

BRUSSELS

CIVA



EUROPAN 16

Living cities

CARE

Dealing with new uses

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1. Site Issues regarding E16 Themes

CARE - Dealing with new uses

A future for the former CIVA (Centre international pour la Ville et le Paysage – International Center for City and Landscape)

In 2023, a new museum center will open its doors to the public in the former Citroën garage along the Canal.

For the Rue de l'Ermitage site, this opening will mean the relocation of all activities and collections.

Two wings articulate the construction: a first building built between 1895 and 1901, originally housing a "secondary electrical factory".

In 1983, this building was converted into offices for the Compagnie intercommunale bruxelloise des eaux (CIBE), and at the end of the 1980s it became the premises of the Fondation pour l'Architecture.

This complex was completed in 2000 with the inauguration of a new wing along Rue de l'Ermitage. Resulting from an architectural competition, it includes exhibition rooms, archive rooms, offices, a library and a conference room. This way The CIVA was created, an institution that integrates the Foundation for Architecture and other associations that culturally promote the urban environment.

The planned relocation of the CIVA leads us to think about a new future for this built ensemble. Conceived as an enclosed space, centered on itself, the hypothesis of a reallocation makes it possible to envisage new relationships between the buildings and their environment.

Positioned at the rear of the site, a water reservoir operated by the water distribution company Vivaqua is part of the project's study area. Built in 1855, this reservoir is covered by a grass roof, which is now inaccessible and not activated in terms of use. The layout of the roads bordering the CIVA can also be rethought.

For the buildings making up the CIVA, several questions arise: what vocation(s) should this former museum facility be given? What programs should be integrated into these buildings and what interventions should be carried out on them? What housing potential (public/social)? How can the site be thought out in interaction with its context, so that it becomes a living center for this district of Ixelles? How can the water reservoir be integrated into the project while respecting its operational constraints?

2. SITE PARTICULARITIES REGARDING THE ORGANIZATION OF THE COMPETITION

SITE REPRESENTATIVE

Société d'Aménagement Urbain (SAU) of Brussels Capital Region

ACTOR(S) INVOLVED

Vivaqua, Commune d'Ixelles, Urban.Brussels, Commission Royale des Monuments et Sites

TEAM REPRESENTATIVE

architect

EXPECTED SKILLS REGARDING THE SITE'S ISSUES AND CHARACTERISTICS

architect, urban designer, landscape architect, structural and technical engineer(s)

COMMUNICATION

Anonymous publication (online or in an exhibition) after the 1st jury round

Communication after the competition (with the events dates when known)

JURY – 1ST EVALUATION

with the participation of the site representatives

POST-COMPETITION INTERMEDIATE PROCEDURE

Depending on project relevance

Direct selection of one winning team for a detailed Building-Program Study.

or

Workshop onsite with the rewarded teams (winner(s), runner(s)-up, special mention(s)) allowing the site representative(s) to choose a team for the implementation phase.

3. Situation of the site in the city

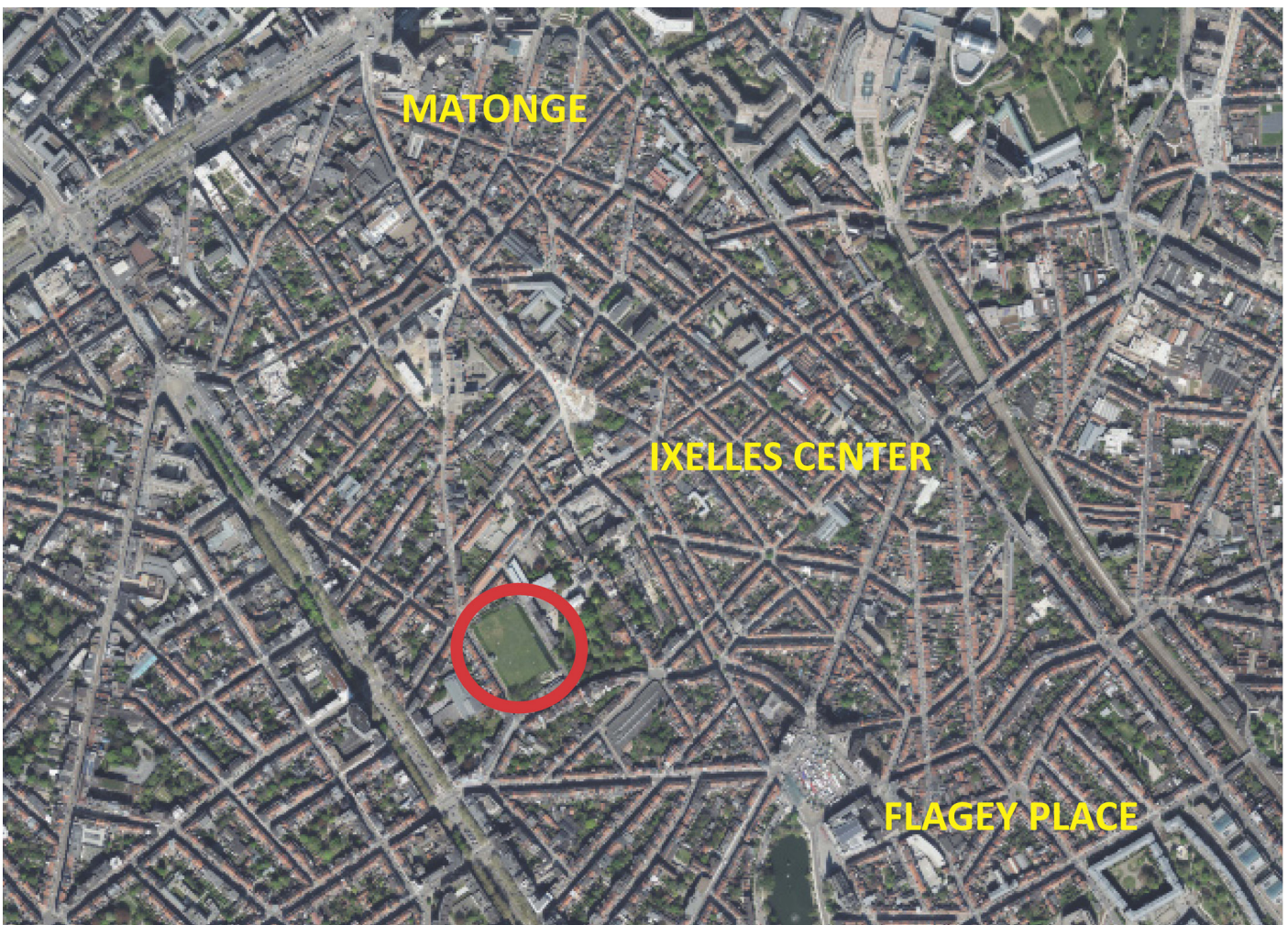
The “CIVA” site is located on the territory of the Commune of Ixelles, in an urban fabric of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century which developed after the demolition of the city walls of the Old Regime, also called the “first ring”.

