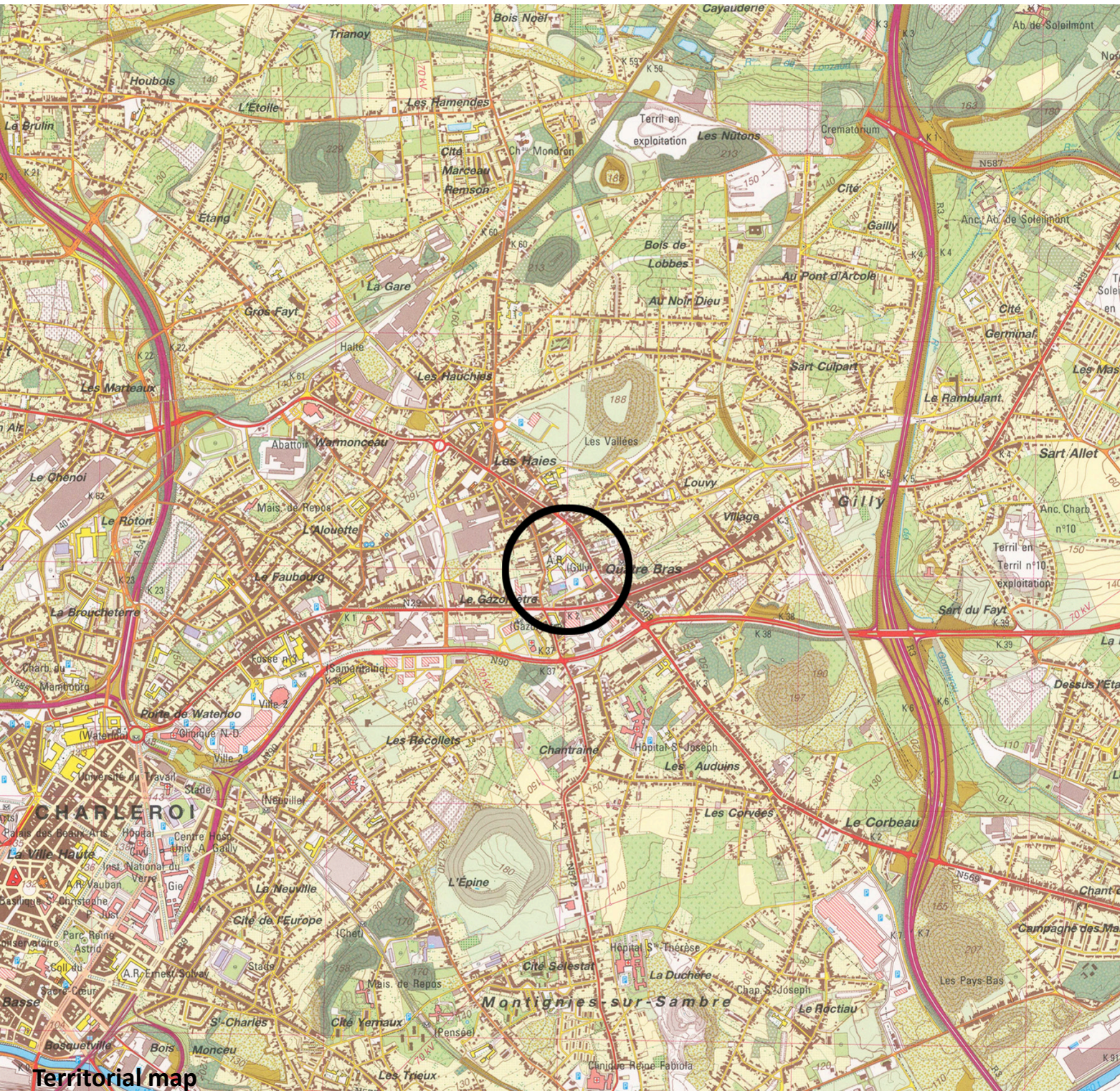


CATEGORY: Town planning and architecture
SITE'S FAMILY: How to create positive dynamics from a difficult situation ?
LOCATION: Charleroi, Gilly, Place Destrée
POPULATION: 203,753 habitants
STUDY SITE: +/- 11.40 hectares
SITE OF PROJECT: 2.50 hectares
SITE PROPOSED BY: City of Charleroi and Charleroi Bouwmeester
OWNERS OF THE SITE: City of Charleroi
COMMISSION AFTER COMPETITION: Town planning study, architectural design of public spaces and some buildings.
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE TEAM: Town planner, landscape architect and architect

