

Outline Brief

The former Prior department store in the city of Most is set to become a new hub for shared activities, community life, and meaningful encounters. The building, once a symbol of commerce, is to be brought back into the daily rhythm of the city.

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Request for participation
and professional approach
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Call for Participation

Dear colleagues,

We warmly invite you to take part in a competitive dialogue launched by the Statutory City of Most – SuperPrior.

SuperPrior is one of three dialogue-based competitions that make up the SuperMost project, which CCEA MOBA has been developing in collaboration with the city since early 2025. The aim of the project is to reframe and reactivate the central part of Most through a series of three competitions, each with a different scale and purpose.

SuperPrior is the first in the timeline. It will be followed by the smaller-scaled SuperRadnice, an artistic intervention on the city hall building, seeking a contemporary response to the removal of the original mosaic on the cornice, along with the revitalisation of its main entrances. The largest of the three, SuperCentrum, will address the renewal of the city centre, focusing on the reconstruction of public spaces, smart regulation of the urban core, and ways to animate and activate the area with direct input from citizens.

SuperMost is looking for professionals across disciplines to become partners in reimagining and improving the heart of the city. The goal is not merely physical renewal – but to use the centre as a tool to reverse negative trends: slowing population decline, enhancing appeal for creative professions, and fostering a more positive, shared communal life in Most.



Opening remarks by the mayor

Most is a city with a story. A powerful story, sometimes difficult, but all the more exceptional for it. A city that had to overcome the loss of its historic center and cope with profound changes in its economic base. It knows the power of change and today faces another opportunity – not forced, but conscious, targeted, and well thought out.

We are announcing the SuperPrior competitive dialogue as the first of three dialogues within the SuperMost project. The goal is to find a new and meaningful use for the former Prior department store.

This building used to be one of the natural centers of city life. Today, we are looking for a way to reintegrate it into everyday life—as a place for meeting, cooperation, community activities, and new functions that will meet the needs of the modern city of Most.

At the same time, this dialogue marks the beginning of a broader debate on the form of the city center, its character, and its future direction. Through follow-up projects, SuperRadnice and SuperCentrum, the SuperMost project will focus on the revitalization of public space and artistic interventions.

Together with experts from various fields, we are looking for solutions that will not only improve the urban environment, but also strengthen the cohesion of the population, restore people's trust in their shared city, and help Most become a more welcoming, transparent, and attractive place to live. Our aim is not only the physical renovation of buildings, but the overall cultivation of public space and the formulation of a new, viable vision for the city center that will function better as a whole and be attractive to young families, entrepreneurs, and cultural life.

I would like to thank everyone who participates in this dialogue, and I believe that together we will find a solution that will be beneficial for the city and its residents in the long term.

Marek Hrvol, mayor of Most



A Brief History of Most

The story of Most is a unique example of radical urban transformation that profoundly affected the city's architecture, urban structure, and social fabric. The city's history dates back to the 10th century, when it was a settled area in a marshy landscape, crossed by wooden bridges along a major trade route. The name “Most” (meaning “bridge” in Czech) comes from these early structures.

In the 18th century, vast deposits of coal were discovered in the area, fueling rapid industrial growth in the 19th century. The city saw the arrival of the railway and the construction of a sugar refinery, porcelain factory, steelworks, and brewery. A local saying claimed that residents could simply walk into their cellars and scoop out coal – a simplified but not entirely inaccurate way to express how deeply coal was embedded in the everyday life of the people.

In 1964, the Czechoslovak government made the decision to demolish the historic city to make way for large-scale surface mining of brown coal beneath it. Demolition began in 1965 and continued for nearly two decades. One of the most remarkable moments in this transformation was the relocation of the Gothic Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in 1975. Weighing over 12,000 tons, the church was moved 841.1 meters using hydraulic jacks and rails – a process that took 646 hours.

The population of the old town – around 15,000 residents – was relocated in phases to the newly built city. The new Most was designed to accommodate up to 100,000





people, and the reconstruction project was led by architect Václav Krejčí (*1928), who was selected through a design competition in 1959. Krejčí's vision was modernist and utopian: he sought to create a rationally organized, functionally zoned city in line with the ideals of socialist urbanism. His plan separated residential, industrial, and recreational areas and introduced wide boulevards, a central square, and large housing estates intended to provide quality living conditions for the relocated population. The new city was meant to embody modernity and progress – a vision that strongly shaped its planning and architectural character.

The first major building to be completed in the new Most was the district headquarters of the Communist Party in 1971. This was followed by department stores and residential blocks – including the Prior department store, which was finished in 1976. Many of the city's buildings were completed only in the 1980s.