Today this area is part of the central city, with a population that has a socio-economic level above the regional average.

In general, the area is well served in terms of public facilities, shops, etc. More specifically, the site is located near 3 neighborhood centers, namely:



- Matonge and the Place Fernand Cocq, with the City Hall of the Commune of Ixelles, at the end of an important commercial artery, the Chaussée d'Ixelles, recently pedestrianized;
- Place Flagey, which is an important commercial and popular center. On weekends, it hosts a market that is very popular. Place Flagey is also a major cultural center in Brussels with the presence of the cultural center "Flagey" and the Marni Theater. The Faculty of Architecture La Cambre-Horta of ULB also has its premises there;
- the Place du Châtelain, which works in "binomial" with the Rue du Baili and the Place de la Trinité. The Place du Châtelain hosts a very popular weekly market.



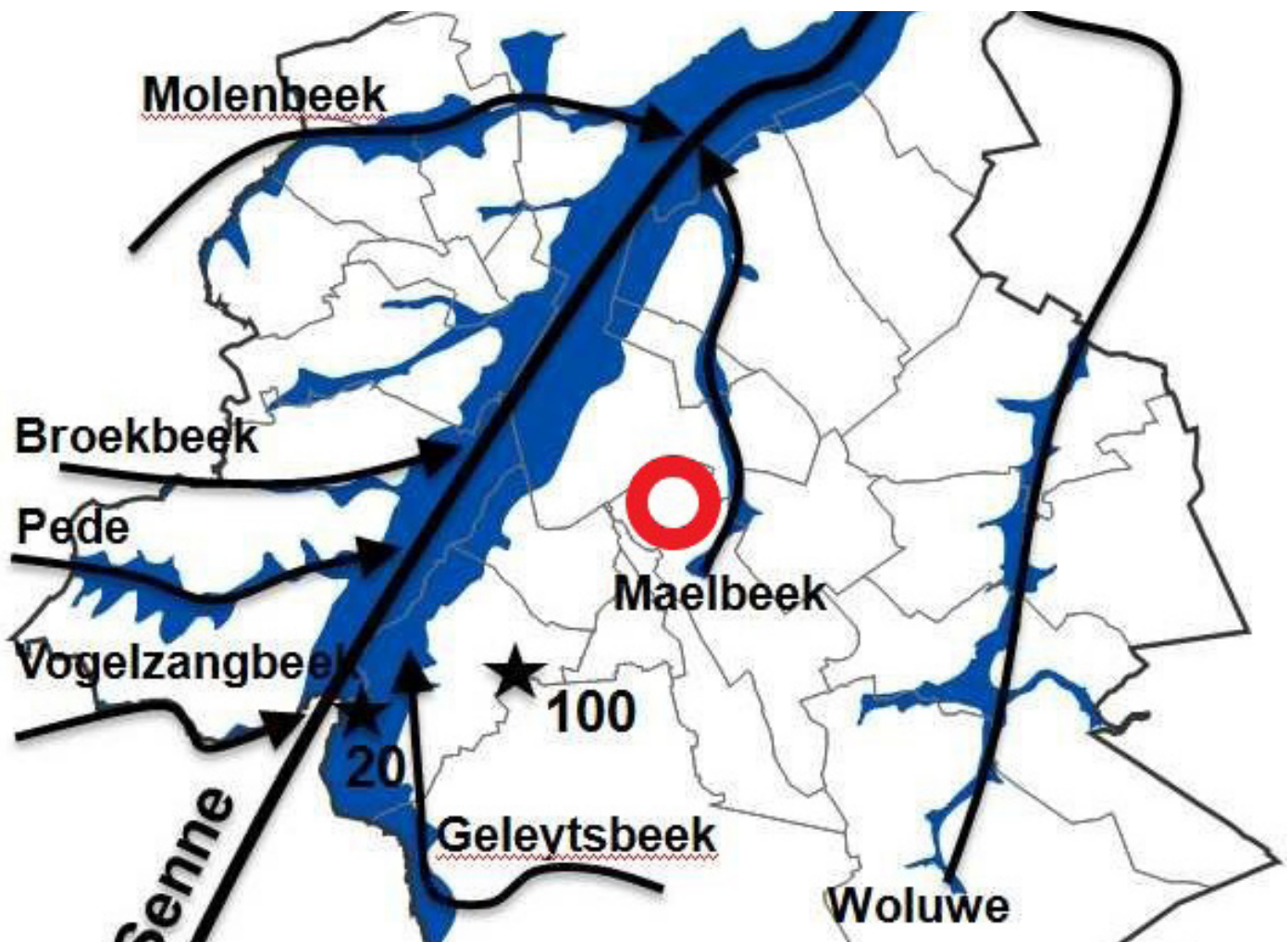
These neighborhood centers are linked to one of the main arteries of the city, Avenue Louise, which is both a primary commercial axis of the city and an axis of service activities (law offices, consultancy, headquarters,...). Avenue Louise was built in the 19th century to connect downtown Brussels with its new green lung, the Bois de la Cambre. It is a prestigious axis of the city along which one finds a residential building resulting from the first phase of urbanization (including achievements of the architect Victor Horta) and which underwent an important process of transformation of its building, during the 1970's in particular, with demolitions/constructions giving way to modernist office buildings.

