

COMPETITION TASK

COMPETITION FOR THE CONCEPTUAL DESIGN FOR THE REVITALIZATION OF THE “GORICA FOREST PARK” NATURAL MONUMENT IN PODGORICA

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument is the largest and most significant urban green area and a cardinal element of the green infrastructure within the broader urban landscape of Podgorica. Gorica Hill, with an elevation of approximately 130 m above sea level, is located on the north-eastern edge of the central city zone, only 600 m from the main city square. It covers an area of approximately 105 ha, with a boundary perimeter of around 5.3 km. Surrounded on all sides by urban neighbourhoods, Gorica Hill has for decades provided citizens with opportunities for rest and time in nature through recreation, walking, sport, and cultural and educational activities.

Gorica Forest Park is a protected natural asset. The Assembly of the Capital City adopted the Decision on the Declaration of the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument (Official Gazette of Montenegro – Municipal Regulations, No. 31/2022). The protected area is managed by the Agency for the Management of Protected Areas of Podgorica, in accordance with the Law on Nature Protection (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 54/2016, 18/2019 and 84/24). On the basis of the Protection Study, the Management Plan for the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument 2024-2029 was prepared and adopted, defining the vision, activities and management measures.

The legal basis for the adoption of the Decision is contained in the provisions of Article 62 on spatial planning of the Law on Spatial Planning and Construction of Structures (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 019/25, 028/25 and 049/25), Article 6 of the Rulebook on the Manner and Procedure for Announcing and Conducting a Public Competition for a Conceptual Architectural Design (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 19/18), Article 100, paragraph 1, item 20 of the Statute of the Capital City (Official Gazette of Montenegro – Municipal Regulations, No. 8/19), as well as activity 1.1.2 of the Action Plan within the Management Plan for the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument for the period 2024-2029.

Over the past fifteen years, Gorica Forest Park has faced serious challenges of degradation caused by fires and the spontaneous, uncontrolled development of vegetation. In 2021, a major fire affected the hill and destroyed approximately 21 ha of forest area. The consequences of the fire are still visible in parts of the terrain, particularly on the northern, eastern and western slopes. Following the fire, invasive black locust expanded over burnt areas, especially on the south-eastern slopes of the summit area.

This international competition covers the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument, with the aim of obtaining the best conceptual design for its arrangement and revitalization. Participants are asked to respond to the key challenges presented in the Competition Task through creative, professional and nature-sensitive proposals.

2. SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COMPETITION

The subject of the competition is the development of a conceptual landscape and urban design for the rehabilitation and revitalization of the "Gorica Forest Park" Natural Monument in Podgorica. The conceptual design should offer a comprehensive vision for the development, arrangement, and use of the forest park, serving as the basis for further elaboration through detailed designs and phased implementation.

The "Gorica Forest Park" Natural Monument is envisioned as a resilient forest park and a key node within Podgorica's green infrastructure — a place that brings together ecological restoration and public use, and that embodies a contemporary landscape and urban approach to restoring natural harmony within the urban environment and adapting to climate change. The strategic objectives of the competition follow from this vision.

Strategic Objectives

1. Ecological restoration and resilience. Revitalization of Gorica's damaged ecosystem through the regeneration of vegetation following the fire, the preservation of biodiversity, and the establishment of a stable, resilient woodland ecosystem capable of self-sustaining and adapting to climate change.

2. Gorica Forest Park as the foremost element of green infrastructure. Positioning the Natural Monument as the cornerstone of Podgorica's green space system and one of the city's defining green assets, whose rehabilitation strengthens the ecological and recreational value of the system as a whole.

3. Integration into the urban fabric and the city's green infrastructure. Establishing ecological and functional connectivity between the forest park and its surroundings, with due regard for the topography and the characteristic views toward the city and the wider landscape, so as to achieve a coherent and legible relationship between the natural area and the urban tissue.

4. Inclusivity, accessibility, and social cohesion. Planning the program and the design in line with the principles of universal design, making the forest park accessible to a broad range of users and a multifunctional space for recreation, education, and culture throughout the year.

5. Landscape character and cultural heritage. Preserving and enhancing the character of the landscape by aligning interventions with the natural, visual, cultural, and ambient qualities of the site, while honoring its cultural and historical monuments and the symbolism of the hill as a point of identity for Podgorica.

