

Regenerating Hôtel-Dieu to create an open and living environment

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Team representative: architect, urbanist and landscape architect

Location: Nantes Métropole (44)

Population: 656 275 inhab.

Strategic site: 80 ha

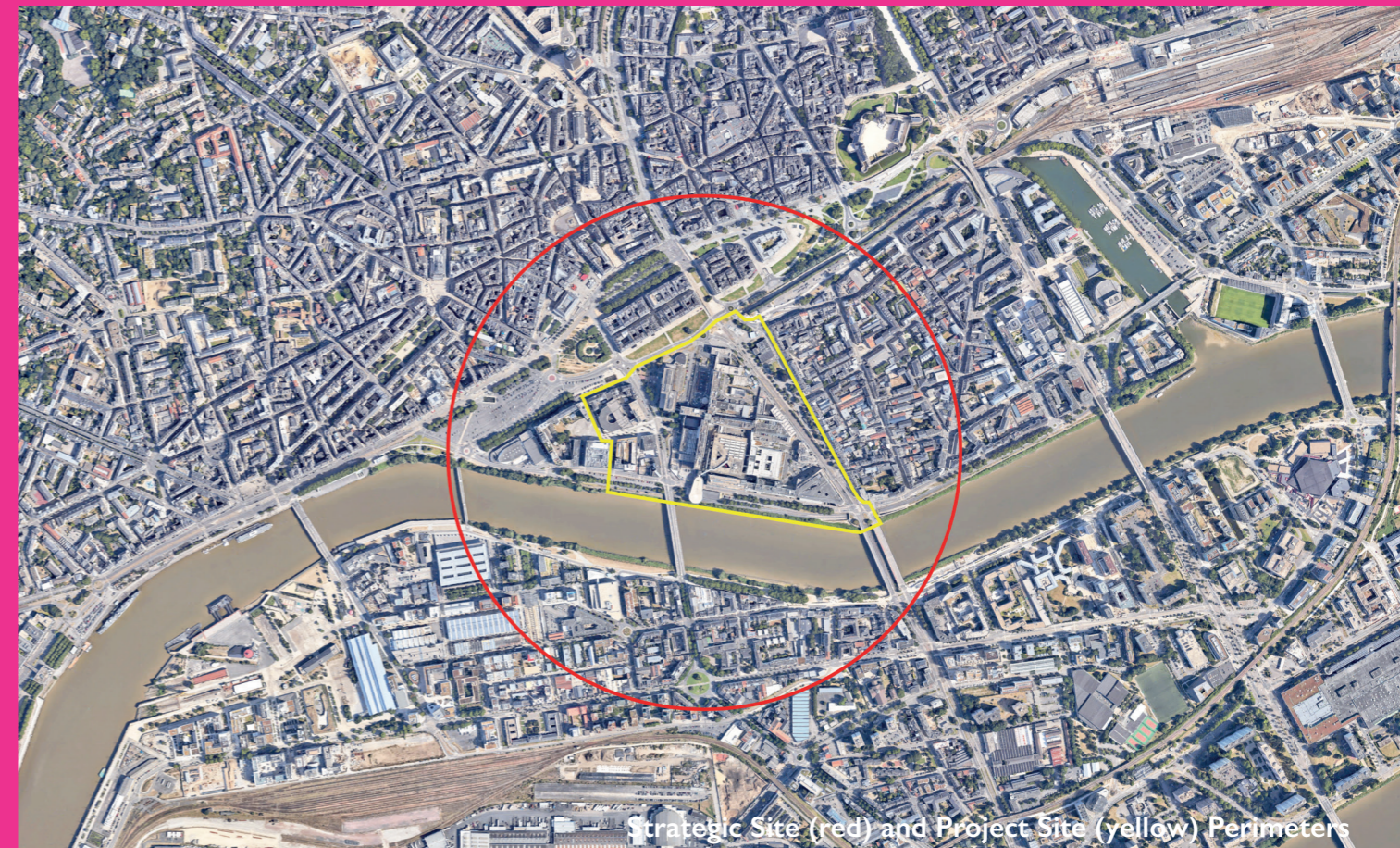
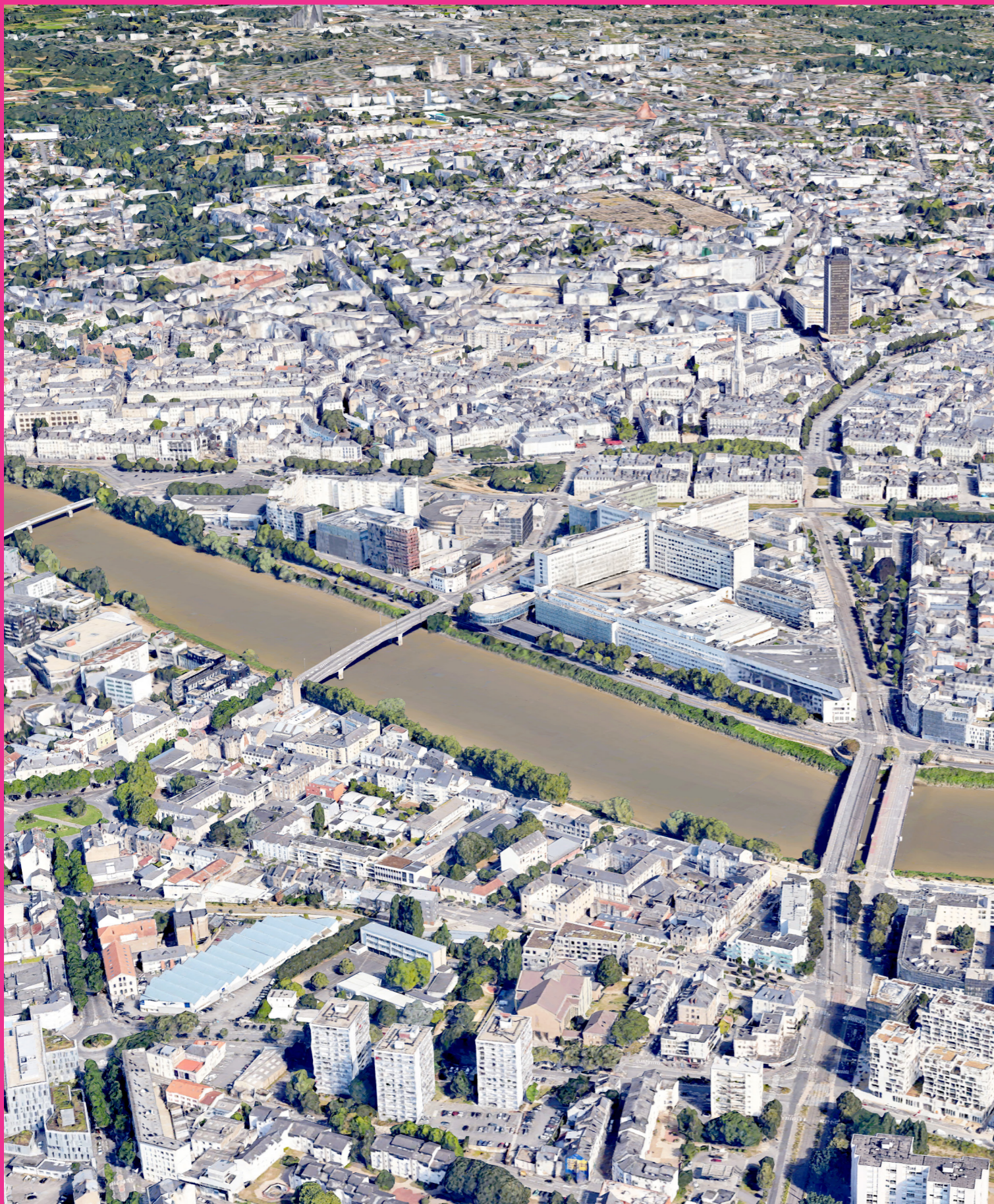
Project site: 18,4 ha

Site proposed by: Nantes Métropole

Actors involved: Nantes Métropole, city of Nantes, SAMOA

Owner(s) of the site: Nantes Métropole, State, French Blood Institution, University Hospital, University of Nantes

Commission after competition: Study and project development assignments to explore the strategic proposals in greater depth, feasibility studies on the project site including preliminary proposals for uses and/or reuse of buildings, urban project management and/or architectural commissions.



