OPEN COMPETITION FOR A CONCEPTUAL
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

LIMINAL
TRIMONTIUM

ON THE THRESHOLD BETWEEN TWO ERAS

BRIEF

The present brief, competition rules and analysis have been coordinated with the Municipality of Plovdiv, the Chamber of Architects in Bulgaria, the Union of Architects in Bulgaria, the National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage, the Regional Archaeological Museum Plovdiv, ViK Plovdiv, EVN, and other operators of the technical infrastructure.

ДРЕВЕН И ВЕЧЕН

Регионален археологически музей
ПЛОВДИВ

НАЦИОНАЛЕН ИНСТИТУТ
ЗА НЕДВИЖИМО
КУЛТУРНО НАСЛЕДСТВО

INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Plovdiv announces a competition for a conceptual architectural and urban design solution, aimed at the complete transformation and revitalisation of the "Trimontium" underpass. This key urban zone is one of the busiest transport and pedestrian arteries in the heart of the city. Its strategic location makes it a calling card of Plovdiv, yet its current condition does not meet the high aesthetic and functional criteria arising from the cultural and historical significance of the site within the city.

The underpass territory is of exceptional archaeological and cultural value, as it falls directly within the boundaries of the historic zone "Philippopolis – Trimontium – Plovdiv". It forms an integral part of a group archaeological and architectural heritage monument of national significance. The immediate proximity to the ancient Forum complex of Philippopolis, as well as the archaeological structures present within the underpass itself, demands an exceptionally sensitive and responsible approach to any intervention.

The stated priorities are the creation of a sustainable, aesthetically coherent and multifunctional solution that will transform the perception of this transit space. The aim is for the underpass to be converted from a place of rapid passage into an attractive urban environment — a zone with potential for culture, socialisation, recreation and information.

A solution is sought that harmonises the contemporary needs of the city's residents and visitors with Plovdiv's rich and unique archaeological heritage. Through this, the aim is to consolidate the city's identity as a "living open-air museum".

The project should propose a comprehensive concept that integrates the underground and above-ground space into a unified, legible and safe urban environment, and make a proposal for a new tourist information centre.

The selected project will be used as the basis for commissioning the next design stage — the preparation of a technical project required to obtain a building permit and to proceed with subsequent construction.

LIMINAL [ˈliminəl]
threshold, transitional
from Latin **limen** –
threshold

In architecture, the liminal space is the zone of transition– neither inside nor outside, neither above nor below. It is the corridor, the staircase, the underpass — the place you pass through but rarely stay. Spaces whose identity is entirely delegated to what they connect, but never to themselves.

Liminality is the state of "in-between". Between the known and the unknown, between the completed and the forthcoming. The moment in which you have left one room but have not yet entered the other. The threshold on which you stand with one foot in the past and the other in the future. Yet liminality is not emptiness — it is tension. A state of arrested potential between two established orders.

In a deeper sense, this is a space of pure potential. The familiar has been interrupted; the new has not yet been established. It is precisely in this indeterminacy that the possibility of transformation lies — the moment in which a place can become something fundamentally different from what it has been.

Liminality is an acknowledgement that boundaries are not lines but territories. That between two eras, two cultures, two levels of the city there exists a space that belongs to both — and to neither. A space that does not divide, but intertwines.

The "Trimontium" underpass is a liminal space in the fullest sense. A threshold between ancient Philippopolis and contemporary Plovdiv. Between the archaeological stratum and the urban fabric. Between forgetting and revelation. This project does not fill the threshold. It articulates it, illuminates it, and transforms it into a destination.

