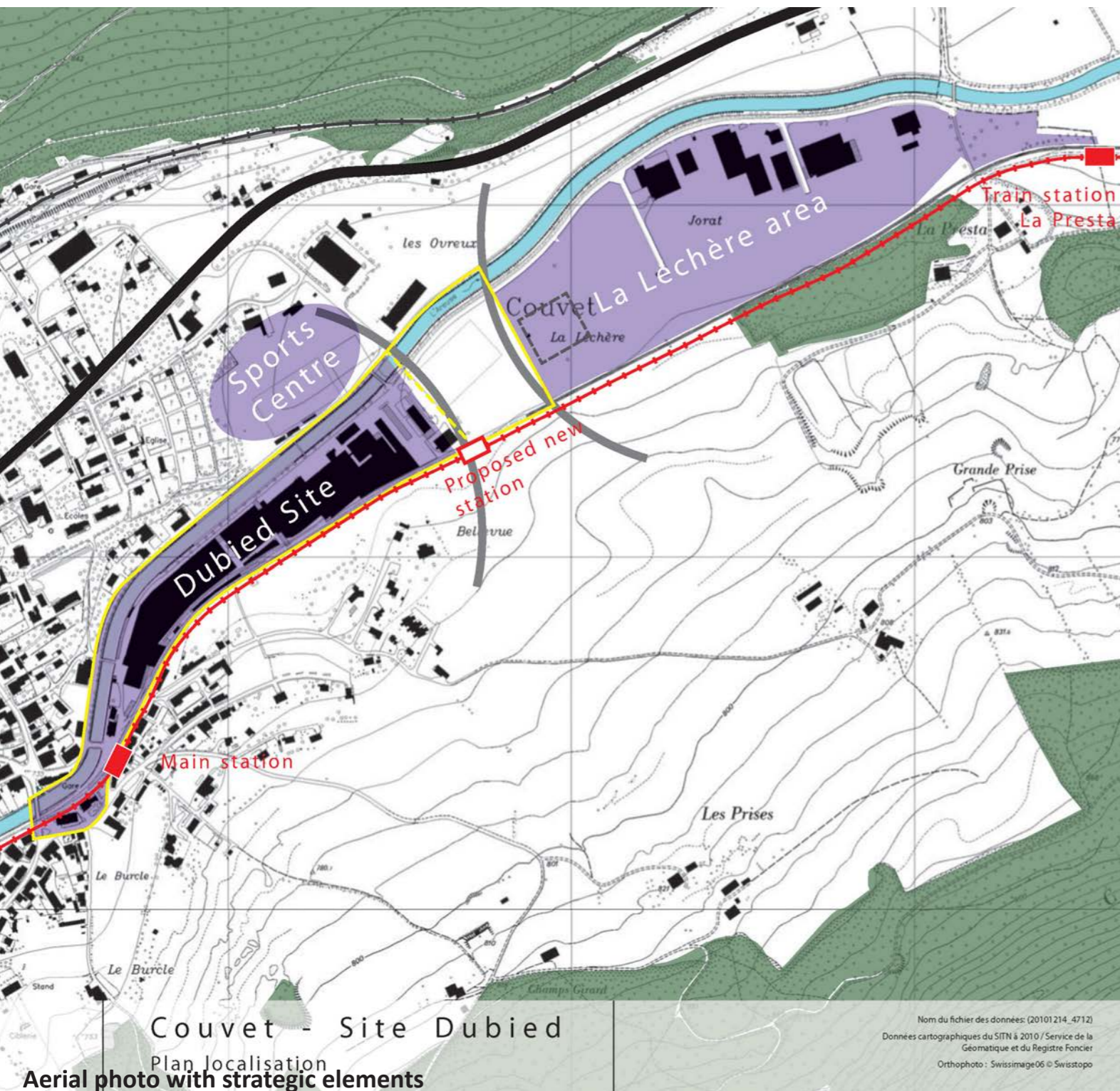
The site included then industrial buildings (warehouses, storage), assembly and production halls, as well as administrative buildings, which were sold piecemeal to multiple owners. Currently, this large built-up area (project area A) is home to various business and craft activities located in the most remote parts, a center for adult education, and a small business hotel. Large dilapidated areas are used for storage. The demand for quality modular

surfaces, for industrial or artisan activities, offers a great opportunity to refurbish the site. Especially since it is now recognized by the state, together with the neighboring industrial Léchère zone as a “cluster for regional economic development”. Some noteworthy buildings of the site should be preserved; however, a large amount of freedom is left to the young planners to decide on the best density and the best use of the site.

CITY STRATEGY

The project should organize spaces defined by a succession of structures built over a century of industrial activity and provide a comprehensive response, which should include a link-up of the area with the expansion of the industrial area in the Léchère sector on one side and the town center on the other side. The latter includes the Grand-Rue (Main Street), the redevelopment of which could take advantage of the new impetus created by the renewal of the Dubied site.