The CIVA site is not directly served by efficient public transport.

The 54 bus runs along the Rue de la Vanne, but one must go to Avenue Louise or the Chaussée d'Ixelles to find an efficient public transport system: streetcars 93, 8, 81 at Avenue Louise and the 71 bus at the Chaussée d'Ixelles, respectively.

The territory of the Brussels-Capital Region is developed on 3 parallel valleys of small rivers and streams (today for the most part intubated in the network of sewers), namely the Senne, the Maelbeek and the Molenbeek. The CIVA site is located on the ridge that divides the Senne Valley from the Maelbeek Valley.

This elevated position also explains the location of the drinking water reservoir behind the CIVA.



The CIVA site is located in a neighborhood mainly composed of single-family houses and small condominiums, typical for the urban extensions of the 19th century.

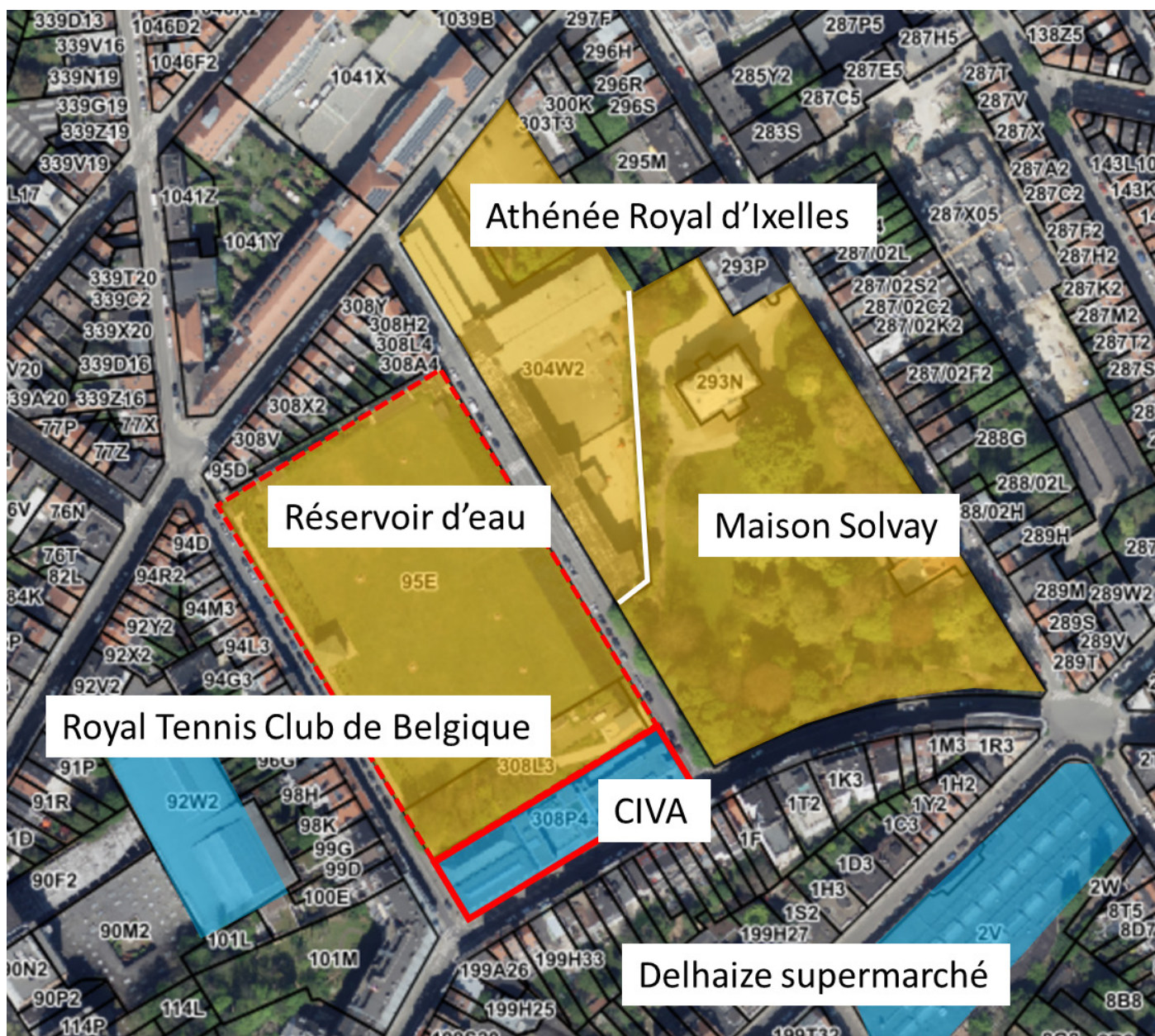
The rue de l'Ermitage, along which the CIVA is located, is characterized by the presence of several modernist apartment buildings, such as number 28 built by the architect L.H.Deconinck (1938) or number 48 built by M.Peeters, author of one of the first Brussels skyscrapers (Pavillons Français in Schaerbeek - 1935). At number 86 of the street is a former Masonic lodge, built in 1934 by the architect F.Bodson.

