

Jan Světlík, Vítkovice: We will hugely participate in Ostrava's development



Author: SF / Petr Bým | Published: 07.04.2009

A company as large as Vítkovice has a responsibility to its region, reaching far beyond mere economy. Do you also consider the development of Ostrava as a city to be part of your responsibility - i.e. urban and architectural problems?

Of course. And we should not talk only about Ostrava, our plants are situated throughout the whole region. As regards Ostrava itself, in the areas you mentioned, it is an expression of the fact that its urban organism has to be developed rationally and we want to participate in this development, through our Nové Vítkovice project.

But you are by far not alone in the city. Real rational urban development envisages broad cooperation between all parties involved, i.e. political representatives, state institutions and private business. Is this cooperation working?

I think so. We are in constant contact with the leadership of the city and the Moravian-Silesian region, but also the Olomouc region, because we also have operations there. We also managed to establish reasonable cooperation with conservation authorities - and it is essential for us, taking into account the work on the national cultural monument Vítkovice.



Stavební forum



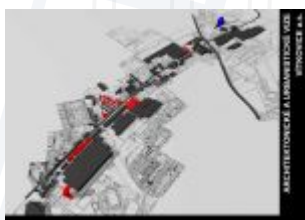
(Lower Vítkovice)

And what about businessmen, especially those building in the city? The biggest Czech property development project is growing in your neighbourhood - Nová Karolina. Are you in contact?

We have good neighbourly relationships with Multidevelopment. We even sold them some land that Vítkovice had in Karolina. Without any problems and at an ordinary price - I am saying this because in Multidevelopment they obviously expected obstructions and blackmail from us. But otherwise, we are rather disappointed about Nová Karolina. We were looking forward to working on a footbridge by architect Jiříčná and special steel structures for Rem Koolhaas's projects, to trying different types of architecture, but nothing came out of it. Not much is going on in Karolina now. But I would like to correct you - compared to Nová Karolina, our Nové Vítkovice project is not just bigger, but several times bigger. It takes an area of about 160 hectares and a total investment of CZK 50 - 60 billion.

However, Karolina, or its part, is already being implemented. I have a feeling that Nové Vítkovice is still more of a concept?!

It is a very complicated project, and not just because of its dimensions. Its large portion is based on conversions of industrial buildings. It is much more difficult than for example to repair and open a Baroque castle. We have to look for new functions and purposes for all buildings. At the same time we do not want to build an open-air technical museum; we want to bring to life a living organism that should become part of the city centre. And we are also struggling with a huge problem - environmental burden of extreme proportions. And unfortunately, the redevelopment has almost come to a halt.



(Area ČEZ Arena, Ruska...)

So nothing is happening today in the area of "monument-protected" Vítkovice, i.e. its lower part?

We are working just like in the past six years. However, we have to proceed step by step, so today we are performing demolitions of basically illegal buildings from the 1970s and 1980s, plus we are removing machinery from other buildings that are earmarked for conservation.

It looks like the mere conversion of the lower Vítkovice is a hardly imaginable work which, of course, requires huge amounts of money. Wouldn't it be good to get a partner for the project?

Look, before we obtained Vítkovice from the state, nothing was going on there. What we did in only six years is that, in addition to a large volume of construction and other work, we completed all the necessary paperwork and created a concept for zoning development. We are not against cooperation with anyone, of course we could do with a financial support from the state or the EU, but we want to be in charge of the fundamental direction of the whole project and the speed of implementation.



(Nové Vítkovice)

What do you see as a priority today in the lower Vítkovice?

Three buildings: the gas holder, scheduled for conversion into a congress centre, energy central room 6, which should offer the World of Technology exhibition, and blast furnace 1 - where we are planning an industrial trail and a viewpoint to look at the whole city of Ostrava. Everything is being designed - we cooperate with many architects, for example the congress centre is designed by Josef Pleskot. Construction activities as such should start this year.

The recession today slows down all business plans. Is it the same in Nové Vítkovice?

Of course, we also feel the impacts. The whole holding company had purchase orders for this whole year as well as for next year, but many orders have been cancelled. I am quite optimistic, I think that if everything goes well, the problems should be over at the end of next year. And a crisis is always a healing process - everybody has to cut all operations that are not efficient enough. But it is not only about reductions and streamlining; you also have to invest and build. We will do it like that, we will not definitely put Nové Vítkovice on hold.



Stavební forum





ENERGETICKÁ VEŠTERKA VITKOVIC
V ARENĚ IHP V OSTRAVĚ s.r.o.



ENERGETICKÁ VEŠTERKA VITKOVIC
V ARENĚ IHP V OSTRAVĚ s.r.o.



ENERGETICKÁ VEŠTERKA VITKOVIC
V ARENĚ IHP V OSTRAVĚ s.r.o.



ENERGETICKÁ VEŠTERKA VITKOVIC
V ARENĚ IHP V OSTRAVĚ s.r.o.

(Energy central room 6)

Vitkovice and you personally have other projects as well. The “Conflicts of Sight” (“Sváry zření”) exhibition, which you participated in to a large extent, finished a short time ago. Are you planning anything similar?

I will start with the exhibition - it was visited by 30,120 people, i.e. 8% of Ostrava’s population. It is

absolutely unique, in Prague any such principal event would attract about 0.5% of its population. This figure testifies to several things, for example that Ostrava is not a city of cultural primitives; quite to the contrary, we have an original, rich cultural life. At the same time it clearly showed that Ostrava really lacks a gallery of contemporary arts. Today its role is taken by the municipal centre of graphics, where the exhibition took place, but this situation smacks of schizophrenia because the museum should primarily have a different mission. We therefore expect that we will establish a civil association to build such a gallery and give it to the city. That should be also part of the Nové Vítkovice project.

Vizualizations: Vítkovice

07.04.2009 09:13, SF / Petr Bým

Stavební
forum