Proposals should demonstrate:

- A clear conceptual and spatial hierarchy;
- Ecological sensitivity and low-intensity interventions;
- Long-term sustainability and the capacity for phased implementation;
- A balance between programmed uses and preserved natural zones;

- Spatial and functional coherence.

Participants are expected to put forward a vision that transforms the site into a natural oasis — one that respects the spirit of the place and the authentic character of the landscape. Obtrusive built structures, intense colors, and modern materials are to be avoided; preference is given to uses and activities that foster a connection with nature and support the local ecosystem.

3. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE

3.1. Competition scope

Gorica Hill is located on the north-eastern edge of the central urban zone of Podgorica, surrounded on all sides by built urban neighbourhoods. It represents an isolated green oasis and an element of green infrastructure rising from the flat basin. Its highest point reaches approximately 130 m above sea level, while the foothill lies at around 40 m, meaning that Gorica dominates the city with an elevation difference of approximately 90 m. The total area of the Natural Monument is approximately 1.03 km² (102,67 ha), with a boundary perimeter of around 5.3 km.

The competition area includes cadastral parcels 1745/2, 1942, 1989, 1990, 2070/1, 2071, 2095/1, 2095/2, 2124, 2126/2, 2126/3, 2126/4, 2146/1, 2146/4, 2146/5, 2147/1, 2147/2, 2148/1, 2148/2, 2149/1, 2149/11, 2150, 2151/1, 2151/2, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155/3, 2156/1, 2198/1, 2200/3, 2200/4, 2200/5, 2201, 2202/1, 2202/5, 2202/6, 2269/2, 2269/5, 2280/1, 2280/3, 2280/6, 2281, 2282, 2283/1, 2283/3, 2388/1, 2589, 2590/3, 2594/1, 2594/19, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2599, 2600/1, 2601/1, 2601/164, 2601/165, 2601/6, 2601/7, 2602, 2603/1, 2603/16, 2603/17, 2603/175, 2603/2, 2603/20, 2603/27, 2603/3, 2603/46, 2603/47 i 2603/48 Cadastral Municipality Podgorica II, (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Competition scope

3.2. Natural and landscape characteristics of the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument

Gorica Forest Park is a protected natural area in the central part of Podgorica, of exceptional significance both for biodiversity conservation and for its landscape, cultural-historical and social values. Gorica Hill is an urban forest park of artificial origin, established through planting in the second half of the 20th century and continuously supplemented up to the present day. Participants should understand this area not merely as a green space, but also as a valuable and dynamic ecosystem, a viewpoint, a place of collective memory and the backbone of the city's green system.

Climatogenically, the area belongs to the zone of xerothermic deciduous oak and hornbeam forests of the order *Quercetalia pubescentis*. The primary vegetation type, now preserved only in fragments, was the association *Quercetum trojanae montenegrinum*, with *Quercus trojana* as the dominant species and accompanying species including *Carpinus orientalis*, *Fraxinus ornus*, *Quercus pubescens*, *Pistacia terebinthus*, *Phyllirea media*, *Paliurus spinachristi*, *Acer monspessulanum*, *Punica granatum* and *Juniperus oxycedrus*. The current landscape is dominated by an artificially established stand of Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*)

and Mediterranean cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), with sporadic natural regeneration. Individual specimens of *Pinus pinea* in the summit zone are of particular value, as are the remnants of autochthonous stands of *Quercus trojana*, a species with a reduced range in the Podgorica area.

Gorica is a habitat for more than 400 taxa at species and subspecies level, giving it the character of a unique botanical site of educational importance. Several strictly protected and rare fungal species have been recorded within the Natural Monument (*Geastrum fimbriatum*, *Geastrum nanum*, *Hygrocybe spadicea*, *Omphalotus olearius*, *Sarcosphaera coronaria*, *Tulostoma brumale*, *Pleurotus eryngii*, *Pseudoboubovia benkertii* and others), and the hill itself is the locus classicus for the species *Pseudoboubovia benkertii*. Open grassland habitats are particularly important, as they support rare species associated with the plant *Eryngium campestre*; these areas must therefore be maintained through regular mowing and protected from overgrowth.