Cultural life in Most has historically played an important role in shaping the city's identity. Theatre, in particular, was closely linked to the broader cultural scene, helping to create a rich and evolving cultural landscape. In the 1980s, the Karel Hynek Mácha Theatre served as a major cultural hub, with the city becoming known not only for its theatrical productions but also for a wide range of cultural activities including concerts, exhibitions, and other events. This tradition continues today, with the local theatre and numerous festivals and public cultural programs contributing to a dynamic cultural scene.

Today, Most has a population of approximately 61,000. Although the new city was originally designed for 100,000 inhabitants, this number was never reached. The city's population peaked in 1980 at around 70,000. The ambitious scale of the project reflected the socialist vision of creating a modern industrial hub, designed with centralized planning, efficiency, and rational zoning. Today it is clear that the city was built too ambitiously and the population was overestimated. Large parts of it remain underused, lacking the density and urban compactness necessary for a vibrant city life. The relocation of the population and the loss of the historic town centre had a deep impact on the city's social fabric. Community ties and a sense of belonging were disrupted. In the large housing estates built for residents of the old Most, lower density and dispersed populations often weakened social cohesion.

Now, Most stands at the threshold of a new chapter. With both the ambition and the potential for transformation, Most is becoming a city with a distinct regional identity. In recent years, major investments have been made in revitalising public space – most notably Park Střed, a newly renewed central park, and in the reclamation of the surrounding post-mining landscape. The nearby Most and Milada lakes now offer residents and visitors new leisure and recreational opportunities. These environmentally focused projects also signal a shift in the city's economic direction, opening up fresh opportunities for sustainable development.

As a post-industrial city, Most is well connected by rail and motorway to both the wider region and the capital, Prague – just under two hours away by train or car. Today, the city is focused on revitalising its centre, strengthening cultural and civic life, and investing in sustainable infrastructure to improve quality of life and attract new residents. The goal is to create new employment opportunities, reinforce local identity, and foster a renewed sense of community.



Aerial photo from 1975, ČÚZK

Prior department store

Prior was a chain of department stores established in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s. The concept was inspired by Western models of all-in-one shopping centers that offered a wide variety of goods under a single roof. Each store was spatially organized into departments specializing in specific categories such as food, cosmetics, or haberdashery. The first Prior store opened in Bratislava on November 20, 1968..

SuperPrior – the current competition dialogue – seeks a new use for the former Prior department store in Most, originally designed by architects Mojmir Böhm and Jaroslav Zbuzek between 1968 and 1971, and constructed between 1972 and 1976. Upon its completion, Prior became an integral part of the new city center – it was considered the most modern regional department store of its time, equipped with escalators and a large-scale self-service section. Known for its unusually wide selection and often superior range of goods compared to other shops of the era, Prior quickly gained a reputation as a shopping destination not only for locals but also for people from the surrounding region.

The building is situated on a natural slope, with entrances at two levels: one from Moskevská Street and the other from the elevated Velká Mostecká Stávka Square. The two levels are connected by escalators, allowing the building to serve as a key node in the area's pedestrian circulation. This configuration also gave the building two retail ground floors, enhancing its commercial potential and accessibility.

The structural system on the second floor (accessible from Velká Mostecká Stávka Square) is based on a 9 x 9 meter grid, composed of 25 modules (5x5). This rational, modular layout continues into the third (upper) retail floor, which also features an open plan, cantilevered 2.85 meters beyond the floor below. The facade of this upper floor is a suspended panel system with a thickness of 300 mm. Both retail floors are structurally reinforced with core walls and a stairwell located in the first module along the eastern side.



The fourth floor serves as an office and staff area. Daylight is brought into this space via an atrium approximately 12 x 26 meters, which is not visible from the exterior. Above this level, on the eastern side of the building, is a recessed upper floor measuring 31.6 x 9.2 meters.

The first floor and the lower ground floor (accessible from Moskevská Street) follow the same 9 x 9 meter grid, supported by 0.6 x 0.6 meter columns, again in a 5 x 5 module configuration. Additional grid fields (outside the building footprint but supporting a public space above) are carried by round steel columns. The remaining ground floor area and basement are designed for technical and service functions, including supply and logistics for both the Prior and the adjacent Repre cultural center.

