

Scale L: Urban-architectural

Location: Kaerntner Strasse, Graz, Austria

Population: 320.000 inhab.

Strategic site: 110 ha

Project site: 43 ha

Site proposed by: City of Graz

Actors involved: City of Graz

Owner of the site: City of Graz / Department of Urban Development

Post-competition phase: Urban master plan and design guide for public space
/pilot scheme for other access roads

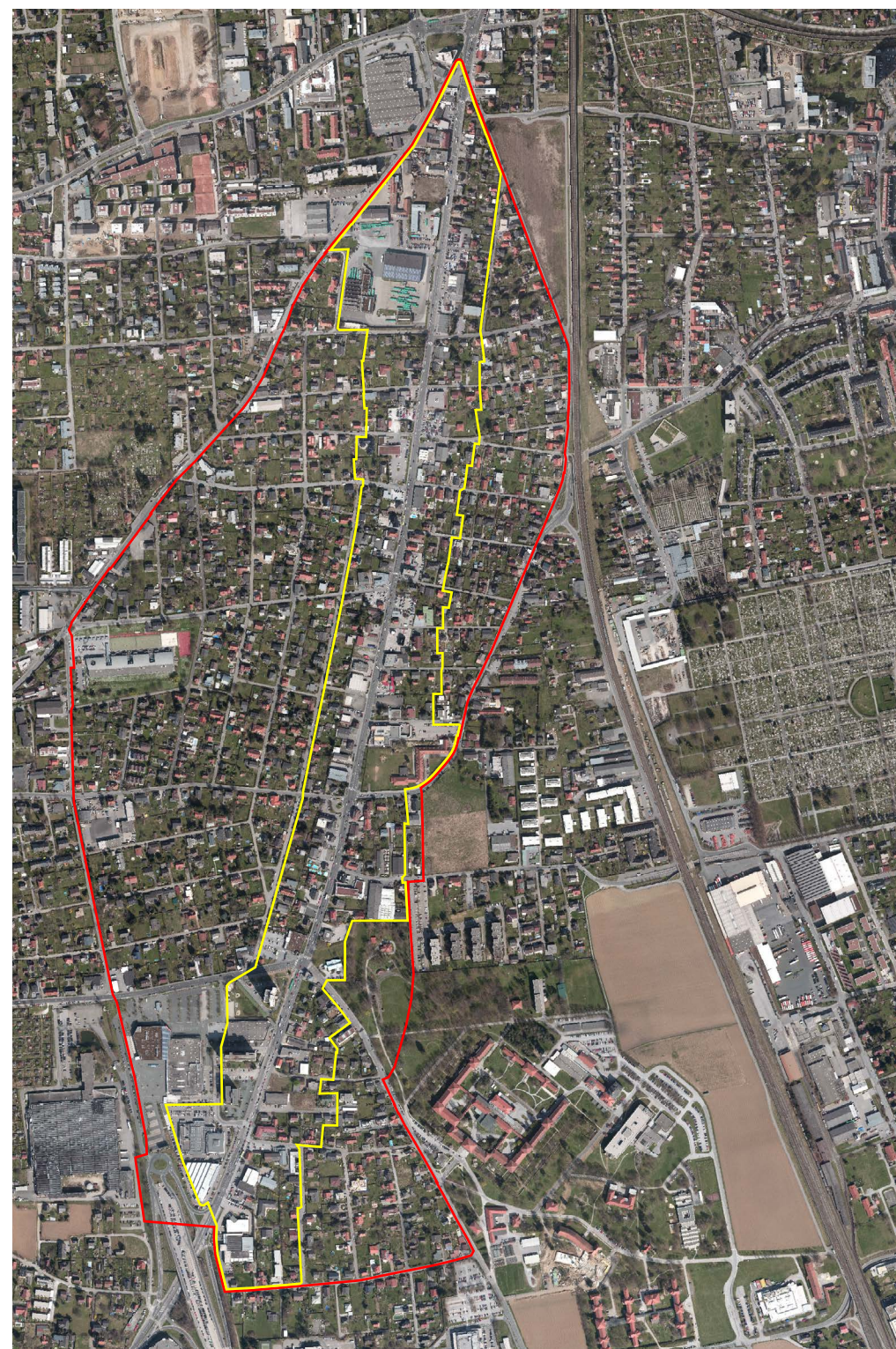
Team representative: Architect, urbanist, landscape architect

HOW CAN THE SITE CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRODUCTIVE CITY?

Kärntner Straße might be the most extreme and at the same time most typical example for suburban access roads all over Europe: its street front is a fascinating amalgam of radically converted single-family houses turned into car sellers or brothels, and suburban boxes featuring home-depot-markets, coffee shops, restaurants and playrooms – all dedicated to a productive strip with an array of lights and signs. Yet, the productive crust, which forms the street front layer, hides a huge housing carpet in the back. Characteristically, between these two developments there is an absolute lack of relationship. Establishing new transversal connections would link the territorial economy of the street to a local level, creating new potentials of productive programs at the crossing point of a supra-regional and a local urbanity.

CITY STRATEGY

Kärntner Straße is one of the most frequented, most visible, yet most neglected urban spaces in the city of Graz, strongly defining the first impression and therefore the identity of the city. By specific modes of densification, programming and landscaping, the city of Graz, partner of European 14, aims at upgrading Kärntner Straße into an urban boulevard in order to provide a better living environment for visitors, locals and workers alike. Instead of a project with fixed and rigid outlines, the City of Graz calls for a vision for Kärntner Straße based on a strategic master plan that may be applied flexibly. The winning proposal shall broadly be published, promoting Kärntner Straße as a new role model for access roads in order to trigger future activities and investments. Moreover, the winning team will be commissioned with an urban master plan and design guide for public space for Kärntner Straße, serving as a pilot scheme for other access roads.



SITE DEFINITION Kärntner Straße is regarded to be the access road with the biggest dynamic and highest potential for transformation in Graz, as its explicit suburban character doesn't meet at all with the requirements of an urban, inner city street that Kärntner Straße has become in the past 50 years. Connecting the city centre with regional as well as supra-regional destinations like Carinthia (Kärnten), the street has successively been incorporated in the municipal area with today over 5 kilometres running inner-city, mostly leading through small scale housing developments that along Kärntner Straße have radically transformed into hybrid structures due to the strong influence of heavy traffic. Because of the disproportional strong population growth of Graz in the past 10 years, the incentives of the European project could trigger an investment boom that could be initiated along Kärntner Straße which will push major transformations within the next years.

HOW IS PRODUCTION CONSIDERED IN THE URBAN DIVERSITY PROGRAM ?

The transformation of Kärntner Straße has been causing strong contrasts between the hybrid street front – featuring a bizarre universe of extensive programs like car dealers, medical trade, night clubs, tattoo studios etc. – and the remaining small scale housing developments in the back. The non-communication between these two areas is characteristic. Beyond, the burden of heavy traffic has led to devastated public spaces and abandoned buildings. Yet, the hybrid building structure of Kärntner can hardly meet new challenges, neither regarding the provision of appropriate qualities for its own development, nor to solve the situation of non-communication with adjacent residential areas.

Hence, the challenge is to enrich the structure of existing economies by involving the cut-off residential areas into the programs along the strip. By introducing a transversal link between the productive strip and the housing developments in the back, new forms of mobility, additional forms of production and new demands on the quality of buildings and public space shall be provoked. The unique link between excellent car-access and a sustainable soft mobility network in the residential area could trigger a broader bandwidth of production including various services, local supply, manufacturing and leisure facilities.

European 14 – Graz (AT)