The immediate surroundings of the site are characterized by the presence of large properties composed essentially of open but fenced spaces:

- The Solvay House: the former residence of the founder of the Solvay group, Ernest Solvay, which is still today a seminar center for the Solvay group ("Solvay House"). The villa is situated in a large garden with old beech trees and other species typical of the large urban gardens of the early 20th century.
- The Vivaqua water reservoir: this is a semi-buried water reservoir built in 1855 and which guarantees the distribution of drinking water to the Brussels population living in this sector of the city. Because of its underground but elevated character, it allows clear views and vis-à-vis for the surrounding buildings. The reservoir is fed by water catchments located in the Bois de la Cambre, in the Forêt de Soignes, and beyond, in the Walloon Region. The pavilion located in the rue de la Vanne would have been built by the architect J.Poelaert, author of the monumental Palais de Justice in Brussels.
- The Royal Athenaeum of Ixelles: a modernist school, designed in 1954 by the architect Marcel Lambrichs and built in two phases: 1954 and 1962. In the rue du Couvent, two parallelepipedic volumes frame a blind recessed bay. This wall was originally made of glass bricks.

Near the site are also some facilities that create morphological caesuras:

- Delhaize Flagey: a large supermarket opened in 1957, in the excitement of the World's Fair that would take place a year later in Brussels, and which would be the first self-service supermarket in Europe;
- The Royal Tennis Club of Belgium, whose infrastructure was opened in 1954 and is characterized by its location in the heart of the block.



4. Intervention and reflection perimeters

Within the framework of the European competition, a reflection on the scale of two perimeters is proposed:

- The intervention perimeter is limited to the “CIVA” site
- The perimeter of reflection also includes the Vivaqua water reservoir and the streets bordering both the CIVA and the reservoir (rue de l’Ermitage, rue de la Vanne, rue du Couvent).



On the “CIVA” site, a complete programming and architectural intervention exercise is requested. There is no specific program decided upon at this time.

However, certain guidelines have already been established, and fully inscribe the CIVA in the theme of Living Cities:

- The regional and SAU will to start the reflection from the capital constituted by the existing buildings (both the old power station and the contemporary extension) and to maintain on this site a project of public interest, whether it is public equipment and/or public housing;
- The teams are invited to reflect more specifically on the “housing” potential of this site in combination with one or more public programs to be determined. This reflection takes into account the visual clearance offered to the rear on the Vivaqua site;
- It is not envisioned that the land will be removed from the UAA property holdings. Any project should therefore be compatible with this constraint of a land that will remain public.
- A project that is in line with the regional will in terms of circularity (objective “Low Carbon Region”) and on this basis therefore to increase the climate resilience of its real estate and built-up areas;
- A project that can be realized for a reasonable budget, depending on the public means and/or own funds available at the UAS. Project economics is a consideration;
- A project that takes into account the heritage values of the buildings as a whole.

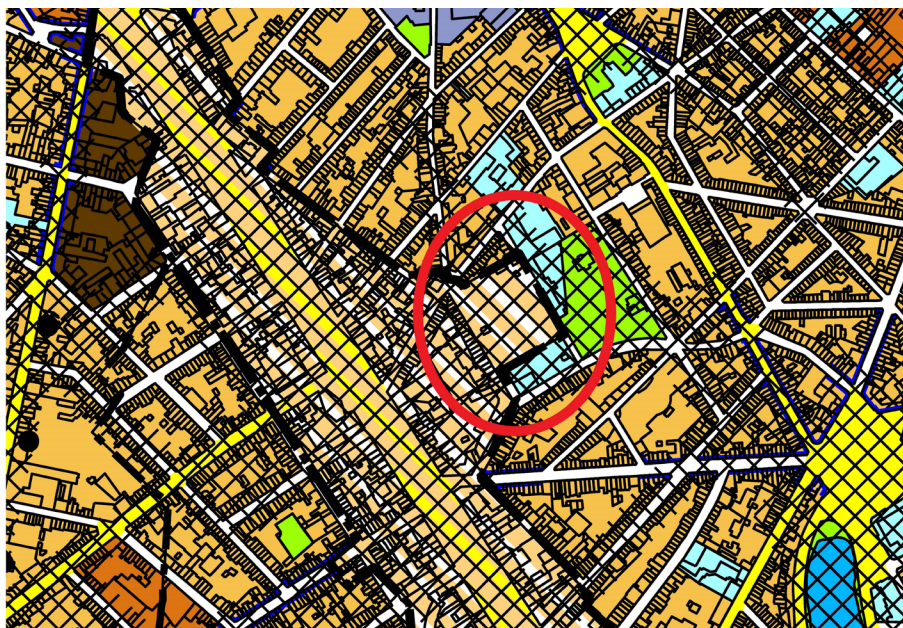
The vision developed must take care to improve the living environment of the inhabitants of Brussels and propose solutions that are just as beneficial to the city project as the current function.

