

Location: Saintes, Îlot de l'Arc de Triomphe

Category: Intensification of town centres

Population: 27,500 inhab.

Intervention area: 1.2 ha || **Construction area:** 3,500 sq.m.



SITE

Situated to the East, the Arc de Triomphe district is one of the conurbation's oldest. The Rue de l'Arc de Triomphe is included in a preserved sector, whereas to the South the constructions are in a protected urban zone. Except for parking lots at the foot of the Arc de Triomphe, the urban fabric is dense, heterogeneous and complex. Narrow parcels are encircled with high walls and built with one façade on the street. Numerous alleys cross the interior of the plots, mainly annexes or waste ground. Quality of construction and nature of population vary considerably. However, the many buildings in a poor state resulted in them being condemned as people began to leave the area. More than 60% of the site has been acquired by the town and the SEMIS (Mixed Economy Property Company of Saintonge); an acquisition policy is under way.

CONURBATION

For 15 years, the town has been trying to reconquer its centre. The residential sector, abandoned in favour of the suburbs, requires major rehabilitation with preservation of numerous buildings and as many reconstructions. On the left bank of the Charente River, the centre has been renovated, with an animated pedestrian precinct. Its periphery is starting to be populated by active industrial zones. Unfortunately, few bridges link both banks and the districts on the right bank, which include the station and the celebrated Abbaye aux Dames, are not yet completely rehabilitated.

OBJECTIVES

From the Charente River to the Abbaye aux Dames, the land, like all the right bank, is subject to winter flooding. The town has a risk exposure plan. The district –hit hard by the 1982 flood– contains numerous houses in a poor state or in ruins. Its central situation and the recent urban operations realised in the neighbouring zones explain the necessity for the reintegration of this side of the Charente's banks into the urban function. The rehousing of the inhabitants that are still present, the densification and the diversification of the residential occupation, the development of public

spaces are just a number of the actions designed to solve the problem of the abandonment of this sector that is nevertheless very rich in built heritage. The volumetric of the new constructions must respect the particular atmosphere of the historic fabric.

PROGRAMME

Refurbishment and construction (renewal of the existing housing surfaces with 20% 2-room, 40% 3-room and 40% 4-room units). Shops and offices, plus proposals for either various activities that will not present a nuisance for the environment, or socio-cultural facilities. Treatment of a “green corridor” from the Abbaye aux Dames to the banks of the Charente. The Place de l’Arc de Triomphe is to be redeveloped as well as the street of the same name, which borders the construction part of the site and is in a protected sector.

THEME

In an old and degraded fabric of housing, it is a question of reactivating all the plots while taking the evolution of ways of life into account and integrating new urban functions. Public and private spaces must be mixed in a subtle progression from the exterior to the interior of the constructed zone.