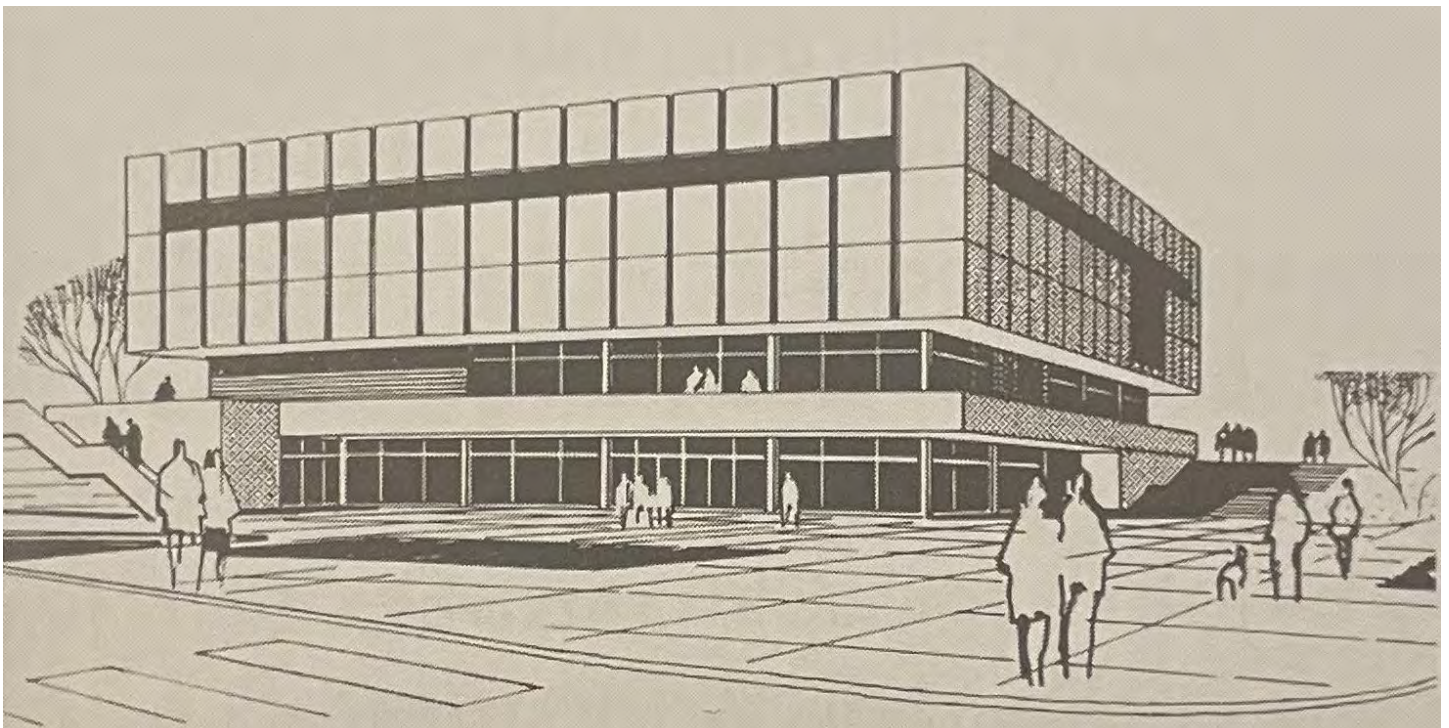
A close study of the floor plans and sections reveals a modernist approach to circulation, carefully separating pedestrian movement from vehicular supply routes for both Prior and Repre. To fully understand the site relationships and spatial flows, a firsthand experience of the area—both on foot and by car—is essential.

The floor-to-floor heights are as follows:

First retail floor: 4.77 m; Second retail floor: 4.8 m; Third retail floor: 4.48 m; Office floor: 4.25 m; Recessed top floor: 2.8 m

The grid facade of the two cantilevered upper floors partly reflects the building's internal program. The office level is wrapped in continuous strip windows, while the retail floor has only three windows, providing daylight to stairwells or parts of the commercial space along Budovatelů Street. The two ground levels combine a lightweight façade system with alternating glazed storefronts and masonry infill.

The building's total usable area is 12,747 m², with 4,233 m² of retail space and 2,173 m² of storage. The total gross volume is 61,822 m³. At the time of construction, the total investment cost was 77.85 million CZK, a remarkable sum given the average monthly wage of 2,381 CZK—representing a significant public investment.





Prior in the 1990s, Photo: Luboš Dvořák



Prior in the 1980s, Source: Mstecký deník - screenshots from the video "Mstecký Prior kdysi a ted", Martin Vokurka

Brief

The City as Owner

After the Velvet Revolution, the Prior department store passed into private ownership. In 2024, the City of Most reacquired the property back, regaining control not only over the building itself, but also over the public space it helps define. This acquisition was crucial for the city due to the historical value of the Prior building, the need to prevent its further deterioration, and especially for the ownership and management of the public space located on the roof of the underground parking structure. Although the building's footprint is just over 2,000 m², the total land parcel acquired by the city covers 8,000 m², making it a strategically important site in the city center.

Building Program

When acquiring the Prior building, the city's initial intent was to explore the feasibility of operating a multiplex cinema, a type of facility currently absent not only in Most, but also in nearby cities. The closest large-scale cinemas are located in Teplice and Ústí nad Labem. Preliminary consultations with potential operators revealed that the third and fourth floors of the building could potentially accommodate up to five cinema auditoriums. These would include three smaller screening rooms with a capacity of 80 to 120 seats each, which would require only minimal construction work and vertical connections between the two floors. In addition, one or two medium-sized auditoriums with a capacity of 200 to 250 seats could also be considered. However, these larger spaces would require a minimum width of 18 meters and would protrude above the existing building envelope, making it necessary to partially demolish the current structure.