In landscape terms, the Protection Study (with zoning carried out before the 2022 fire) divides the area into eleven landscape units with different character and value (Figure 2):

- Zone 1 – Park entrance zone (near the Church of St George): characterized by greater floral diversity; in addition to Aleppo pine and cypress, *Celtis australis*, *Gleditsia triacanthos*, *Fraxinus ornus*, *Quercus pubescens*, *Punica granatum*, *Melia azedarach* and *Morus alba* are present.
- Zone 2 – Area around the “Fallen heroes – Partisan the Warrior Memorial” memorial: dominated by Aleppo pine and cypress, with specimens of cedar (*Cedrus* sp.), naturally occurring *Fraxinus ornus* and *Quercus ilex* saplings from reforestation campaigns.
- Zone 3 – Mediterranean Garden: a public educational park opened in 2018, with a diverse range of Mediterranean species (*Ligustrum*, *Laurus*, *Pinus halepensis*, *Cupressus sempervirens*, *Quercus ilex*, *Punica granatum*, *Viburnum tinus* and others).
- Zone 4 – Adventure Park zone (north-west): trees bent under the influence of the northern wind, a broken canopy structure and, in places, inadequately introduced species.
- Zone 5 – Central zone: a monodominant stand of older *Pinus halepensis* trees, with sparse cypress regeneration in the understorey.
- Zones 6 and 7 – South-eastern zone above and below the path: strongly affected by degradation and several fires, with the formation of openings; in places, regeneration nuclei of Aleppo pine as a pyrophytic species, as well as *Quercus trojana*, *Quercus pubescens*, *Ficus carica* and *Celtis australis*.
- Zone 8 – Eastern zone: dense young stands of Aleppo pine and cypress formed through natural regeneration.
- Zone 9 – Summit Zone 1: the most representative and ecologically stable zone, dominated by *Pinus pinea* together with *Quercus pubescens*, *Quercus trojana* and *Fraxinus ornus*; an area of particular dendrological value.

- Zone 10 – Summit Zone 2: flat terrain with grassy clearings, shrub formations and forest of broken canopy, with significant cypress regeneration.
- Zone 11 – Northern zone: an area largely without mature overstorey trees, with regeneration nuclei of *Quercus trojana* to the east and *Pinus halepensis* to the west..



Figure 2. Evaluation of landscape characteristics

The major fire of 2021, as well as subsequent fires, affected more than 20 hectares, particularly in Zones 7-11, significantly altering the appearance and ecological condition of these parts of the forest park. For this reason, the revitalization of burnt areas is one of the key challenges of the Competition Task. In addition to its ecological values, Gorica has a pronounced microclimatic role – acting as a shield against the northern wind in winter and as a cooler-temperature island in summer – as well as multiple social and health functions: a place for recreation, education and contemplation, while also being a site of identity significance for the city.

Understanding these natural, contextual and landscape layers should be the starting point for all design decisions within the Competition, so that the proposed solutions enhance existing values while minimizing interventions in the most sensitive zones.

3.3. Protection zones and regimes of the Natural Monument – excerpt from the Management Plan for the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument for 2024-2029

Two protection zones are defined within the Natural Monument – Protection Zone II and Protection Zone III – together with a buffer zone (Note: see the map Graphic representation of the boundaries of the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument, source: Protection Study) (Figure 3).

Protection Zone II – Active Protection includes the forest of Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis* Miller) and Mediterranean cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens* L.), with exceptional specimens of stone pine (*Pinus pinea* L.) and Macedonian oak (*Quercus trojana* Webb), as well as the peripheral part of Gorica Hill and gently sloping plateaus formed by uniformly dry grassland communities and grassland habitats. This zone is defined by Natura habitats 9540 – Mediterranean forests of thermophilous pines, 62A0 – Eastern sub-Mediterranean dry grasslands (*Scorzoneretalia villosae*), and 6220 – Pseudo-steppe with grasses and annuals of the Thero-Brachypodietea class.

The objective of active protection (Protection Zone II) allows for interventions aimed at restoration, revitalization and the overall improvement of the condition of the protected natural asset, as well as controlled use of natural resources without consequences for the primary values of habitats, populations and ecosystems. In Protection Zone II, sanitary-hygienic silvicultural measures that contribute to the improvement of the area are permitted. Forest tending and protection measures in the form of thinning and sanitary felling are carried out in accordance with the guidelines for the reconstruction and arrangement of Gorica Forest Park provided in the Protection Study.

