

BALKONAS

Designing a master plan is about filtering the layers, about recognizing the most important elements and seeing possibilities in what already exists. It is not about the architecture, but about creating a plan / vision that has potential and gives space for change in time.

The possibilities of the plan area Lituanica in Kaunas are enormous. The site is unique and also the cooperation in the stage / workshop of the developers together with the municipality is of great value. Not only we deal with water, public space, the landscape, an open program, the scale of the old city centre, parking, phasing and last but not least an identity.

In such a short time, it is almost impossible to solve all these layers and come to a final plan. But a good concept should be born and be the starting point of something that is not a final destination but a plan that can grow in time.

A good concept is about looking further than your plot only, looking into the future and further than a scale of architecture, urbanism or landscape alone. It is about looking over the edge through your own window over the riverside.

The Lituanica area is a transition between city, park and the river Neris. It shows the potential of the reconstruction of the complete banks on both the riversides in Kaunas. These riverbanks together are the biggest public space of the city Kaunas and belongs to its citizens. But it could even provide in a public function broader than the city scale, it should attract people towards the city.

The old city centre should be brought towards the river Neris.

Not only as a view, but as a physical connection. A beautiful pier on street level, to create a view over the river. On the lower riverside a small park strip appears with just the intervention of a pedestrian pathway, but with a whole range of possibilities. This green strip is not stopping on the Lituanica site, it is continuous along both riverbanks, everywhere with its own identity, its own specific functions and its own topography.

By extending the streets of the old centre, the identity is adopted for the new area; the morphology and heights of the existing centre, but denser. Low rise, high density is what makes the connection between both but also creates a distinction. The density and heights diverse even within the plan area, both following the functions.

As a final aspect we have the public spaces in different scales and varieties, there should be tension between public and private, between built and non-built, between interior and exterior. These public spaces give the high quality to the higher density. People want privacy, natural light and pleasant views in an environment that is inviting, safe and easily accessible. People want to be able to park their cars, do their shopping and have recreational facilities close to home. That is what Lituanica can provide them.