HOW THE SITE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE "ADAPTABLE CITY"?
 An old industrial community to the East of Charleroi, Gilly has developed along the communication lines that link the North of the Charleroi conurbation to the town of Châtelet in the South, as well as to the Centre of Charleroi and its periphery to the East towards Fleurus and Namur. With its many shops and public facilities, the "Quatre bras de Gilly" crossroads constitute the pole of attraction of the former municipality, now merged with Charleroi. The transit traffic is diverted by the fast lane known as the "Route de la Basse Sambre" [Lower Sambre Route] and the tram has been replaced by a light metro on the site in the Gilly crossing. In spite of a loss in economic vitality and a drop in its social life, Quatre bras remains the heart of Gilly. Its appeal must be further enhanced, however, to re-endow it with a quality of life and urban intensity that can spell renewal for the quarter.

CITY STRATEGY
 The city of Charleroi went through a major economic development thanks to its coal mines, and steel and glass making plants. Like all industrial cities, its residential fabric is closely related to the places of the activities and crossed by numerous road, waterway and public transport infrastructures and facilities. Following the de-industrialisation process and discontinuance of the old activities, the city has undergone a process of rehabilitation. One of the lines of action is intended to give the city back to its inhabitants. Major renewal work is in progress in the city centre. A polycentric city resulting from the addition of industrial communities that were independent until the merger of municipalities in 1977, the municipal authorities wish to complete this action in the centre of town through actions in the secondary hubs. The Place Destrée in Gilly proposed to European 13 is one of those projects.



Territorial map



Urban aerial view

SITE DEFINITION

To the north of the Quatre bras de Gilly crossroads, the Place Destrée plays host to the Town Hall Annexe. It is the heart of a public service quarter comprising different facilities: school buildings, sports complex, cultural centre, libraries, rooms for associations and public parks. The light metro goes through the site underground with a station accessible from the Place Destrée. An isolated building in the centre of an extended area, the Town Hall Annexe boasts imposing volumes that hide the rear part of the public space. Taken over by parked cars, this area no longer plays its role as user-friendly space for social cohesion. The municipal authorities wish to review the organisation of the public space surrounding the Town Hall Annexe, both its front side on the Chaussée de Lodelinsart and its rear side, by retaining a link with the Chaussée de Charleroi in the south.

FUTURE OF THE SITE IN RELATION OF THE SITE'S FAMILY AND ADAPTABILITY

The municipality is keen to create a multi-functional, user-friendly public square that appeals through its varied moods, so as to constitute an urban pole of attraction for the neighbourhood. Whereas this desire to boost the appeal of the site is clearly stated, the options for development are open. With European 13, the town wishes to obtain an open-ended development plan, which while allowing existing activities to be continued on the site, takes into account current or expected changes. The existing car parks are to be moved to another location on the project site. Renewal operations on old residential housing is in progress in the vicinity of the project site. By reorganising the site, the town wishes to reinforce the interest of private real-estate promoters for new public and private housing operations.

The reflection on the future of public buildings on the project site must also be integrated into the approach. According to the options for the administrative reorganisation of the city under consideration, the administrative function of the Town Hall Annexe will be preserved. The participants are invited to develop a plan for the ground floor of this building and for the relations between the interior and the public space. Access to the “Temps choisi” cultural centre must be reconsidered. The organisation of the sports complex is to be reviewed: demolition/reconstruction or renovation. As the fate of certain buildings on the project site is uncertain, the candidates are invited to propose an open-ended solution that will make it possible to keep the site operating during its “revamping” phase.

Charleroi - Belgium - european 13