Permitted activities in Protection Zone II are:

- controlled scientific research and monitoring of natural processes;
- marking of trails and installation of visitor infrastructure;
- forms of recreational tourism that do not endanger the values of the protected asset or this protection zone (recreation, walking, etc.);
- protective, remediation and other necessary measures for the protection of the area;
- introduction of native species by an authorized institution;
- reclamation of devastated areas in accordance with the guidelines for the reconstruction and arrangement of Gorica Forest Park provided in the Protection Study;
- implementation of appropriate fire-protection measures in accordance with fire-protection measures and recommendations; maintenance of secondary fire-access paths (routes for fire engines);
- implementation of works for the remediation and revitalization of degraded areas, based on the guidelines for the reconstruction and arrangement of Gorica Forest

Park;

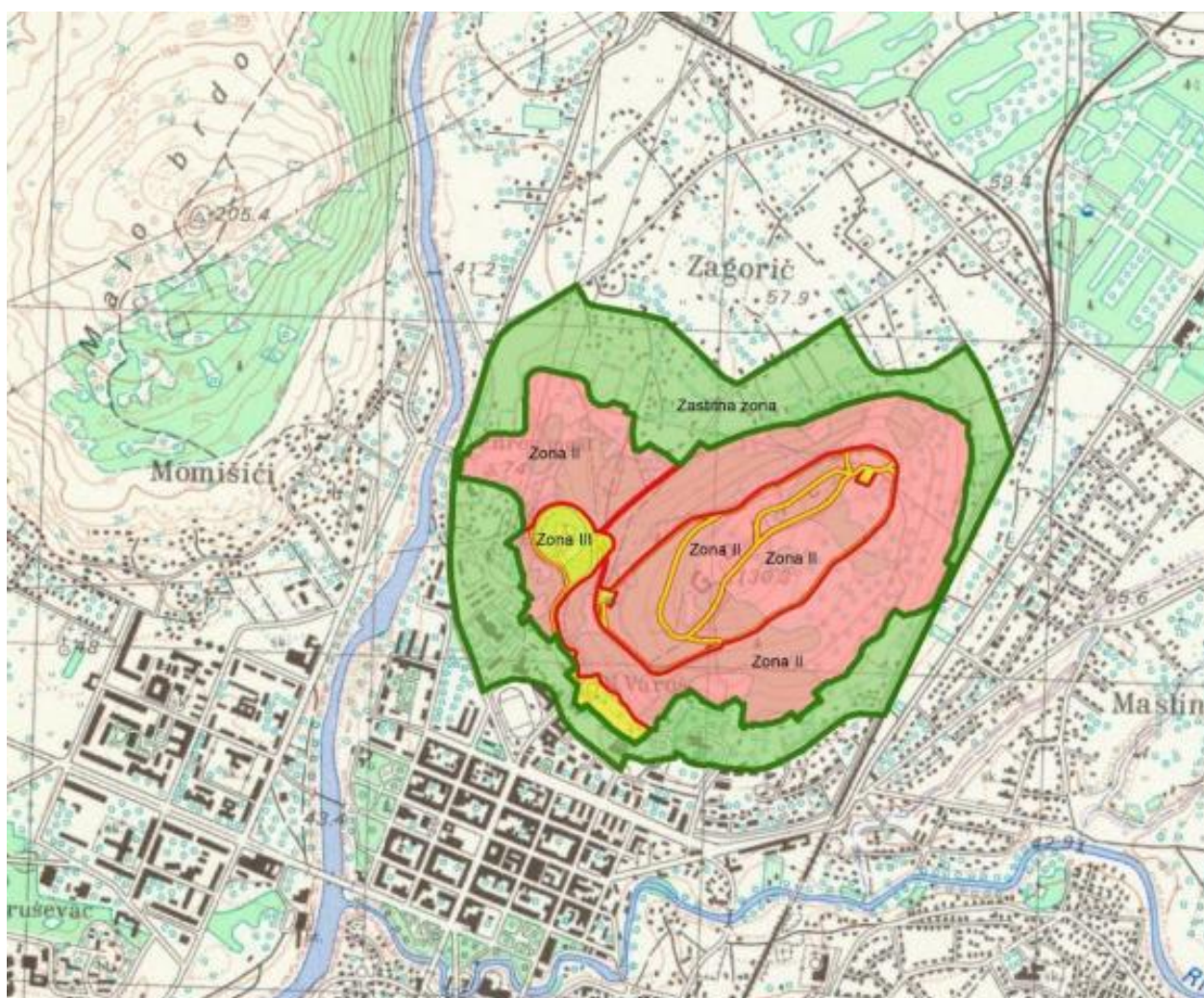


Figure 3. Geographical location of the Natural Monument with protection zones

Protection Zone III – Sustainable Use includes natural values that have been altered, but not to such an extent as to endanger the functioning of established functional-ecological links within the natural asset. This zone includes parts of the forest park containing the Church of St George with its associated land, the “Fallen heroes – Partisan the Warrior” memorial complex and the Mediterranean Garden, the Adventure Park with accompanying facilities, communal infrastructure facilities with their surroundings, the sports ground with its surroundings, and existing asphalt paths with a 2 m buffer strip measured from the outer edges of the paths on both sides.

