

# Nové Vítkovice - giant property development project

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The revitalization of the so-called Vítkovice Lower Part, an area of 160 hectares with many historical industrial buildings and structures, has been given a fresh impetus by the recent signing of a contract for a CZK 500 million subsidy. On behalf of the property developer, the contract was signed by Jan Světlík, director of the Vítkovice holding company, which also owns the unique complex. A discussion meeting organized in Ostrava by Stavební fórum under the name “Nové Vítkovice - a space for investors” a short time ago showed that it was a project with a huge potential, yet its implementation is contingent upon the solution of many practical as well as theoretical problems.

According to Jan Světlík, the project’s spiritual father, Ostrava should become the centre of the surrounding territory with a radius of 100 kilometres in the near future. This includes territories in three countries, large industrial capacities with a prevalent focus on the engineering industry and about ten million people. The Moravian-Silesian capital should be the hub of industrial production, education and research and development in this region, but also the seat of cultural and recreational facilities and, last but not least, the main target for investment activities. The Nové Vítkovice project, as the future revitalized area of Dolní Vítkovice (Lower Vítkovice) is called, has a key role in these plans.

However, putting aside the unparalleled financial and actual scope of the project in the context of the Czech Republic, the accomplishment of these goals requires well-settled relationships between Dolní Vítkovice and its immediate and farther surroundings. The co-existence of the historical complex with the “rest” of Vítkovice, with its functional (and operating) industrial capacities, seems the least problematic because both parts have the same owner (Vítkovice Holding). The separation of the two parts has been more or less prepared during the recovery and preservation stage, which has been going on in Dolní Vítkovice for many years. However, it will be necessary to settle the relationship with another protected heritage site, the Hlubina mine, situated in the immediate vicinity of the complex. Soon the mine will be transferred to the Moravian-Silesian regional authority, but J. Vzíentek, Assistant Governor, said at the meeting mentioned above that the regional authority was not yet sure about its future use. The same is true of another neighbour - the Karolina clearance, which separates Vítkovice from the centre of Ostrava and where MultiDevelopment was developing its Nová Karolina project, frozen some time ago because of the critical situation. All these relationships have also transport implications. At SF’s meeting, the architect J. Pleskot said that today Vítkovice itself is already an almost impenetrable area, which requires, together with its much-needed connection to the city centre, the construction of new transport infrastructure in the whole location.

Dolní Vítkovice is also a national cultural monument. As Benjamin Fragner, director of the Research Centre for Industrial Heritage, said, this fact is a factor for the development of the area that has to be taken into account and that also requires a precise determination of the level of protection of all facilities on the site. At the same time, he pointed at foreign examples to document that fact that successful revitalization projects are only those that incorporate historical buildings in the urban organism: “This engagement of ordinary life, however, mustn’t destroy the values for which the society wants to building preserved.” In this respect, J. Pleskot warned against the danger of “industrial romanticism”, which can be only a passing fashion.

The renewal of the site’s main parts is scheduled for 2013. These parts include blast furnace 1, which will be converted into a technical educational trail, a gas holder with a diameter of 72 metres and a height of

14 metres, which should be turned into a multi-purpose hall with a capacity of 1,500 seats, and the building energy centre IV, which should provide space for a technical museum, educational rooms and laboratories. It is obvious those fulfilling the target vision, i.e. building Ostrava's new centre in Nové Vítkovice, will take much longer and will necessitate investments of gigantic proportions in our country. Their preliminary estimates are about CZK 60 billion.

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