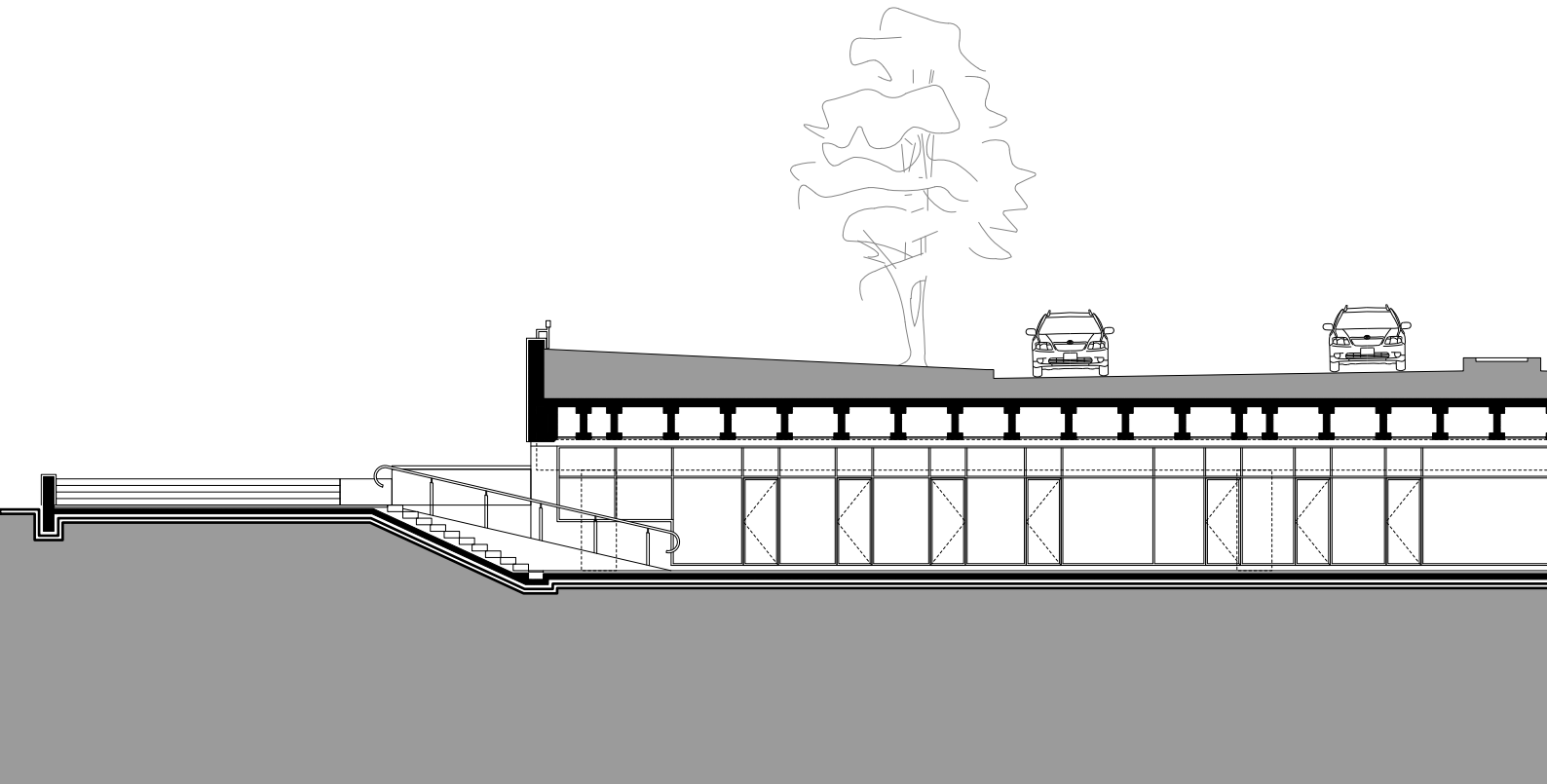
BRIEF

The architectural project must propose a comprehensive, sustainable and visionary architectural concept for the key urban space — the underpass opposite the Hotel "Trimontium" in the heart of Plovdiv — as well as for its surrounding territories. The primary objective is to achieve a full and meaningful integration of the underground and above-ground space. This integration must transform the current condition into a unified, legible and safe urban environment.

A critical aspect of the brief is the requirement to demonstrate deep respect and a responsible attitude towards the extraordinarily complex and multi-layered archaeological stratigraphy that constitutes the historical heritage of Plovdiv (ancient Philippopolis). The concept must strike a balance between contemporary architectural intervention and the preservation, exhibition and interpretation of the cultural and historical layers.

Furthermore, the brief includes a proposal for the siting and construction of a new, modern and functional tourist information centre. This centre must form an integral part of the overall concept, serving as a gateway to the city's archaeological heritage and as a key point for welcoming and orienting visitors.

A solution is required that transforms the underpass from a purely transit space into a significant urban destination and cultural landmark.



1. ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTIONS

The project stage is conceptual, which means that a definitive solution for conservation and exhibition is not required, but rather a conceptual approach that allows for development in subsequent design phases. Detailed engineering studies or final technical solutions are not required, but the projects must demonstrate an understanding of and address the volumetric and technical challenges of the project.