Protection Zone III – Sustainable Use refers to the protection of the landscape, biodiversity and landscape values. Sustainable use implies selective and limited use of natural resources; interventions aimed at the restoration, revitalization and overall improvement of the protected natural asset; arrangement of cultural-historical heritage and traditional architecture; and improvement of infrastructure aligned with the potentials and capacities of the protected natural asset, particularly in relation to sports, recreation and other forms of tourism.

Permitted activities in Protection Zone III are:

- revitalization of existing sports and recreational facilities that will be integrated into the contextual values of the area, be of appropriate scale and dimensions, and be connected to the utility network on the basis of separate designs and programmes that are in accordance with the function of the protected area;
- construction of new facilities for sport, recreation and similar uses that do not biologically or visually endanger the protected natural asset, as well as reconstruction of existing infrastructure for which technical documentation must be prepared in accordance with protection measures and conditions;
- reconstruction and extension of existing structures only where they are in accordance with the function of the protected area, with architectural design fully adapted to the existing setting and landscape;
- reconstruction of cultural assets in accordance with the conditions and protection measures prescribed by the competent authority for the protection of cultural monuments and the competent administrative authority in the field of nature protection;

The Management Plan contains data on species planted on Gorica, which may serve as useful input for the revitalization of the subject area.

3.3.1. Fallen heroes – Partisan the Warrior Memorial – excerpt from the Protection Study for Gorica Forest Park (Figure 4)

The cultural heritage site - Fallen heroes – Partisan the Warrior Memorial on Gorica was protected by Decision No. 634/57 of 8 August 1957 and entered into the Register of Cultural Heritage Sites under No. 08-799/1 of 14 June 1962.

The type of immovable cultural heritage site of the Memorial is a cultural-historical structure: an architectural work and memorial structure.

According to Real Estate Folio No. 640, the cultural heritage site is located on cadastral parcel 2281, Cadastral Municipality Podgorica II, as a cultural monument.

The area of the immovable cultural heritage site zone is 704.5 m², while the protected surroundings of the cultural heritage site include part of cadastral parcel 2281 and the entirety of cadastral parcel 2282, with a total area of 27,947 m². The proposed protected surroundings are defined by the pedestrian path around the complex.

Pursuant to the Law on the Protection of Cultural Assets, the Fallen heroes – Partisan the Warrior Memorial is categorized as a cultural heritage site of national significance (2014).



Figure 4. Location of the Fallen heroes – Partisan the Warrior Memorial, with the protected surroundings of the cultural heritage site

3.4. Social significance of the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument

The “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument is a key natural and social resource of Podgorica. As the “lungs of the city” and the most important area for spending time in nature within the broader centre, the Natural Monument is a public good of priority importance for quality of life and social cohesion in the city.

The park is used on a daily basis and Gorica is visited by diverse categories of users, from recreational users and athletes to families with children, pensioners and tourists. The most common activities include walking, running, cycling and exercising along the existing path network, sports activities at the summit, and use of the Adventure Park in the lower area.

The space also has a strong community-gathering function through sporting events, charity and mountain races, as well as volunteer cleaning and reforestation campaigns, environmental campaigns and educational tours, demonstrating a high level of civic attachment and willingness to engage.

Additional value is provided by the cultural-historical layer, with particular reference to the Church of St George at the foothill and the Fallen heroes – Partisan the Warrior Memorial complex, where commemorative ceremonies are held. It can therefore be said that the forest park also functions as a place of collective memory.

Frequent fires over the last two decades and the need for greater safety and monitoring have guided the development and improvement of management practices, through the introduction of a ranger service, video surveillance and modern early fire-detection systems, along with continuous remediation and reforestation, further confirming its social significance and the focus on protecting the area.

3.5. Data from spatial planning documentation

According to the applicable spatial planning documentation, Gorica Hill is categorized as protective greenery – forest park, where no built structures are envisaged except for the accompanying infrastructure required for that use. Administratively, the area lies within several cadastral parcels and urban zones, but for the purposes of this Competition it is considered as a single whole defined by the boundary of the protected asset.

