

European Garden Heritage Network - Award ceremony 2023 at SCHLOSS DYCK / JÜCHEN

Laudation for category: Design or concept of a contemporary park or garden

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Winner: Westpark Augsburg, created by Lohaus – Carl – Köhlmos Landschaftsarchitekten

Westpark

Worldwide, there are many cities where large areas have a military designation, making them a no-go area in the city. Augsburg also had such an area. In 1950, the US Army was stationed here. Many Augsburg citizens worked here, but for the vast majority this area was inaccessible and unknown. A large fence surrounding the barracks closed off the area from the city.

When the Americans left and the barracks closed, the Augsburg municipality decided in 1998 to draw up a master plan to transform this area. During this process, there was intensive citizen participation, where the importance of a large green space in the city was emphasised as there was a lack of this in the neighbouring districts. Within this master plan, there was an opportunity to answer these wishes. And this was successfully fulfilled. Enclosed by a commercial centre on the west side and new residential areas on the east side, the park is firmly embedded in the urban context. It is a green, spatial connection through the city and stitches east and west together.

It started, as is common nowadays, with a competition, won by the German agency Lohaus-Carl-Köhlmos. After a planning and realisation process of more than 15 years, the Westpark was completed in 2021. They succeeded in designing an open and modern landscape park for young and old, for people and animals. What an amazing job to work on!

The park

The park is designed like a leisurely river; a meandering ribbon lies in the middle of a tree-lined park landscape. It changes its width, individual lanes drift apart and reconnect to form the main path through the park. The ribbon, which is made of light-coloured asphalt throughout, and becomes a guiding line through all parts of the park. The path is a fast or a slow, strolling connection depending on the choices of loop. The fastest and most direct connection is the central cycle and footpath, which is also shared as a skating line.

The spaces in between are special places with sports and play elements and /or special planting that interprets American landscape sections: Fields with flowering prairie shrubs, dense groves of trees or topographical faults, which also refer to the Wertach floodplain (near Augsburg). These alternate in various forms and invite visitors to explore, experiment and investigate the entire park.

The existing trees, some of which are extensive and worthy of preservation, were integrated into the park and supplemented with North American, bright red, orange or yellow tree species. The edges to the buildings are uniformly bordered with rows of trees, which create the framework for the generous, open grass landscape loosely covered with tall trees. Some of the grassland is mown regularly and used for ball

games and sports, while large areas are mown only twice a year and develop into extensive meadows rich in flowers and insects, which also serve as compensation areas of ecological connectivity.

The framework of the park, consisting of vegetation, topography and meandering paths, was realised in sections before the adjacent structural development, but with 'empty spaces' for future opportunities for play and other functions. The planning was carried out over an extended period of time with the participation of the residents. Over this period, the development of the park incorporated the care, maintenance and future adaptation of the site.

Review

The jury is very enthusiastic about the project. The landscape architects have been able to create a very coherent design. The foundation of the design lies in a very strong spatial concept and robust detailing which has allowed the park to develop well over the years. The high ambition that was put into the project from the beginning was not lost by the designers during the long period of development and construction.

Within the strong concept, the history of the place comes to fruition. Careful consideration has been given to what remains of the barracks could be embedded and to what could be added to the park in terms of programming. In doing so, they responded well to the context of the park.

A variety of functions makes it a park for young and old, a park for everyone! The strong concept ensures a lot of variation in open and closed areas, but always maintaining the sightlines. The carefully chosen planting, with a nod to history, strengthens the spatial concept and is one of the most important design tools for this park. The planting brings the park to life.

The current use shows that this is a fantastic example of how a hidden spot in the city can be transformed into an important green network in the urban structure. A model project for many.

On behalf of EGHN I would like to congratulate Westpark in Augsburg with this award. We would like to ask Peter Carl on stage to receive the award in the category Design or concept of a contemporary park or garden. Congratulations!