The primary priorities of the architectural solution sought are:

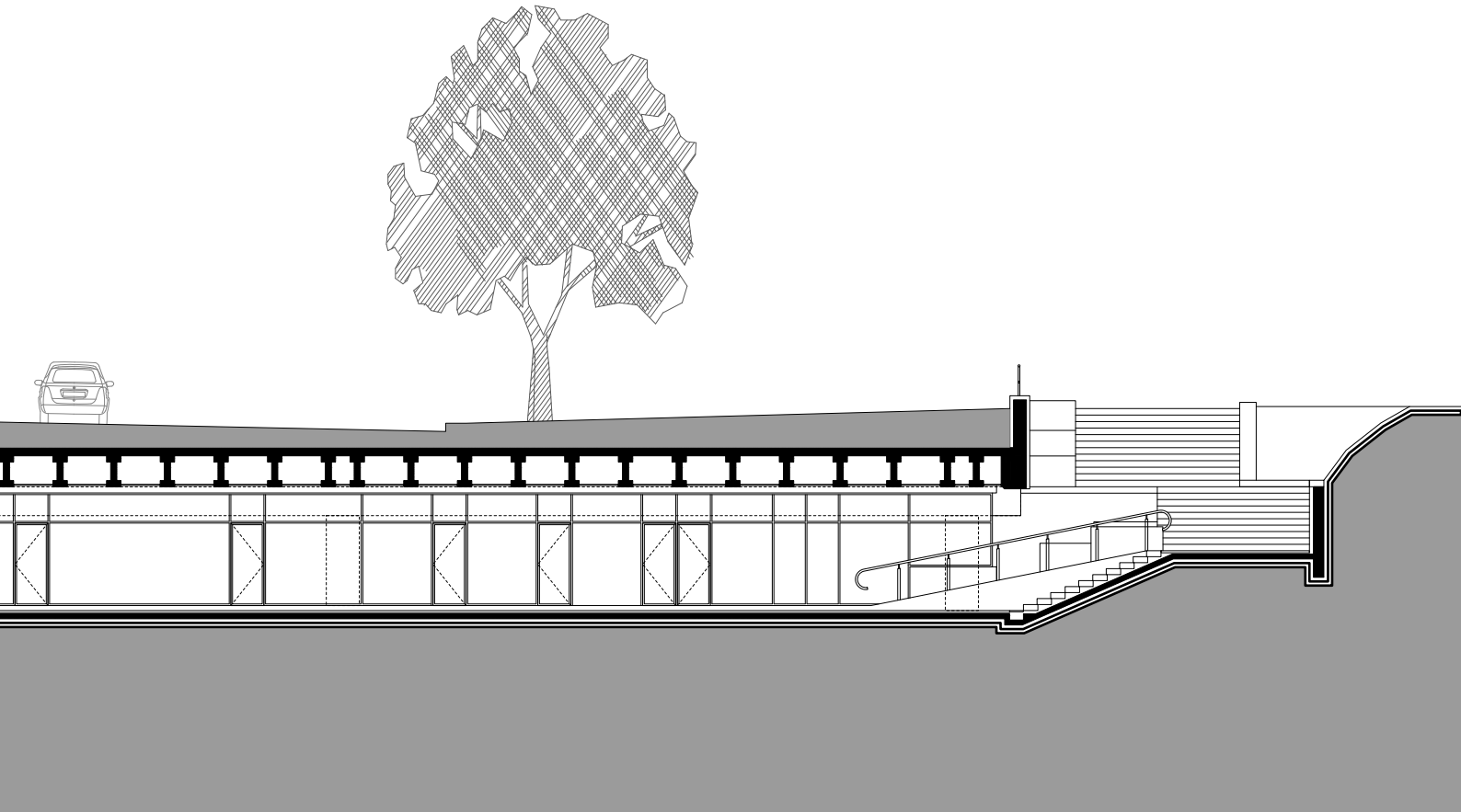
- a high degree of accessibility for all user groups;
- integration of existing and potential archaeological structures;
- quality architectural and landscape design;
- clear spatial orientation and legibility;
- pragmatic, durable, sustainable and easily maintainable solutions with regard to materials and technical choices.

1.1 CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Participants must propose a concept that transforms the underpass from a utilitarian passage into an "antechamber" of Plovdiv's cultural and historical heritage.

The territory falls within a zone of high cultural and historical value and must not be regarded merely as transport infrastructure. It is necessary to investigate and propose options for a physical and visual connection between the level of the underpass and the adjacent archaeological site "Forum Complex". Various scenarios for hosting permanent and temporary open-air exhibitions should be explored.

Project proposals should treat the archaeological and historical layers as an active resource rather than a constraint. Integration of the exposed fragment of the fortification wall into the solution is mandatory.