The conceptual design must be aligned with the objectives, measures and vision defined in the Protection Study for the subject area, the Decision on the Declaration of the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument and the applicable Management Plan for the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument 2024-2029.

3.6. Understanding local natural conditions and the ecosystem

In order to better understand the natural characteristics of Podgorica’s urban flora and fauna, as well as the method of reforestation of Gorica Forest Park, participants are referred to the following sources:

<https://sekretarijat-za-ppor.podgorica.me/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/studija-gorica-maj-2022.pdf>

<https://sekretarijat-za-ppor.podgorica.me/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Nact-plana-upravljanja-2024-2029.pdf>

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281272638_The_Urban_Flora_Of_Podgorica_Montenegro_SE_Europe_Annotated_Checklist_Distribution_Atlas_Habitats_AndLife-Forms_Taxonomic_Phytogeographical_And_Ecological_Analysis

The Protection Study for Gorica Forest Park and the Management Plan for the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument for the period 2024-2029 are in the local language and represent valuable sources of information on the established ecosystem in Podgorica’s urban core, developed through a long-term process of reforestation.

Source of meteorological data for Podgorica:

<https://www.meteo.co.me/page.php?id=41>

4. COMPETITION TASK

4.1. Conceptual framework and design principles

The concept of the design proposal should be based on the integration of three interrelated thematic entities – Nature, People and Heritage – which form the fundamental design pillars for this project.

PILLAR: NATURE (ecosystem, landscape, resilience)

The “Nature” pillar means treating the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument primarily as a living ecosystem that is protected, restored and enhanced. All design moves must be subordinated to the objective of preserving natural and landscape values, as well as improving the environmental condition of Gorica.

Key principles: - Restoration of forest vegetation after fires: Provide comprehensive measures for the ecological revitalization of burnt parts of the hill, in accordance with the guidelines of the Protection Study and the Management Plan for the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument. - Native vegetation and biodiversity: Prioritize the planting of native and naturalized tree and shrub species adapted to the local climate, with the gradual transformation of the monocultural Aleppo pine forest into a mixed deciduous-coniferous stand to increase ecological stability. - Fire resilience (fire-smart design): Integrate the principles of a “resilient landscape” that reduce the likelihood of fire spread. Follow the proposed route of the fire escape,, establish green barriers by planting broadleaf species less prone to fire, and provide fire-extinguishing material points and a hydrant network. - Water and soil: Provide stormwater management, rainwater harvesting, rain gardens or infiltration channels. - Habitat mosaic: Create a mosaic of different habitats – wooded areas, forest clearings, grasslands and shrub zones.

PILLAR: PEOPLE (recreation, accessibility, social role)

The “People” pillar focuses on user experience and the social function of the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument. Gorica should be a safe and inspiring space for all citizens and visitors, while respecting spatial limitations in terms of the defined protection zones when planning programme elements.

Key principles: - Diverse recreational programmes: Provide facilities that meet the needs of different visitor groups – from athletes and recreational users to families with children, tourists and older persons. - Accessibility and universal design: Mark at least one main route from the foothill to the summit or viewpoint with a sufficiently gentle gradient for wheelchair users or parents with strollers. - Safety and visitor comfort: Plan discreet lighting, a wayfinding system, rest areas and drinking-water fountains, linked to the hydrant network, which also contributes to fire protection. - Social interaction and community: Provide spaces and programmes that encourage the gathering of different groups. - Education and awareness-raising: Propose thematic trails or points with interpretative signage that build upon the existing educational trails and the Mediterranean Garden, enabling the implementation of a “school in nature”.

PILLAR: HERITAGE (identity, culture, spirit of place)

The “Heritage” pillar encompasses all aspects of Gorica related to cultural-historical identity, symbolism and the stories associated with this place.

Key principles: - Preservation of cultural assets: Ensure that all interventions respect the integrity of the Fallen heroes – Partisan the Warrior Memorial. - Integration of historical narratives: Integrate design elements that communicate to visitors the historical, cultural and symbolic stories connected with the hill. - Identity and symbolism of the hill: Strengthen the emotional connection and symbolism of Gorica through design. - Respect for the “spirit of place”: Reversibility is part of this spirit – every intervention should be removable one day without permanent consequences.

