RE-THINK-ATHENS

FAQs

Q. What is this project about? Is it yet another pedestrianisation?

A. The "Re-think-Athens" project is a multifaceted intervention centered on Panepistimiou street, extending from Amalias Avenue to Patission Street and ending at a brand new Omonoia Square. The primary objective is to contribute to the recreation of the centre of Athens. Despite the fact that the project is usually referred to as "pedestrianisation", Panepistimiou Street will become pedestrian and bicycle *friendly*, without being converted into a pedestrian zone. The project will include the extension of the tram line from Amalias Avenue to Patissia, private cars and public transport vehicles will be able to access Panepistimiou Street from four vertical streets while cars will be allowed on the side road.

Q. Which needs does this intervention cover and why is it taking place?

A. Panepistimiou Street will become part of an urban and architectural "ring" which will link the archaeological sites and the museums of Athens with the contemporary social and economic activity of the city centre. This intervention will contribute to the strengthening of all commercial and financial activities, the environmental and aesthetic improvement of public space, the highlighting of the historical and cultural significance of the city and the easier access and enjoyment of the centre of Athens by all citizens. Upon completion of the project, Athens will experience a *new metropolitan centrality*.

Q. Whom is this intervention addressed to and whom does it concern?

A. The project is addressed to all citizens of Athens, regardless of whether they live and work in the centre or not, as well as to all visitors, regardless of whether they visit Athens for professional and/or other purposes or they come to Athens for holidays. We all have a right to a friendly, functional and attractive city that will offer its benefits not only in relation to our career, our home or to trade but also in relation to culture and pleasure.

Q. How are we supposed to be informed of the alternative proposals and the possibilities for intervention?

A. The search for ideas and their evaluation as well as the acknowledgment and adoption of proposals that will lead to a better future for the Greek capital, will be the objective of an International Architectural Competition. The competition functions as a catalyst that will initiate an open dialogue where issues relevant to the

city centre will be discussed among citizens, the experts involved, architects, artists, intellectuals and economists. This process of creative fermentation and the critical evaluation of the proposals will incite everyone's interest towards new creations on the city's old canvas. This intervention is the spine that will connect minor individual or collective activities and initiatives that relate to the centre of the city. The objective of the project is to allow for the centre to reflect city life like a giant kaleidoscope that attracts, enhances and gives value to Athens.

Q. What is the process of the competition, what does the grant of the Onassis Foundation include and who is considered eligible?

A. The competition will be European and will be developed in two stages. During the first stage, ideas will be submitted and a small number of architects will be selected. During the second stage of the competition the winning proposal will be selected. The Onassis Foundation will cover all the expenses of the competition as well as the expenses of the necessary studies that will be conducted until the project is auctioned. In this competition eligible candidates should be based in Member states of the EU, the European Economic Area (EEA) and other states that have signed conventions within the framework of the World Trade Organization.

Q. In what way will this Competition be realized?

A. The registration to the architectural competition will be held through the competition's website at www.rethinkathenscompetition.org, which has been created especially for this purpose. The technical folder and all the useful information regarding the architectural competition will be available through the above website. All the elements of the submitted proposals will be submitted inside a single, opaque package or envelope (container) for both of the two stages of the competition.

Q. Is this project yet another announcement for the simple submission of architectural studies? What is the project's timeline? Will the Municipality of Athens or other bodies and institutions participate?

A. For the preparation of the project, the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change and the Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks have been collaborating for months with the involved institutions that will be coordinating the project. In relation to the competition, an agreement has been contracted between the Ministries of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, and of Transport, Infrastructure and Networks, the Athens Metro, the Region of Attica, the Municipality of Athens and the sponsor, which is the Onassis Foundation. The Municipality of Athens will have a representative in the Jury of the competition as well as in the Committee that will be watching over the procedure related to the

submission of the final studies. One year will be required for the submission of the studies necessary for the auction of the project, while the project itself will have been completed in a year and a half.

Q. How long is Panepistimiou Street going to be a construction site?

A. In order to limit any inconvenience caused by the construction works, a special traffic arrangement, which will allow all ground transportation to function properly, will be implemented while the project will be completed in three different stages. The rearrangement of the public space due to works in each of those stages, will only last for a few months.

Q. How will traffic be served and how will the centre of Athens be accessed?

A. The centre of Athens is mainly accessed by metro and tram, whereas the lines for both these means of transportation will be extended over the next few years. The stations at Syntagma Square, Omonoia Square and Monastiraki Square are the "gates" to the centre of Athens when it comes to urban rail transit. Ground transportation will contribute a lot to this network in the future, following the reorganization of their operation and the improvement of traffic conditions in the centre of Athens.

As far as private cars and taxis are concerned, they will be able to head to the centre but they will not be permitted to pass through it. Vehicles heading to the centre of Athens via Vassilissis Sofias Avenue will be redirected to Akadimias Street, whose direction will now be reversed. Piraeus Street will continue functioning as it is from Stadiou Street to Filellinon Street. The direction of Aghiou Konstantinou Street will be reversed and Aghiou Konstantinou Street will now link the west entrance to Athens with Tritis Septemvriou Street. Access from Syngrou Avenue towards Kolonaki will be possible through Vassileos Konstantinou Avenue and Vassilissis Sofias Avenue, while traffic in Amalias Avenue will be permitted only towards the commercial triangle of Fillelinon, Ermou and Monastiraki, the Parliament and Plaka. An inner traffic ring will also be formed, while the transportation network will be reorganized.