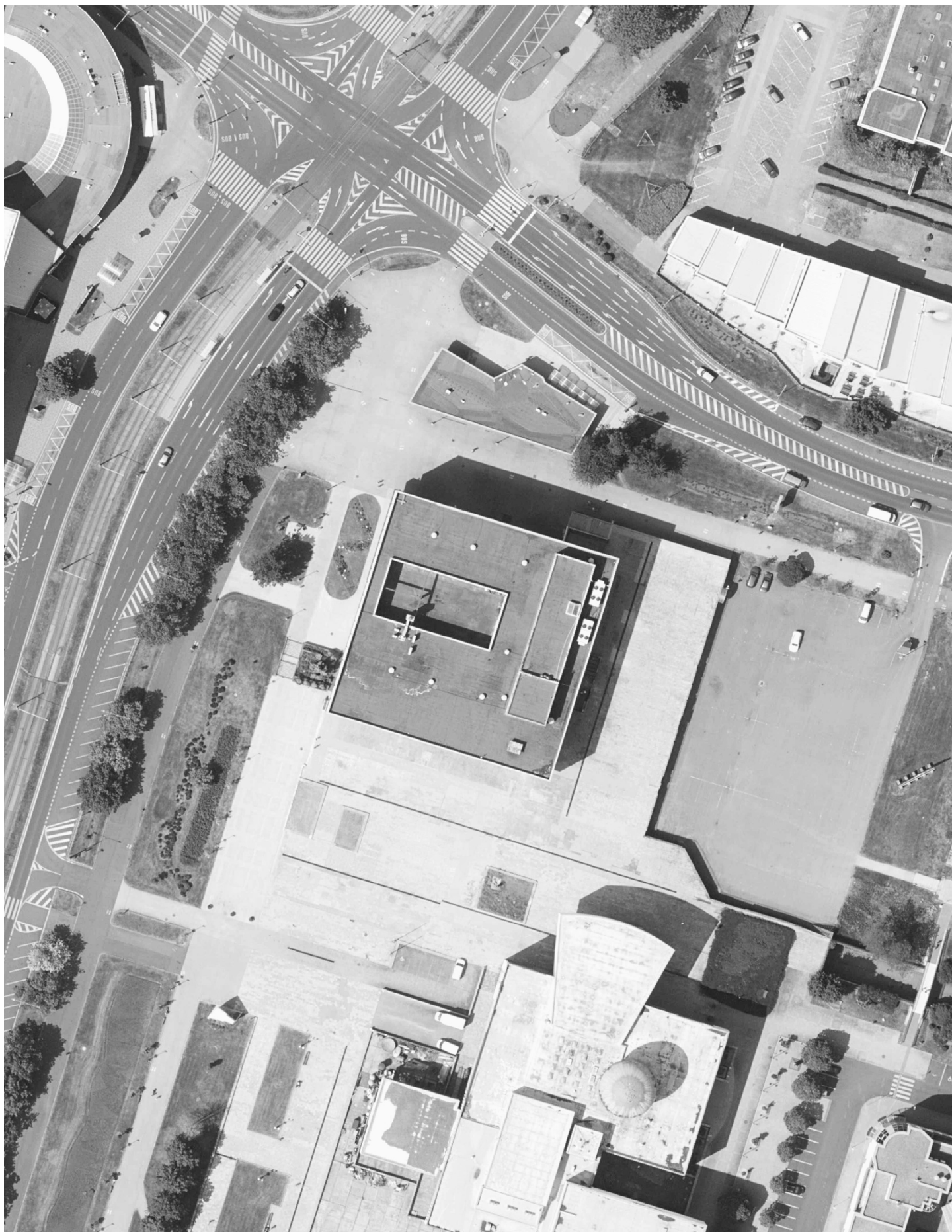
Reconstruction

Some of the approached multiplex operators have suggested that replacing the entire building with a new construction would be a more suitable solution for the desired program. However, given the historical value of the building, the city prefers to preserve the existing structure. In light of the historical and social context of the city center, the city does not consider replacing the Prior building with a new one to be the most appropriate solution — both in terms of the city's vision for the revitalization and the mental map of the citizens of Most.