4.2. Specific programme requirements and recommendations

4.2.1. Zones of Gorica Forest Park – proposed contents by zone

Lower plateau – Fallen heroes – Partisan the Warrior Memorial

The lower plateau zone (Fallen heroes – Partisan the Warrior Memorial) is the most visited and one of the most recognizable areas of Gorica Forest Park among users. Existing contents should therefore be further integrated, clearly marked, and made more visible and legible in space.

Mandatory measures include the arrangement of access paths, the introduction of discreet lighting and benches for visitors, while preserving the visual perception of the space around the memorial. The installation of thematic installations/panels and signage is recommended to enable clearer “reading” of the space, as well as the formation of a “green classroom” within the area of the Monument to the Fallen Fighters as a multifunctional space for educational activities, outdoor classes and commemorative events, contextually integrated with the memorial character of the zone.

The Mediterranean Garden should be retained and revitalized through renewal of the existing botanical collection, with information boards and planting of native melliferous and aromatic species. It is recommended that the garden be marked as an educational point and included in a thematic botanical trail.

The Adventure Park with the existing café bar should be retained and improved, while the café bar should be treated as a temporary, prefabricated and accompanying facility within the recreational zone.

It is recommended that the Lower Plateau be supplemented with a children’s playground based on the principles of nature discovery (natural materials, and elements of relief, vegetation and water as play elements), instead of industrially produced, standard structures,

as well as with a pet zone, with clear movement guidance and content signage in order to connect the lower plateau into a coherent whole.

Upper plateau

The upper plateau of Gorica is the highest point of the narrower urban core and a natural viewpoint from which Podgorica can be seen. However, it currently lacks a legible and recognizable character, and the competition proposal is therefore expected to shape this space as a clear contextual whole with identity, orientation and contents for all age groups. The focus should be on establishing the spatial structure and experience of place through an arranged main viewpoint, opening key vistas, a series of smaller plateaus with urban furniture, a multifunctional educational space such as a “green classroom” or small amphitheatre, a sensory and inclusive playground, a modernized outdoor gym, a discreet accompanying pavilion for user gathering, as well as the possibility of artistic interventions and land-art proposals that strengthen the character of the space without aggressive interventions. Special attention should be paid to protecting representative specimens of *Pinus pinea* in Zone 9, which represent a unique dendrological value in the territory of the Capital City and whose setting must not be disturbed.

The existing football pitch should be upgraded and transformed into a high-quality multifunctional sports and recreational surface, but as an accompanying element within the whole. The key creative task is to propose a contemporary, unobtrusive and contextually integrated “landmark” that marks the summit of Gorica as a point for viewing the city, while simultaneously functioning as a new place of identification, gathering and orientation within the forest park and the city.

4.2.2. Path network and entrances to Gorica Forest Park

The circulation network throughout Gorica Forest Park should be designed as a legible, safe, and recognizable system that connects the main entrances to all zones of the park, with a clear hierarchy of primary and secondary routes and continuous looped trails.

The existing network of paved paths, shown in the graphic section of the competition, is divided on the ground by horizontal road markings into pedestrian and cycling lanes, much like a roadway — although this division is not shown in the graphic appendix. This network lies within Protection Zone III and is treated as existing and fixed — its expansion is not permitted, except along the proposed fire-access route indicated in the graphic appendix. Interventions are possible only within a strip of up to 2 m along the edge of the paved surface, and solely for widening the path or creating pockets for rest, seating, fitness, and *vita parours* features. Owing to the close proximity of the two flows, conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians frequently occur on the paved paths; upgrading these paths should mitigate such conflicts, and on steep, higher-speed sections a physical separation of the flows should be provided (a barrier, guardrail, planted buffer strip, or similar).

Along the paved paths, in certain locations, the beginnings of educational trails already exist, though they are neither mapped nor systematized. The competition proposal should conceive and define them — through interpretive content, signage, micro-locations for pausing, and contemporary digital tools (QR codes, audio guides, AR content) — so that they may be further developed and refined at the implementation stage.

New and upgraded sections should use natural, permeable materials (gravel, crushed stone), while paving of new paths is not permitted. Recommended minimum widths are 1.5–2.0 m for primary and 1.0–1.2 m for secondary pedestrian routes. On steep sections, switchbacks should be provided instead of direct ascents, and where necessary, steps or ramps of timber, stone, or set treads.

Entrance zones should be developed at a minimum of four main entrances (north, south, east, west), each providing an information board, bicycle parking, and street furniture, with the option of a small car park nearby. The existing paved road to the summit should be retained as the principal service route, with physical access control, and the network as a whole should be coordinated with fire-protection requirements and the proposed fire-access route.