As far as the Vivaqua site is concerned, the stakes are the following:

- The use of the surface of the reservoir to integrate the possibility of renewable energy production in connection with the development of the CIVA project site;
- A landscaping of the slopes allowing a minimal maintenance and an intelligent management of rainwater;
- Enhancement of the historic pavilions on the site (for example, but not limited to: renovation by sandblasting of the reservoir outlet tank which is a unique and historic monument; remodeling, renovation, replacement of the water inlet pavilions so that they are better incorporated into the environment and at the same time remove the old water inlet pavilion of the Hain collector...);
- Improvement of the security of access to the site (renovation of the gates on Rue du Couvent, physical delimitation with the future CIVA site) knowing that the grassy area and the Vivaqua site in general must, for security reasons, remain inaccessible.

The reflections on the CIVA and Vivaqua site can also lead the teams to develop reflections on the development of the public space framing the land perimeters.

5. Regulatory context



The CIVA site (intervention perimeter) is subject to the following regulations

PRAS (Regional Land Use Plan)

Allocation: public interest or public service equipment zones (prescriptions E.8. of the PRAS).

These zones are dedicated to the reception of “public equipment” type activities. They can also accommodate housing.

RRU (Regional Town Planning Regulations)

The Regional Town Planning Regulations define the town planning prescriptions for the entire territory of the Brussels Capital Region. It came into force on January 3, 2007 and includes 7 titles:

- Title I: characteristics of buildings and their surroundings
- Title II: standards of habitability of housing
- Title III: building sites *title partially repealed - see coordinated version of Title III currently in force
- Title IV : accessibility of buildings for people with reduced mobility
- Title V: thermal insulation of buildings **title totally repealed
- Title VI: advertising and signs
- Title VII : roadways, accesses and surroundings
- Title VIII: parking standards off the public highway

The CIVA site is located in a zone well served by public transport (zone B), in relation to parking standards (Title VIII)

MONUMENTS AND SITES

The site and the buildings are not the object of a classification decree but are listed in the Inventory of Architectural Heritage (see below) which means that these buildings are not subject to any particular protection but are part of the cultural heritage of the Brussels-Capital Region.

6. Focus on the “CIVA” building

The current occupant: the CIVA

The CIVA is at the same time a museum, an archive, a library and a meeting and discussion place for those who are passionate about architecture, landscape, the urban ecosystem and history in Brussels. Temporary exhibitions, conferences, debates, guided tours, book presentations and children's activities take place throughout the year. The archive houses more than 500 collections, including those of Victor Bourgeois, René Braem, Victor Horta, Akarova and René Pechère.

Since 2000, the CIVA has been housed in the Rue de l'Ermitage buildings, but from 2024 it will be housed in the Kanal-Pompidou project, in the former Citroën garage near the Willebroek Canal in downtown Brussels. The reflection carried out within the framework of European 16 must therefore lead to the future of the site once the buildings have been emptied of their collections and the museum function they house.

A group of 2 buildings

The building is located on a plot of land with a surface area of 2,212 m² at the address Rue de l'Ermitage 55/Rue de la Vanne 2, 1050 Ixelles.

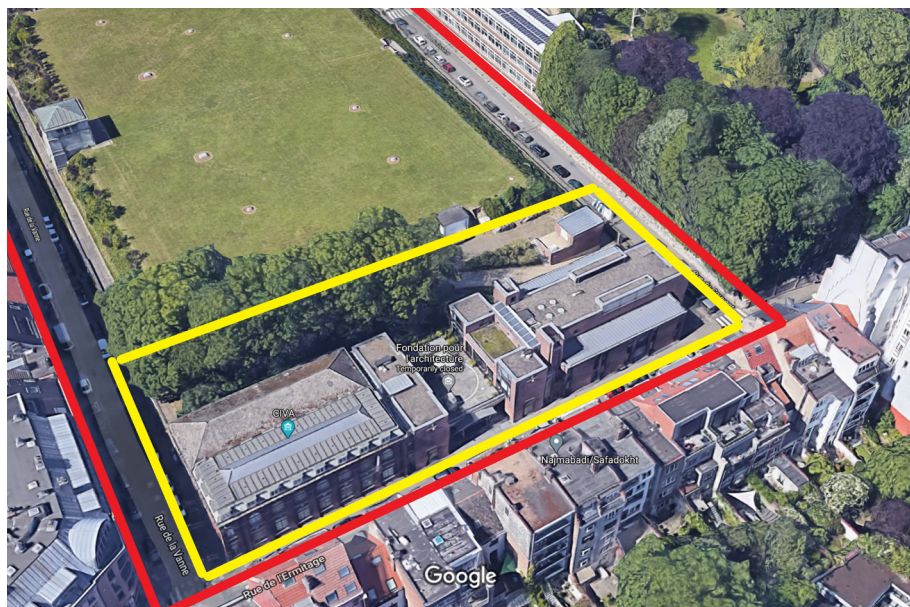
The property is composed of two contiguous parts, communicating with each other, namely :

- A wing built at the end of the 19th century, the former secondary electricity factory;
- An extension built at the end of the 20th century.