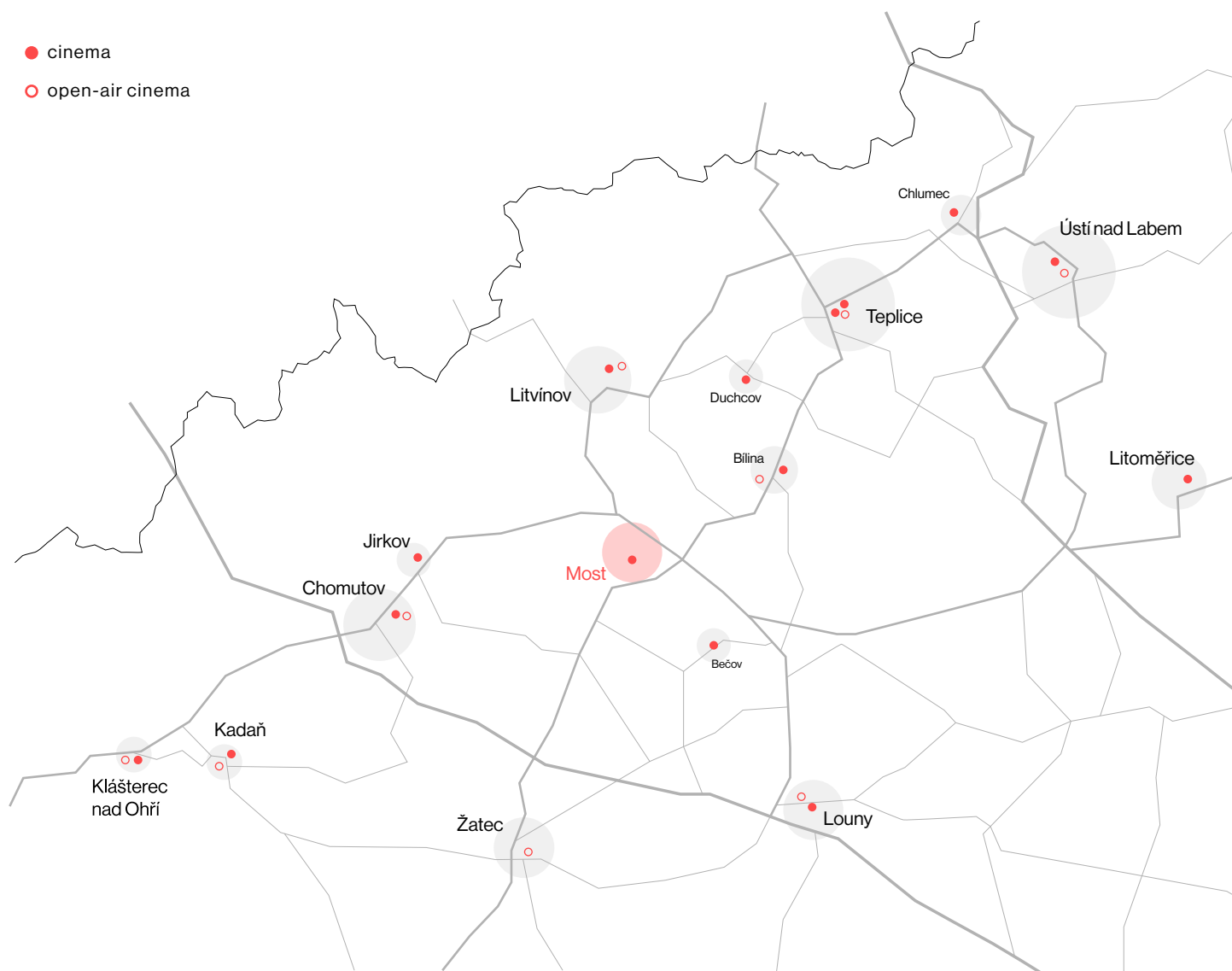
Cinema

The potential integration of a multiplex into the upper levels of Prior would require extensive structural modifications and presents a number of uncertainties, both economic and cultural. These complexities are one of the driving forces behind the launch of a competitive dialogue, whose primary aim is to reimagine the future use of the Prior building – or, with a sense of irony and playfulness, to reinvent it as the "SuperPrior". A key task is to test the feasibility of a multiplex cinema, or alternatively, explore the potential for a more intimate, smaller-scale cinematic experience. Central to this investigation is the broader question of how a cinema should operate in a city of over 60,000 inhabitants. Should Most adopt a tried-and-tested model from larger Czech or regional cities, or is there a need for a tailor-made solution – perhaps even an entirely new type of cinema infrastructure?

These reflections should lead to a comprehensive and creative approach to programming, architectural renovation, and long-term operational strategy for the building and its urban context.



Cinemas (in the vicinity of Most)	seats	screens
Cinema City Ústí nad Labem	664	5
Premiere Cinemas Teplice	502	4
Kino Kosmos Most	464	2
3D Cinema Citadela Litvínov	422	2
Kino Svět Chomutov	341	2
Kino Lipa Duchcov	315	2
Kino Květen - Dům kultury Teplice	330	1
Kino Máj Litoměřice	323	1
Digitální kino KC Bílina	228	1
Kino Jirkov	224	1
Kino Hvězda Kadaň	203	1
Kino Egerie Klášterec nad Ohří	103	1
Kino Svět Louny	155	1
Kino Sever Bečov	112	1
Kino Chlumec		1



Gastronomy

Part of the SuperPrior will be a market hall or gastronomic establishments, that, however, the city of Most will not be directly operating. As part of the competitive dialogue, participants are therefore expected to propose a well-developed management model. This model should include not only the spatial organization – such as the flow of food service, seating arrangements, and operational logic – but also a thoughtful concept that enables the creation and long-term sustainability of contemporary gastronomic ventures. These should reflect the local context, build on existing resources, and support the development of a new, progressive culinary culture.