Public lighting should be provided only where justified — along the main paths and at key points — using energy-efficient solutions discreetly integrated into the setting.

4.2.3. Reforestation and reclamation

Reforestation and reclamation of the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument are conceived as a long-term process of restoring native forest communities and gradually transforming the existing monocultural stand of Aleppo pine and cypress into a stable mixed deciduous-coniferous forest.

The competition proposal should define priority reforestation zones, with a focus on burnt areas, as well as areas to be left to natural succession, while preserving open grassland habitats as permanent meadows maintained through regular mowing.

Planting should be based on native and naturalized species adapted to the climatogenic zone of Podgorica. In the tree layer, preference should be given to deciduous species such as *Quercus trojana*, *Quercus pubescens*, *Quercus ilex*, *Fraxinus ornus*, *Acer monspessulanum*, *Carpinus orientalis*, *Celtis australis*, *Cercis siliquastrum* and *Tilia* sp., together with appropriate evergreen and coniferous species (*Olea europaea*, *Pinus pinea*, *Pinus pinaster*, *Cupressus sempervirens*). In the shrub layer, *Cornus mas*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Cotinus coggygria*, *Punica granatum*, *Arbutus unedo*, *Myrtus communis* and *Juniperus oxycedrus* should be used. The use of invasive species (*Robinia pseudoacacia*, *Ailanthus altissima* and others) and species not suited to the hill's site conditions (*Paulownia*, *Picea*, etc.) is strictly prohibited.

On steep terrain, agrotechnical and biological stabilization measures must be provided, including terracing and ameliorative works to improve soil characteristics. In order to reduce

fire risk, fire-resistant “green barriers” should be established – belts of broadleaf species less susceptible to burning around critical locations and along forest edges – together with segmentation of coniferous stands, fire-extinguishing material points, and an optimal network of hydrants and public drinking fountains.

As an additional value, the involvement of the local community, educational institutions and socially responsible companies in the restoration process is recommended, so that reclamation becomes a social process of co-creation rather than an exclusively technical intervention.

4.2.4. Signage, urban furniture and materialization

The “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument currently lacks a unified navigation and information signage system, as well as a recognizable visual identity. The competition proposal is therefore expected to establish an integrated system of signage and urban furniture that will brand the park as an urban forest park in the centre of Podgorica, clearly legible and accessible.

Signage should include entrance information boards at all main entrances, directional signs at intersections with distances to key points, “you are here” maps at selected locations, interpretative boards at significant sites with QR codes for digital content, as well as discreet rules and warning signs, particularly regarding the prohibition of lighting fires.

Urban furniture must be functional, uniform and recognizable within contemporary urban design, including several types of benches and loungers placed along viewpoints and movement nodes, picnic tables in clearly defined zones, bins with lids and waste-separation points at entrances, canopies or pergolas at key stopping places, bicycle stands, and lighting limited to necessary points. The placement of bird drinking points along existing routes is also recommended, as well as nesting boxes on suitable trees, thereby further enhancing local biodiversity and the educational function of the park.

Materialization should be natural and water-permeable, but implemented at the standard of an urban park: paths of compacted gravel and earth surfaces, steps and thresholds on steeper slopes made of timber or stone, plateaus and contact zones around programme elements made of natural stone, and playground surfaces made of mulch, sand or rubberized layers, with a consistent colour palette and avoidance of intense artificial colours.

All elements of signage, furniture and materials must be unified through a single graphic identity, be technically durable and vandal-resistant, enabling the rational, innovative and dynamic use of the space throughout the day and year.

4.2.5. Regulations and design recommendations

During the design process, the provisions of the following regulations must be respected:

- Law on Construction of Structures (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 19/25);
- Rulebook on detailed conditions and the manner of adapting structures for access and movement of persons with reduced mobility and persons with disabilities (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 48/13 and 44/15);

as well as other regulations governing the construction of structures.

During the design process, it is also recommended to use the Manual for the Planning of Public Spaces in Montenegro (Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro, 2015, <https://mrt.gov.me/rubrike/publikacije/155472/Prirucnik-za-planiranje-i-uredjenje-javnih-prostora-u-CG.html>), as well as the Protection Study for the “Gorica Forest Park” Natural Monument and the Gorica Forest Park Management Plan (2024-2029) as the key professional documents defining mandatory protection measures and guidelines for the arrangement of the area.