The two wings have a total area of 6,583 m² (excluding technical premises).

The building complex has several entrances:

- The main entrance is located in the middle of the Rue de l'Ermitage and gives access to the different wings of the building;
- The building of the former secondary electricity factory has two entrances on Rue de la Vanne;
- The CIVA extension also has a logistical access from Rue du Couvent.



6.1. The old secondary electricity factory

The former “secondary electricity factory”, of eclectic style, was built by the architect Emile Devreux in 1895. The building has an area of 1,407 m² (excluding technical premises).

It is a rectangular building composed of 2 contiguous bays of respectively 3 and 2 levels above ground presenting developments in frontage of +/- 20,5m in Rue de la Vanne and +/- 29,5m in Rue de l’Ermitage.

The 2nd floor has a smaller surface area since it only occupies the front bay located on the Rue de l’Ermitage frontage, with a width of +/- 29.5 meters and a depth of +/- 10 meters.

The building is characterized for its architecture by the following elements:

- Elevation of fourteen bays on two levels - eight bays on rue de l’Ermitage, six on rue de la Vanne - in red brick enhanced by bluestone elements.
- The bays of the first floor have round arches.
- The three bays on the left side of rue de la Vanne are the result of an extension by the same architect in 1901.
- Mansard roof with eleven dormers (resulting from a 1949 conversion) - eight on rue de l’Ermitage, three on rue de la Vanne.
- Original sash joinery partially preserved.
- Inside, cast iron columns and metal beams supporting the structure.
- Remarkable brick ceiling with voussettes.

The building was completely renovated in 1999 for the development of the CIVA and is now composed of 3 above-ground levels used as exhibition rooms, classrooms and offices,

The building is served by 2 main stairwells located at its 2 ends: at the front left of the wing facing Rue de l’Ermitage and at the back right of the rear wing (water tank side). A sanitary block is located on the second floor next to the stairwell in the front wing.

The clear heights (from structure slab to structure slab) vary according to the levels:

- level +2 => +/- 2.4 meters under roof trusses and +/- 2.65 meters under false ceiling (dormer side)
- level +1 => +/- 3,7 meters under beams
- level +0 => +/- 4,6 meters under beam

These are largely sufficient for the installation of modern techniques, mainly ventilation.

The building communicates directly with the new part via a vertical circulation block composed of a stairwell and a freight elevator located in the junction zone of 2 parts.



Old building: originally built to house the secondary electricity plant, it was transformed in 1983 into the offices of the Brussels Intercommunal Water Company (CIBE, the predecessor of Vivaqua). The building is now occupied by part of the CIVA.

6.2. An extension for the CIVA

At the end of the 1990s, a contemporary building was constructed to accommodate the CIVA on the site. The building, built according to the plans of a French architect (architect J-P Garric), winner of an international architectural competition, was inaugurated in 2000, the year in which Brussels hosted the “Cultural Capital of Europe” initiative.

The extension is in dialogue with both the small scale of the neighborhood’s fabric of residential homes but also with the scale of the large walled estates that characterize the neighborhood.

The building includes 3 levels above ground assigned to the use of offices, library and multi-purpose premises, with a total surface area of 2,365 m² above ground (excluding technical premises) and 3 levels in the basement assigned essentially to the use of archives and an auditorium with a total surface area of 2,811 m² (excluding technical premises)

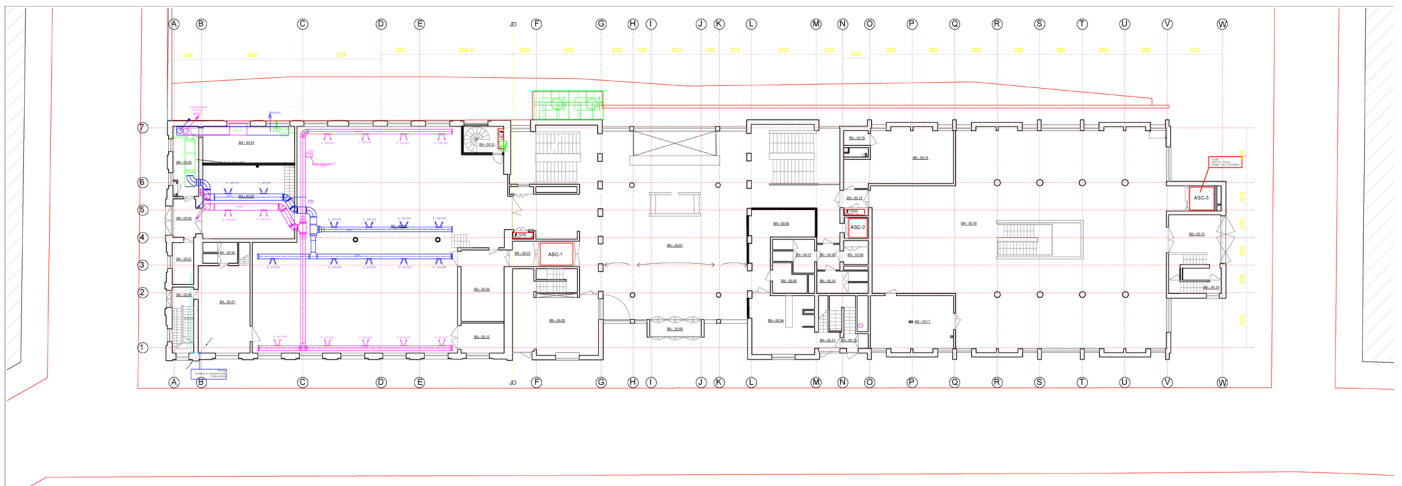
This construction is located in front of the rue de l’Ermitage where it presents a facade development of +/- 57 meters (including the junction block). The building is served at all levels by 2 circulation blocks located at its 2 ends. Each block consists of one or two stairwells and an elevator or freight elevator.