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Aerial photo with strategic elements



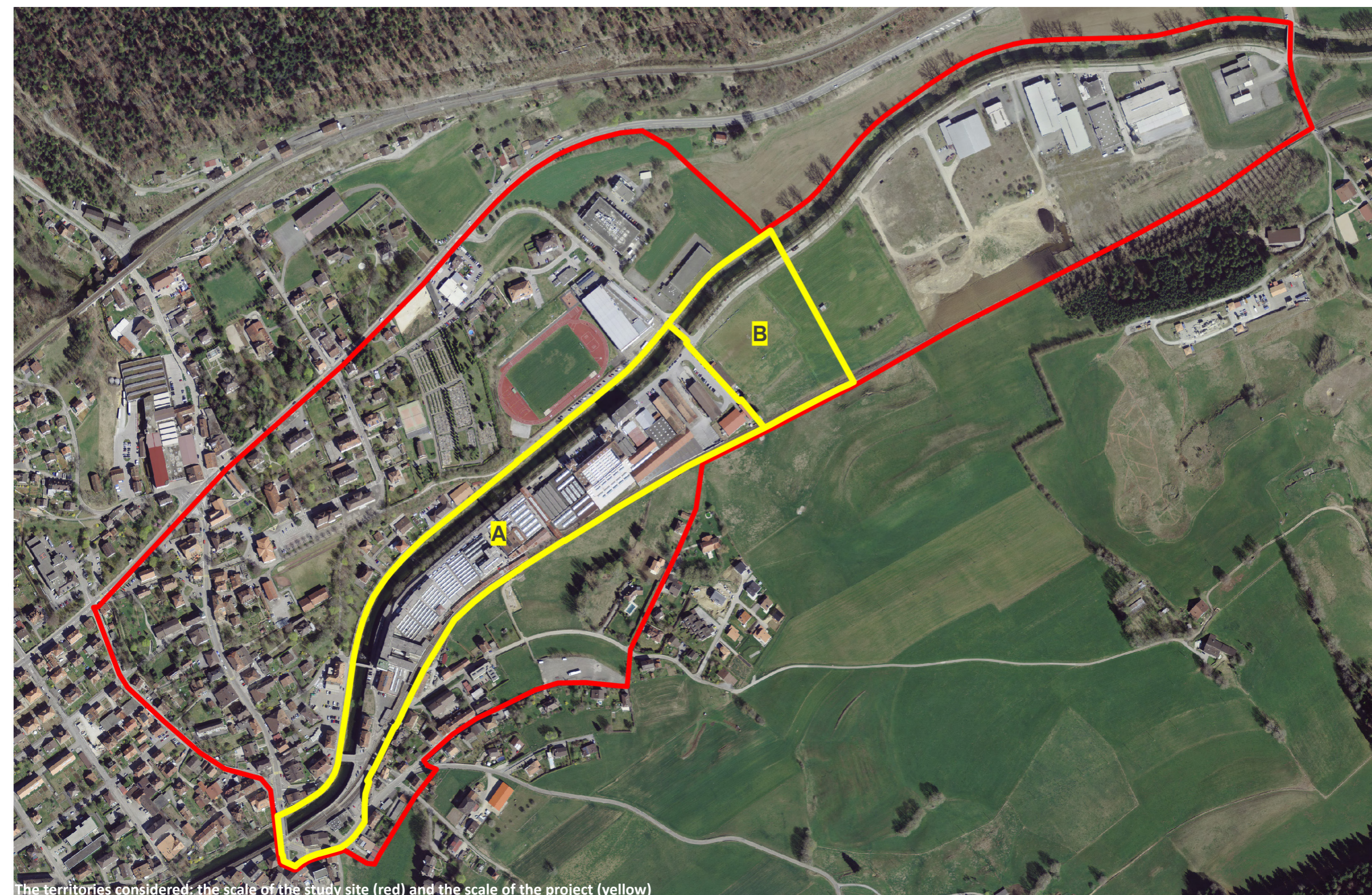
The project site

SITE DEFINITION
The Val-de-Travers spreads over some 20 kilometers and is located to the west of the Neuchâtel Canton, partially bordering the Vaud Canton. The valley follows the Areuse River, an important component of the Region identity. During the past centuries, the nine separate old villages expanded to form now an urban back bone called the Val de Travers Town. The valley currently inhabited by 12,000 people, was always an important communication route between Switzerland and France in the past. It experienced a significant growth starting at the beginning of the 19th Century, based on industrial activity (clock making, mechanical industry, machinery and textile in particular). This industrial past left its mark on the identity of a region that remains open to the world and to technological innovation. In the town of Couvet, the streets run parallel to the Main Street and perpendicular streets link the various blocks. At first, the northern sector was used to build small apartment buildings, (3 story high above a ground floor containing the main entrance) and small single family houses that are simple and functional. At the same time, larger homes were built at the eastern entrance of the village.

ADAPTABILITY: MAIN CHALLENGES TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT
Transport and mobility:
The town of Couvet is served by the railway line Neuchâtel / Val-de-Travers. The main station is located directly west of the Dubied site. There is also a stop at the eastern end of the Léchère site that should be replaced in the future by a new station in the heart of the development cluster (Action Plan B). Several bus lines stop in front of the Sports Centre (North of the Action Plan B area). Road access via the Cantonal highway from Neuchâtel to Pontarlier. The proposals shall take into account the access conditions to the site and the mobility solutions (roads, rail, pedestrian lanes and parking space). A new watch making production unit currently under construction in the Léchère site will create hundreds of new jobs. The development of the area will certainly increase the use of public transport, the road traffic, the need for parking space and pedestrian movements. New infrastructure should be built and the old one improved while the quality of the

links between the town center and the development cluster should be improved.
New lifestyles:
The spaces between the station, the bridge over the Areuse River, between the Areuse River and Main Street should be seen as means to promote regional pedestrian tourism. In addition, the proposals should be consistent with the new mobility concept promoted by local authorities throughout the municipal territory (30kmh speed limit for car traffic, lanes for bicycles and strollers, pedestrians lanes throughout the built environment, parking space). The project shall emphasize the relationship between the Areuse River, the Dubied site and its extensions.
Inter-company cooperation:
Local economic actors usually develop an ability to work as a network, to solve technical problems, meet common needs or engage together in regional development. The Local Authorities intend to promote interaction between the economic stakeholders, tool and machinery sharing and meetings of the trades' people on the site.

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The territories considered: the scale of the study site (red) and the scale of the project (yellow)

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