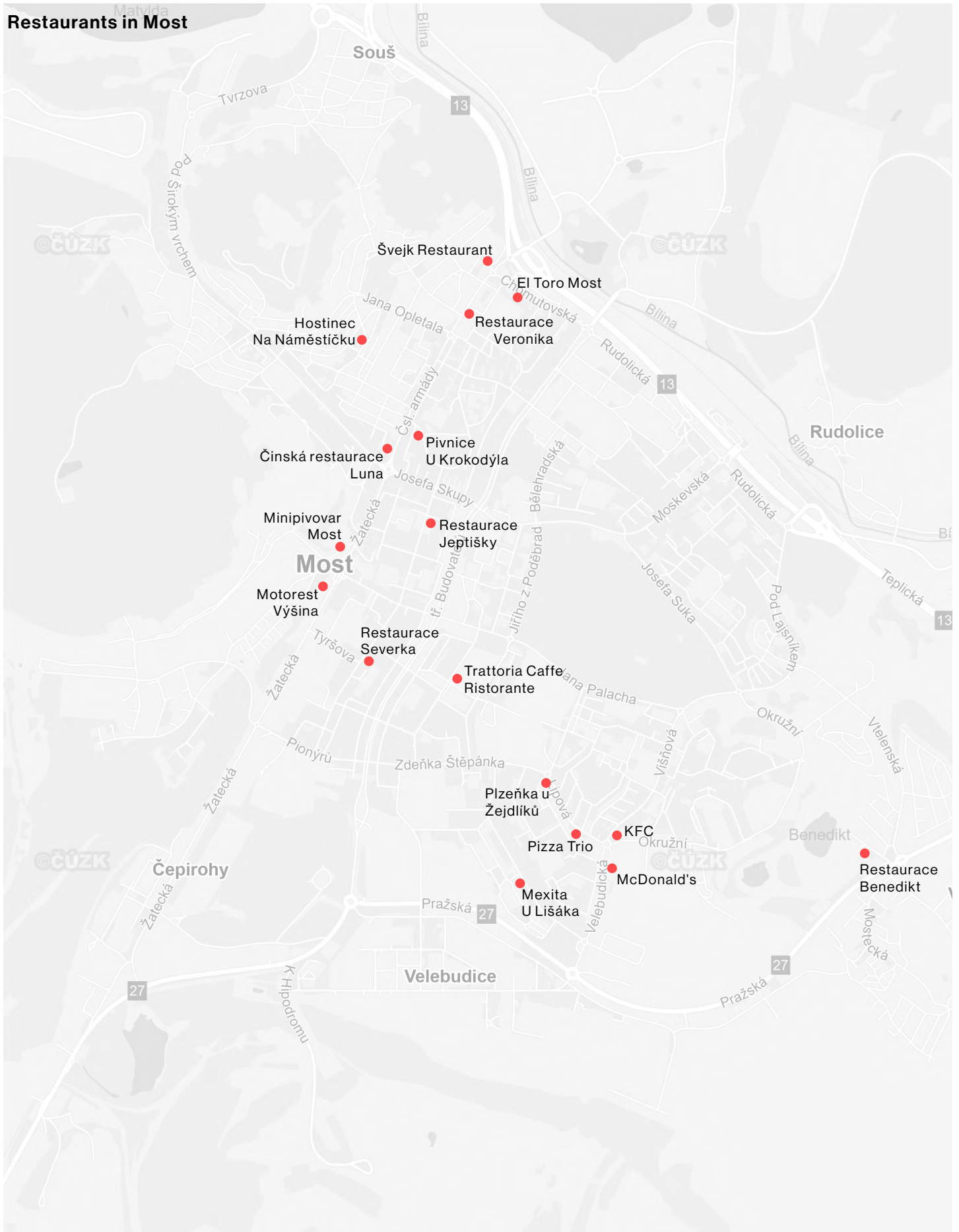
It is expected that the proposals will draw both from the practical experience of the participating teams and from collaboration with experts in gastronomy, hospitality, and service operations. The Prior building once served as a symbolic center of shopping for the entire region. Today, the city's ambition is to make it a vibrant urban landmark once again through a new gastronomic concept – a dynamic place that attracts both locals and visitors by offering an experience that goes beyond ordinary consumption. It should become a natural and open space for leisure, sharing, and social encounters across generations, social groups, and lifestyles.