Q. Is this project costly?

A. The architectural reorganization of the public space is a surface project of low-cost (approximately 25 million euros). The cost of the tram project is much higher, albeit rewarding. The overall cost of the intervention, including the tram line that will reach Ano Pattissia, will not exceed 200 million euros, VAT included, out of which the largest portion of the funds will be used for the tram. The cost of this project can be compared to the cost of building a major highway interchange.

Q. Is this project a superficial showcase? Will other projects be financially set aside?

A. This major intervention aims at an extended reorganization of the centre of Athens and does not have a superficial character, nor does it wish to be superficial. The project will be funded with European funds intended for large-scale, complete interventions that aim to promote competitiveness among cities, without depriving Athens of further projects included in other financial planning.

Q. Parallel to the Panepistimiou Project, will other interventions take place in Athens?

A. This intervention already extends over an extensive area around Panepistimiou Street and is part of a wider frame of interventions for the social, functional, environmental and aesthetic upgrade of the centre of Athens. The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change collaborates with the Municipality of Athens in order to include a number of disparate projects throughout the neighborhoods of Athens, which will be included in the Green Fund's "Urban Regeneration" Program.

Q. Will there be space available for pedestrians or will the space be used as an extension of the coffee shops? What kind of activities will be developed in the area?

A. The large area, which starts from Amalias Avenue and ends at Patission Street, will be available to pedestrians, especially Panepistimiou Street and Omonoia Square. Activities related to trade, services, entertainment, walking and culture will be promoted. Of course, there will be demarcated areas for coffee shops as long as their policy is citizen friendly.

Q. Will there be project maintenance and police protection after the completion of the project?

A. Law enforcement is one of the most important duties of a state. However, the citizens' security depends heavily on the liveliness of the city and the social activities that are addressed to everyone, night and day. The project will include many uses that will generate substantial income to the Municipality of Athens and to the administrative body that may have to be established so that the project's future is safe and security as well as all services offered are of high quality. All these factors are an important prerequisite when transforming the centre into a people-friendly area.

Q. Why a tram line? Athenians do not have a positive experience of it. Is it going to be bidirectional? Which areas will it cover?

A. The tram is one of the most effective means of public transportation in many European cities and it is people and environment friendly. The expansion of its line from Amalias Avenue to the end of Patission Street will become the transportation backbone that will serve the entire centre of Athens, linking the two largest metro stations of Omonoia and Syntagma with the densely populated areas that spread towards both directions. Frequent itineraries in both directions (approximately every two minutes) and the high priority it will be given against other means of transportation, will guarantee its reliability and will make it the most popular means of public transportation.

Q. Why construct a tram line over a metro line in Panepistimiou Street? Will not that be superfluous?

A. The metro is a rapid transit system linking distant areas while transporting a large amount of passengers. The metro brings passengers to the centre from Peristeri, Halandri, Elliniko, Piraeus, Kifissia and the whole region of Athens. On the other hand, the tram runs above ground, its speed is lower and it serves people who visit the city centre using the metro and need to travel to specific areas *within* the centre. Simultaneously it serves densely populated areas of the centre and its periphery. Therefore, the two means of transportation will complement each other improving the daily services provided to the citizens. This is a rule in many European cities.

Q. What will happen during nighttime when the tram does not operate?

A. The tram line that will connect Patission Street with Panepistimiou Street and Amalias Avenue will serve passengers throughout the night, although itineraries will be less frequent. Thus, the centre will be accessible while at the same time, the possibility of taxi circulation over the tram rails during the night is currently examined.

Q. What applies to buses, taxis and private cars?

A. The intervention is based on the prevention of traffic circulation in the centre and the promotion of public transportation, walking and bicycles. The traffic study report has ensured that easy access will be guaranteed through public and private means of transportation but the main objective is that “all roads lead to the centre” as long as the destination is indeed the centre. As far as buses, taxis and private cars are concerned, many adjustments will be made, such as the creation of a traffic ring for private cars that will link Stadiou and Akadimias Streets, and the design of a system to cover the service needs of buildings, based on their individual needs.

Q. How will stores be supplied?

A. The store supply process will be upgraded. Throughout the whole zone involved in the project, parking spaces and demarcated areas will serve the needs of each store.

Q. How will pedestrians access Panepistimiou Street?

A. The whole area between Stadiou and Akadimias Street along with Omonoia and a part of Amalias Avenue and of Patission Street will be friendly to citizens of all ages, facilitating access to Panepistimiou Street. However, the main points of access for pedestrians will be the three two-way metro lines connected at Syntagma and Omonoia Square, bringing citizens to the centre from all parts of the city as well as the new tram line, which will connect the densely populated surrounding areas.

Q. Do similar interventions take place in other European cities?

A. European cities keep looking for ways to enhance their attractiveness. Similar interventions have already taken place in many cities such as Bordeaux, Barcelona, Frankfurt, Helsinki, Amsterdam and Constantinople, with great success. Moreover, great cities aim at radically transforming their most emblematic areas, such as Madrid and Copenhagen.

Q. What will my benefit be as a citizen/ professional / visitor in Athens?

A. The functional and environmental rebirth of the centre will shed light on even the darkest and most unwanted sides of it.

Panepistimiou Street and Omonoia Square will become the liveliest neighborhood, as a city centre for shopping during the day and as a nighttime “place to be”, whereas the area will become a special meeting place for Athenians from all neighborhoods. Living conditions will improve significantly and a large part of the centre will be re-inhabited, whereas the trade, entrepreneurial and tourist activity all over this area will be revitalized.