Strategic Site (red) and Project Site (yellow) Perimeters

INHABITED MILIEU'S CHALLENGES

The site of the Hôtel-Dieu is currently a mono-functional hospital-university isola, densely built and without any link with the spaces that surround it. The large scale of its buildings nevertheless makes it very visible in the urban landscape of Nantes. A veritable hospital megastructure, the Hôtel-Dieu is made up of a disparate group of buildings built between 1951 and 2013, the most emblematic of which - and the first to be built - is the cross building designed by Michel Roux-Spitz, the architect of the rebuilding of Nantes. This metal-framed building with concrete facades reaches a height of 42 m and has a total floor area of 76,000 m². The other buildings were built between the wings of the cross as medicine evolved and as the number of patients and students increased, until they reached more than 250,000 m² of floor space. Some of them form landmark buildings that now symbolize the CHU in the same way as the cross. As a result of these years of successive extensions, the site of the Hôtel-Dieu is hidden from the flow of the city and is 95% built and waterproofed, leaving little room for living animals and plants. The soil of this block, made up of fill from the former Hôtel-Dieu destroyed during the Second World War to a depth of 3 to 6 meters, is all the more inert as most of the connections between the different departments of the hospital are made by a highly developed underground network.

The relocation of the University Hospital by 2027 to new buildings currently under construction on the island of Nantes is an opportunity to give a new program and interpretation to the hospital vocation of this site located on the banks of the Loire and in the heart of the city, between the city center and the island of Nantes, by opening it up to the city, its inhabitants and, more broadly, to the living beings in all its diversity.

HOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE HERITAGE QUALITIES OF THE EXISTING BUILDING WHILE WORKING TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LIVING ENVIRONMENT OPEN TO THE CITY AND THE LOIRE RIVER?



Axonometric view of the Hôtel-Dieu site with the project site perimeter (in yellow)

IN WHAT WAYS SHOULD THE IMMEDIATE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE BE UNDERTAKEN AFTER THE REMOVAL OF THE CHU AND HOW CAN THIS REINVESTMENT BE PART OF AN AMBITIOUS TRANSFORMATION OF THE METROPOLITAN CENTRE OVER THE LONG TERM?



South facade of the CHU, Loire river side



South facade of the CHU, Loire river side



View from Bias Street, to the west



Main entrance to the CHU, to the north

QUESTIONS TO THE COMPETITORS

The central and strategic position of the Hôtel-Dieu site, as well as its special link to the Loire, lead to two types of ambitions that seem contradictory. On the one hand, renaturation and the creation of a nourishing park can be important levers for reconstituting a resilient inhabited environment that is likely to encourage a certain form of biodiversity in the city in relation to the «Loire at the heart» urban development project, which includes the redevelopment of the banks of the Loire and the Petite-Hollande park square.

On the other hand, the heritage value of the buildings (including the monumental cross-shaped building, which has been designated as a 20th century heritage site) and the city's commitment to land conservation mean that the resources of the site must be used to the best advantage in order to develop new ways of living and working in the city and to establish a diversity of activities. So how can we «make do» or «start from» this complex and heterogeneous heritage, while at the same time working towards the development of a healthier, more open and richer living environment, on the scale of the site as well as on the scale of the metropolis? How can we recover fertile, living, nourishing soil, but also active soil, public or common spaces, vectors of exchanges and encounters? What dialogue should be established with the Loire and how can the site participate in the restoration of ecological continuity on the scale of the greater area?

Finally, where to start, which spaces to give access to first? How can the reconversion of the site be initiated and allow its re-inhabitation almost immediately after the departure of the University Hospital? In what ways should the site be used and to what ends? The scale of the site and the interweaving of its infrastructures imply the implementation of agile and skilful reinvestment strategies, beyond the current experiments in transitional or prefiguration urbanism, and which make it possible to rediscover comprehensible scales of project. How does this reinvestment fit into a short, medium and long term transformation project for the site?