From a visitor's perspective, this should be a place to go not only for food but also for atmosphere – a setting that offers a compact and curated selection of the best in local gastronomy and contemporary urban life. This is not about returning to the classic model of a department store, but about creating a new kind of public space: a social hub based on experience, quality, and connection – rather than on shopping, which has largely shifted elsewhere.

The aim of the competitive dialogue is to transform Prior into a new urban landmark, whose purpose is rooted in shared experience – whether through food or film. This may involve operating a multiplex cinema, or alternatively, introducing an innovative form of screening more in tune with the building's character and the city's needs. Should participants, based on their analysis and expertise, propose a different operational solution than originally described, it may be openly discussed and further developed within the framework of the dialogue. However, a key and unchangeable condition remains the openness and permeability of at least the two lower floors – an essential principle that defines Prior's identity.

The gastronomic layer of the project is seen as an integral part of the city's cultural and community life. The center of Most was originally designed for a population of 100,000 residents – a number it never reached. Today, the city has extensive but underutilized spaces in buildings such as the renovated cultural center Repre, the Cascade Hotel, the city theatre, and the public library.

Restaurants in Most



Operational model

From the perspective of the city as a public contracting authority, several operational models are possible for the renovated building. One option is that the city leases the spaces – either directly or through its municipal company, Mostecká bytová a.s. – to individual operators.

The ideal approach, from the city's point of view, would be to make use of the existing administrative structure – such as the Department of Municipal Property or the company Mostecká bytová. However, the creation of a new form of governance appears more likely, whether as an extension of current city departments and organizations or as a creative model embedded within the existing structure.

Another possibility – though one that would require strong justification and proof of its efficiency – is the establishment of an entirely new entity that would take over the management of Prior, and potentially other city-owned buildings.

Investment Costs and Operational Economic Model

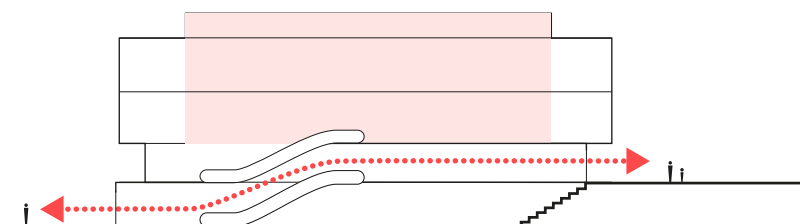
The estimated investment costs are based on the current area of the building, which is 4,200 m². With a projected unit price of CZK 50,000 per square meter, the renovation of the Prior building alone is expected to cost CZK 211 million. To this, an additional CZK 8 million must be added for the redevelopment of surrounding public spaces. The total investment therefore amounts to at least CZK 220 million excluding VAT – an amount based on the city's prior experience with renovating its own properties.

One of the key tasks of the competitive dialogue is to verify, refine, and potentially expand these assumptions. Both investment and operational costs will be crucial parameters in the overall evaluation of proposals. Selected participants in the dialogue are expected to address not only the architectural and functional aspects of the project but also the issue of economic sustainability.

It is desirable that they present a proposed financial model for operations – including for food and beverage services, cinema, and/or other functions. The assignment also includes assessing the return on investment in terms of not only economic value but also its contribution to cultural and social life, and the long-term revitalization of the city center.

Ground floor accessibility

A fundamental principle of the Prior building is its permeability – both horizontal and vertical – as previously described. Preserving this quality is essential to maintaining the spirit of the place and the continuity of the original building's mental map. In addition to an open ground floor, the simplicity of the layout and the natural flow along a clear line of straight escalators – connecting all floors from a central point – are key. This historical department store model, predating the customer-retention





strategies of today's shopping malls, deserves a contemporary interpretation that meets current expectations for comfort and orientation.

The goal is not to create a maze in which visitors lose their way, as is often the case with modern shopping centers, but to offer a high-quality program that has so far been missing in the city. Rather than holding people captive, the space should become an attractive destination to which they'll want to return.

Image and Identity

The buildings of the centre of Most mentioned – from the cultural center Repre to the municipal library – are valuable examples of architecture from the second half of the 20th century. They embody the aesthetics of the era, functional thinking, and a belief in modern public space. Many of them were enriched with unique works of art that brought meaning, identity, and an aesthetic layer to their environments. Some of these artworks have disappeared over time, others were irretrievably lost. Yet these fragments of cultural memory form essential layers, without which Most would lose part of its soul.

Although these buildings are often spatially demanding and difficult to adapt to contemporary needs, their significance remains crucial. They are part of the city's identity and image, silent witnesses to its past and character. Without them, Most would become a hollow city – not only physically, but also internally.