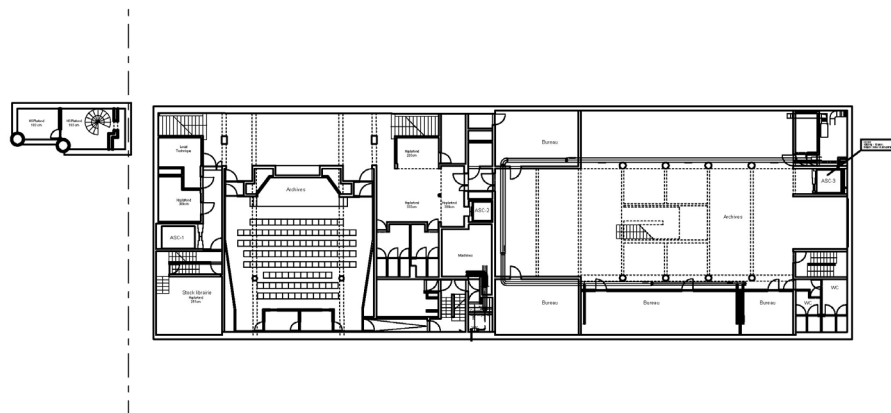
The third circulation block is located on the other side of the main entrance hall and makes the connection between the old and the new part. The sanitary facilities are adjacent to the circulation block serving the new part only to the right of the entrance hall. The location of the restrooms is not suitable for multi-tenant occupancy.

The building is generally in a good state of maintenance and was built with quality materials, which is visible in its finishes. For a possible redevelopment, it is important to present a careful, respectful and circular approach to the existing materials and techniques.

Very large rooms occupy the center of the main wing. These rooms, which vary in size from +/- 350 to 400 m², are allocated for library use on the first and first floors. The headroom in these central areas is significant.

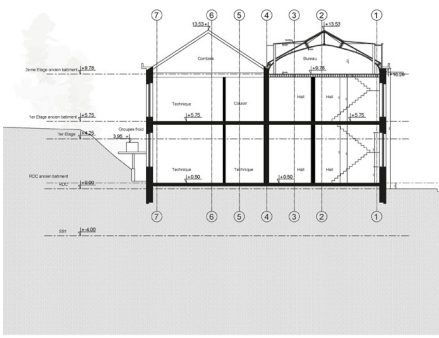


Plan Level 00

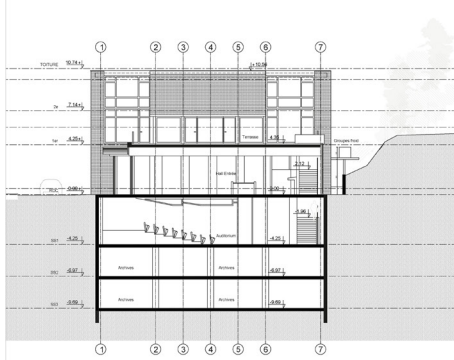


Plan Level - 1

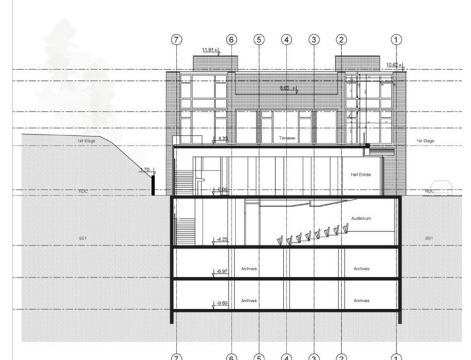
COUPE AA



COUPE BB



COUPE CC



The height of the central room on the second floor is spread over two levels and corridors have been built around this central area on the second floor.

The clearances vary by level:

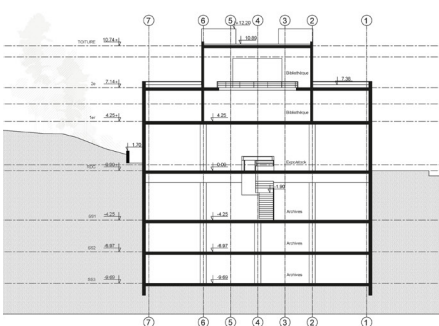
- level +2 => 2,6m under ceiling
- level +1 => +/- 2,6m under slab
- level +0 => +/- 3,6m under slab and +/- 3,9m in the central room
- level -1 => +/- 3,25m under beam
- level -2 => +/- 2,4M under slab
- level -3 => +/- 2,4M under slab

The basement is mainly composed of technical and archiving spaces in very large archive areas under the large central rooms.