1.2 TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Participants should propose a solution for removing the existing commercial units and propose the siting of a tourist information centre (TIC). The centre must provide information on tourist routes and the city's cultural calendar. Ancillary areas for the centre should be provided (sanitary facilities, staff room, 24-hour security and storage/inventory). Additionally, 24-hour automatic public toilets for men and women must be provided.

In addition to the core requirements, participants are expected to demonstrate creativity and propose an extended or seasonal functionality for the site. This additional functionality should be carefully considered and aimed at facilitating the organisation of various appropriate events — cultural, educational, recreational or civic — that contribute to the animation of the space throughout the year.

Furthermore, the integration of other complementary functions may be envisaged to enrich the visitor experience and ensure the sustainability of the project, such as a café / relaxation and social space; a souvenir shop / gift shop for items related to the history, culture or natural attractions of the area, as well as handcrafted works by local artists.

Proposals for extended functionality and complementary functions/zones/facilities must be in harmony with the overall architectural vision and contribute to making the site a year-round attraction and centre of public life.

Participants should propose a solution for the construction of a comprehensive information system in the underpass zone and its adjacent spaces. The system must include information boards that clarify the site plan, chronology and characteristics of the archaeological structures — both those already uncovered and those envisaged for future exhibition. The graphic design of the content displayed on these boards is not subject to the competition.

1.3 ACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENT

A priority of the project is to ensure unconditional access for people with disabilities at all approaches, in accordance with the Regulations and good European practice.

Permanent, non-technical solutions are preferred, guaranteeing sustainable and unimpeded passage for all users. It is preferable to avoid the use of technical means of vertical transport, such as lifts and disability platforms.

1.4 LANDSCAPING AND GREENERY

Projects should present a sustainable approach to landscaping, integrating appropriate elements of street furniture, lighting and greenery.

Key elements in the park design are:

- Integration of the park design solution with the archaeological elements, with the exhibition of archaeology as the guiding principle;
- Consideration of the contact territory with respect to the greenery scheme;
- Sustainability of the solution — an appropriate species composition suited to the local microclimatic conditions.
- Provision of a maximum soil layer (growing volume) with mandatory drainage of tree pits, fixed concrete planters, etc.
- Automation of processes with regard to an irrigation system covering all elements of the planting scheme.
- In planted areas, the use of exotic and Mediterranean plant species must be avoided, as well as artificial or natural stone paving/gravel mulches.

2. CONTACT ZONE

The project scope falls within a historic zone and a zone subject to protection regimes of national significance, comprising both excavated and unexcavated archaeological sites and their buffer zones. The subject of this public procurement falls within the contact zone of an archaeological immovable cultural heritage asset of the category "national significance" — the "Forum Complex" — south-east, for which site there is an approved project by architect Veneta Petkova and team, with an issued building permit. Possibilities for coordination between the two projects should be explored.

Outside the scope of the project are the carriageways of Tsar Boris III Obedinitel Boulevard, the bus stops in the immediate vicinity of the underpass, and the car park in front of the Hotel "Trimontium". The interventions within the scope of the project do not affect the traffic organisation on the adjacent carriageways and do not envisage changes to the transport and technical infrastructure beyond the defined scope. When developing the design solutions, the spatial proximity to the specified elements of the urban environment should be taken into account.

3. ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION AND PLANNING

Although the current project stage is conceptual, which presupposes a focus on conceptual development and the main design directions, it is mandatory to present approximate, indicative cost estimates. These should be prepared on the basis of aggregated indicators and cover all major components of the proposed solution.

The purpose of this requirement is not to achieve a precise quantitative or cost account characteristic of the working design phase, but rather to outline the approximate yet realistic value of the project. This financial framework is critical for an early assessment of the financial sustainability of the concept and for making informed decisions regarding the scale and scope of the project before proceeding to the subsequent, more detailed design phases.