The Prior building does not serve as an art gallery, like Repre, the municipal office, or the library. Its value lies elsewhere – in its potential to become a carrier of a new direction for the city center as a whole. It is one of the largest municipal buildings, and its renovation is a key component of the trio of competitive dialogues intended to reshape Most for decades to come.

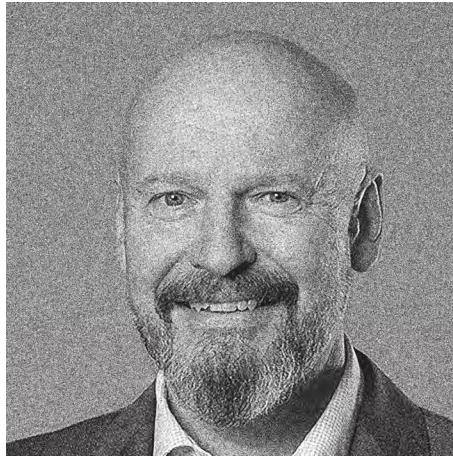
The cultural and community dimension is an integral part of this competitive dialogue. The aim is not to create a new institution, but to seek out, connect, and develop the cultural and social links that already exist in the city – or are waiting to be formed.

Today, the city has new energy and the determination to seek a clear and realistic vision – not only for Prior, but for the entire center. Aware of both its limitations and potential, it is not passively waiting for the arrival of the “planned” forty thousand new residents. Instead, it is actively charting a path forward. Prior – SuperPrior – is the tool to express that courage. A way to show that Most has not forgotten its past, but is also not afraid of the future.

Jury / Dependent part



Marek Hrvol – jury vice chair
mayor of Most



Václav Zahradníček
deputy mayor



Jana Falterová Zudová
city councillor, member of the commission
Regional Development



Jan Hrciník – alternate
external architect-urban planner, member of
the commission for architecture and urban
planning



Petr Nesládek – alternate
external architect, chairman of the
commission for architecture and urban
planning

Jury / Independent part



Gilles Delalex – jury chair

French architect and co-founder of the Paris-based practice Studio Muoto (founded in 2003), which focuses on architecture, urbanism, design, and research. He studied architecture at ENSA Grenoble and McGill University in Montreal, earned a master's degree in urbanism, and holds a doctorate in arts from Aalto University in Helsinki. Among his notable projects is the winning proposal for a building at the end of Revoluční Street in Prague, developed in collaboration with the Brno-based studio PEER.



Marie Kašparová

Experienced cultural manager with over twenty years of practice in leading cultural organizations, strategic planning, and project financing. A graduate of the Department of Production at the Theatre Faculty of AMU. Since 2020, she has headed Kultura Praha 3, overseeing Atrium Žižkov and KC VOZOVNA. She focuses on the development of public institutions, sustainability of cultural infrastructure, and transformations of public space. Member of the board of the Association of Cultural Centres of the Czech Republic



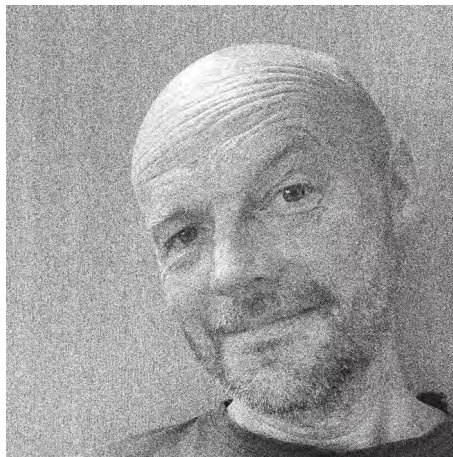
Gerry Schwyter

Swiss architect and member of the management team at EM2N, an architectural studio based in Zurich. He studied architecture at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences and has been an active member of the Swiss Society of Engineers and Architects (SIA) since 2023. His work focuses on innovative approaches to building renovation and adaptive reuse. Among his notable projects is the Büro- und Gewerbegebäude Binzstrasse in Zurich, characterized by its flexible use and experimental façade design.



Marina Kounavi

Greek architect with master's degree from TU Delft. After a decade working in Rotterdam for renowned studios such as OMA, Mecanoo, and MVRDV, she returned to Athens in 2021. In 2018, she founded the architectural office ANAGRAM, focusing on transforming existing typologies and spatial characteristics. Among her significant projects is the winning proposal for the renovation of the town hall in Přerov in collaboration with atelier gram. The modernization of the building from 1969 is currently under construction.



Pavel Plánička – alternate

Czech architect and co-founder of the studio 3+1 architekti, based in Ústí nad Labem. He graduated from the Faculty of Civil Engineering and subsequently from the Faculty of Architecture at the CTU in Prague. He gained professional experience at Swiss studios WA3 and Bearth Deplazes, and from 1998 to 2006 collaborated with architect Jan Jehlík. Among his notable projects is a Family House in Vaňov, distinguished by its sensitive integration into the terrain surrounding natural environment.