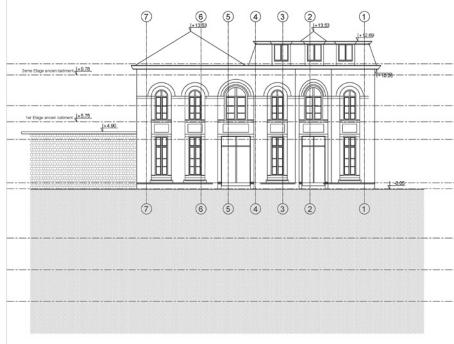
The building has no on-site parking. The structure of the basement and the logistical organization of the building do not allow for the construction of an underground parking lot.

An auditorium has been built in the first basement just below the junction area.

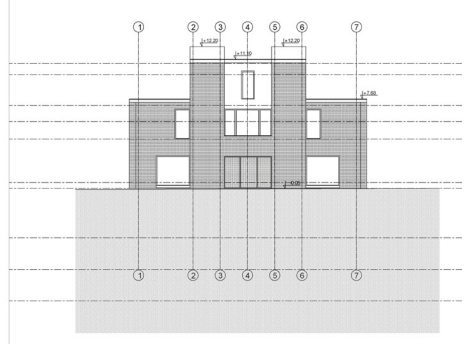
COUPE DD



ELEVATION 1



ELEVATION 2







6.3. Drink Water Reservoir - Vivaqua Site

This reservoir, fed via an underground aqueduct, has been supplied with water from the Hain, the Forêt de Soignes and the Bois de La Cambre since 1855.

It is built semi-subterranean, covered by land, thus forming a promontory and occupying almost the entire block between Rue de la Vanne and Rue du Couvent.

The reservoir collects and buffers the drinking water for the lower town in the Senne Valley.

The access pavilion, built in 1857, with a hipped roof, is attributed to the architect Joseph Poelaert.

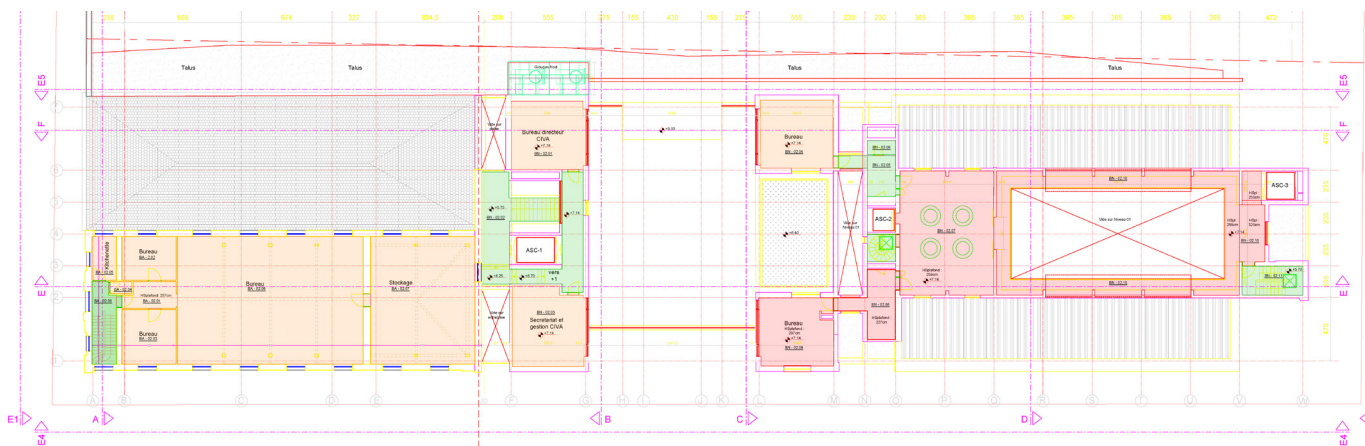
The vehicular access to the site is located in the Rue du Couvent, next to the logistic access of the CIVA.

For obvious security reasons, this site is inaccessible to the public and should remain so in the future.

The company Vivaqua, which manages it, is however open to suggestions concerning its development (see above).



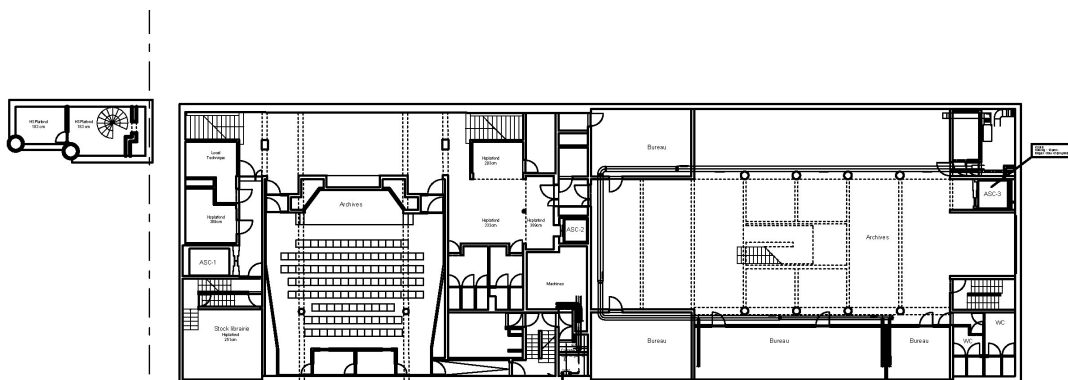
Level +2



Level +1



Level 00



Level - 1

COUPE AA