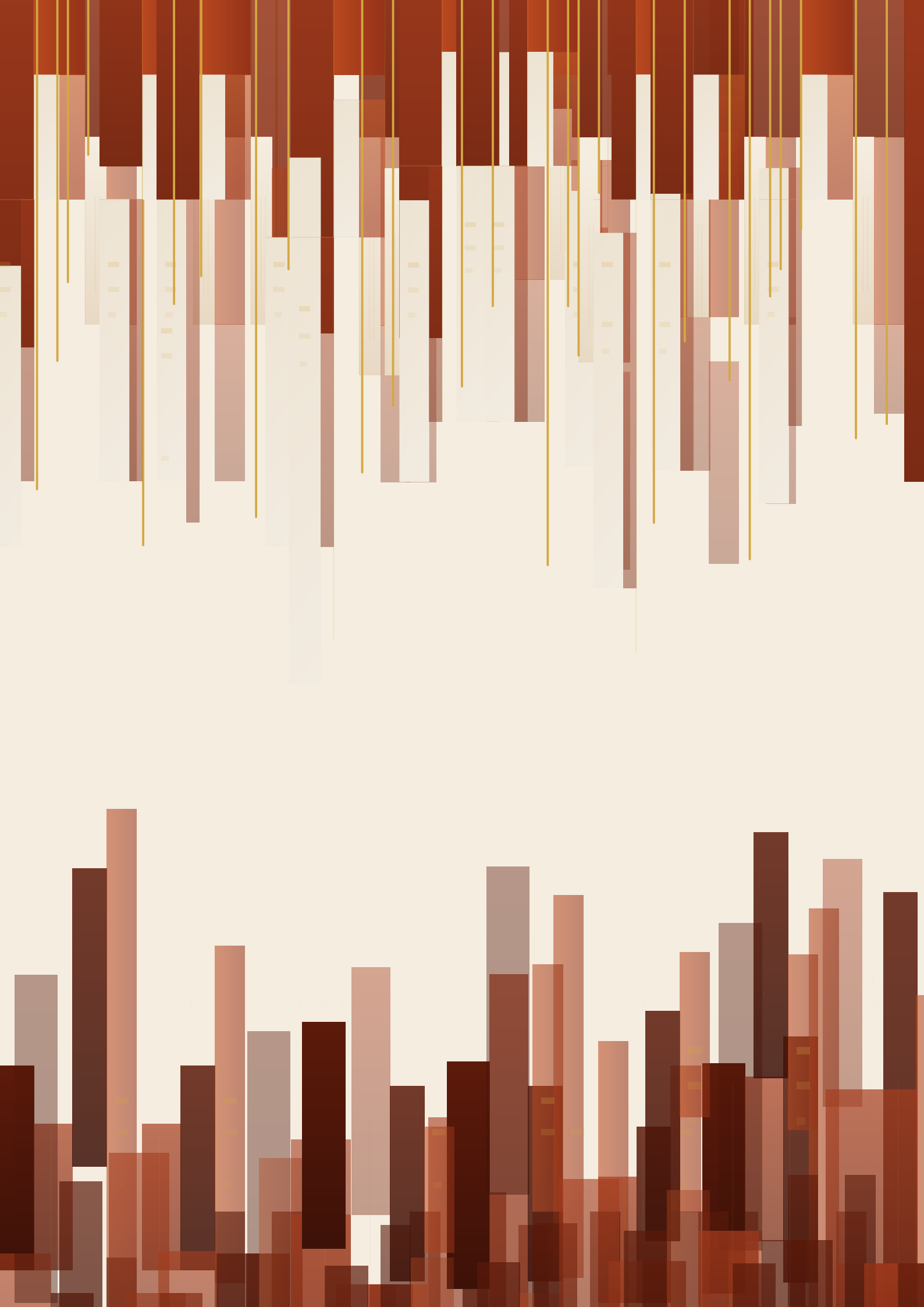
The costing must include design fees, author supervision costs, construction and installation costs (CIC), as well as equipment and furnishing costs.

The submitted approximate budget value must serve as the primary financial reference for the contracting authority, enabling it to compare investment needs with the available budget and assess the overall economic efficiency of the proposed concept. When preparing the budget value, participants must use the template provided in the competition documentation.

4. SOURCE INFORMATION

ELEMENT		FILE
Architectural survey – plan		liminal-plan.dwg
Architectural survey – vertical section		liminal-section.dwg
Geodetic survey		liminal-geo.dwg
Geodetic survey – list of points		liminal-geopts.csv
Orthophotographic image		liminal-ortho.tif
Part of the Ancient Forum Philippopolis project by arch. V. Petkova		AFF-0-SIT.pdf; AFF-1-DETAIL.pdf; AFF-2-DETAIL.pdf
DOCUMENTS	Situational plan of the underground infrastructure	DOC-1.pdf
	Extract PR CGZ2023 PI 521.1382+523.4022	DOC-2.pdf
	Protocol No. 5 of the NSOPK dated 22.05.2000 – IZFTP	DOC-3.pdf
	Schedule No. 1 to Protocol No. 5	DOC-4.pdf
	Schedule No. 2 to Protocol No. 5	DOC-5.pdf
Budget value template		budget.xls
Photos		multiple

The documentation also includes a list of files and index.txt for each dwg file with a list of the layers used.

версия на документа: v0.5

studio TECTONICA
ARCHITECTURE & URBANISM