

http://www.kathimerini.gr/kath/entheta/extra/AthensPlus/30-01-2009.pdf - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.kathimerini.gr/kath/entheta/extra/AthensPlus/30-01-2009.pdf

ATHENSPLUS • FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2009
GREEN SPACES



Urban oasis of culture set to revive Faliron Delta
Renzo Piano presents his concept design for the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center

By walking up the gradual rise (about a 6 degree gradient) toward the sea, visitors will reach the library and plaza.

Plans for the future of the Faliron Delta wasteland moved a step forward on Saturday, January 24, as Italian architect Renzo Piano presented his preliminary design for the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center to the Athens public at the city's Zappeion Hall.

Piano, who co-designed the Pompidou Center (Beaubourg) in Paris over 30 years ago, has come up with a plan for the National Library, the National Opera and the Stavros Niarchos Park, comprising a bioclimatic building amid a huge green area about the size of the National Gardens, stretching up to a gradual incline from Kallithes to the opera house and library poised about 30 meters above Poseidonos Avenue. The keyword Piano used to describe the spirit of the project is "light."

Attic light
'Buildings should be able to live with nature. Light is in the DNA of this town'

Piano and his associates at the Renzo Piano Building Workshop (RPBW) have presented a schematic design for a zero-emission structure covered by an "energy canopy," a roof of solar panels that will also provide the building with shade, with the rest covered by a green roof that they say will be one of the largest of its kind in Europe.

Expected to be completed in 2015 at a budget of 450 million euros - from a grant provided by the Niarchos Foundation - the 16-hectare site is to be handed over to Greek state upon completion. The architect said he hopes the building, enclosing a plaza next to a saltwater canal, will become a destination for both the "sacred and the profane," as he called the functions of culture and of everyday life, with children sailing on the canal and people meeting in the plaza for informal concerts and enjoying the park, the sea view to the south and a panorama of Athens to the north.

His associate, landscape architect Deborah Nevins, said of the project, "It is as if one person combined New York's Central Park, the Metropolitan Opera House, New York Public Library and the view from the Empire State Building all in one."

Community gifts: Education, nature and modernism
BY YVETTE VARVAROSSOU

"I see this park as a kind of gift of Eden to the city, which is calling out for more green space," explained landscape architect Deborah Nevins. "Trees will surround the entire site, planted more densely toward the north, with fewer trees as one walks upward due to the ecology of the site, such as the wind, but it will pull you toward the incredible view."

Paths will crisscross the park to a major circulation route leading to the canal and the path to the library. Nevins said she saw the park as a metaphor for the "soul" of Greece - with water, a view and Mediterranean plants.

"I think this park gives three gifts to the community," she said: "Education, modernism and nature. It is modern in the sense of using endemic and native plants and, above all, plants that are drought-tolerant. You might call it 'eco-style.' I am committed to making a place that speaks to the essence of the Mediterranean and as a teaching tool."

The northern side of the park, more densely planted, will have shade-tolerant plants. There will be a garden in a more sheltered area with plants indigenous to the Mediterranean basin as a whole. "The higher ones move, the lower the plants will be, culminating in the green roof," said Nevins.

Downloading (11.68 MB of 22.65 MB) : http://www.kathimerini.gr/kath/entheta/Untitled - Message (HTML) .jpdf

Unknown Zone | Protected Mode: Off

http://www.kathimerini.gr/kath/entheta/extra/AthensPlus/30-01-2009.pdf - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.kathimerini.gr/kath/entheta/extra/AthensPlus/30-01-2009.pdf

Looking north to the city and south to the sea

BY JULIA PANAYOTOU

"I don't like imposing buildings," said Piano as he presented the conceptual designs for the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, with only 20,000-25,000 of the 166,000 square meters set aside for the project's constructed areas, a good portion of which are underground, while the dominant elements will be water, earth, stone and glass. Construction is expected to start in 2011 and the center will be certified by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System, developed by the US Green Building Council. Piano's California Academy of Sciences recently received a platinum LEED rating, the highest possible mark from the US Green Building Council.

Tucked underground, the opera house will seat 1,400 and be outfitted with the latest technology. "Making space for music is a passion of mine," explained Piano. "I wanted to become a musician, but wasn't very good. So instead I became a builder of spaces for music." The Greek National Opera has never enjoyed custom-designed premises before.

Space will also be set aside for cinematic building amid a huge green area about the size of the National Gardens, stretching up to a gradual incline from Kallithes to the Niarchos Foundation - the 16-hectare site is to be handed over to Greek state upon completion. The architect said he hopes the New York's Central Park, the Metropolitan Opera House, New York Public Library and the view from the Empire State Building all in one."

computers) as well as hosting educational and cultural programs, along with lifelong learning, information technology, immigrant-aimed and children's programs.

Piano was most animated when talking about the library's reading room. With views of both the sea and city, "the most magic room will be the reading room, set somewhere between lightness and heaviness." Located at an elevation of 30 meters, a point with two great views: Looking south, toward the sea - what Piano described as "the Internet of the world: The Mediterranean is a soup, a consomme of culture, connecting Greece, the Middle East, North Africa (...) recording history and then giving back" - and north toward "the quarry of white marble" that is Athens. "The city," said Piano, "is beautiful at that distance."

With its twin vantage points of both sea and city, Piano hopes the cultural center, with the reading room at its apex, will act as a gathering place for Athens. Meeting places, after all, are what Piano sees as the "richness of urbanity... cities are great because they have meeting places, public spaces. This is why civilization developed from them."

Plano emphasized that the library would draw in a wide audience with wireless access, seminar series, children's programs and more.


hibits on Greece's musical theater heritage, but rather than catering only to aficionados of opera, the aim is to attract a broader audience. There will be a separate, smaller stage for experimental music as well as rooms for lectures and seminars. The 1,600 sq.m. public square to be situated between the opera house and library has been designed with outdoor concerts, theater and more in mind.

While the design of an opera house follows a certain set pattern, creating a contemporary library is a different matter altogether. "Libraries have been changing for the past 30 years," said Piano. "Today they are physical as well as virtual. Athens is a good place for this new library, a natural place to do such a thing. We know what an opera house looks like, but a library is great because we have to invent it."

The new National Library will have a dual role. First, it must fulfill the traditional concept of a national library - housing the country's literary heritage. But, in addition, instead of being intended to appeal just to scholars, it is hoped that the center will attract the broader public as well as foreign visitors.

It will be fully accessible to people with special needs (for example, it will be equipped with Braille

ogenous to the Mediterranean basin as a whole. "The higher one moves, the lower the plants will be, culminating in the green roof," said Nevins.



The area in a recent photo.

The residents of Kallithes will certainly benefit from the project in the form of an improved environment and the proximity of cultural and recreational facilities. There will be at least two entrances to the park from Kallithes - one via a staircase and the other via a ramp.

"Kallithes - 'bella vista' - had its beauty and its view stolen from it by the inevitable system of streets and the coastal highway," said Piano. "This will give it back its water and its view."

One problem that has not yet been solved is that of access from the other side of Syngrou Avenue. The only entry point for residents of Palatio Faliron and Nea Smyrni, only a short walking distance away, is via a very unsavory underground passage in front of the Metropolitan Hotel.

"Crossing a busy street like Syngrou is not easy. An underpass needs to be dug 5 to 6 meters down, so it is always a difficult problem," Piano told Athens Plus. "It is easier to make an overpass, but this also needs to be about 6 meters high. We are working on the question of accessibility."

Done

Unknown Zone | Protected Mode: Off