

MAKEOVER



Utopia Arkitekter's winning proposition in the makeover-competition for Tegelbacken.

TEGELBACKEN'S FLOATING GARDENS

About six months ago, Fastighetsägarna Stockholm in tandem with Metro Stockholm's architects. The aim was to make better use of the inhospitable Tegelbacken area in between the city centre and the old town. The winning proposition came from Utopia Arkitekter and was titled 'Stockholm's Floating Gardens'. The proposal was to utilise the Tegelbacken quays' greatest resources, namely the location, the water and the view, and thereby inject a healthy dose of opportunities in a place currently completely bereft of life.

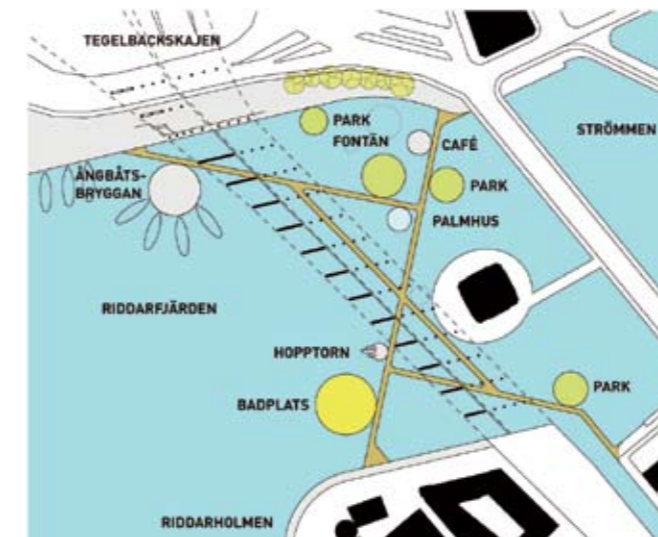
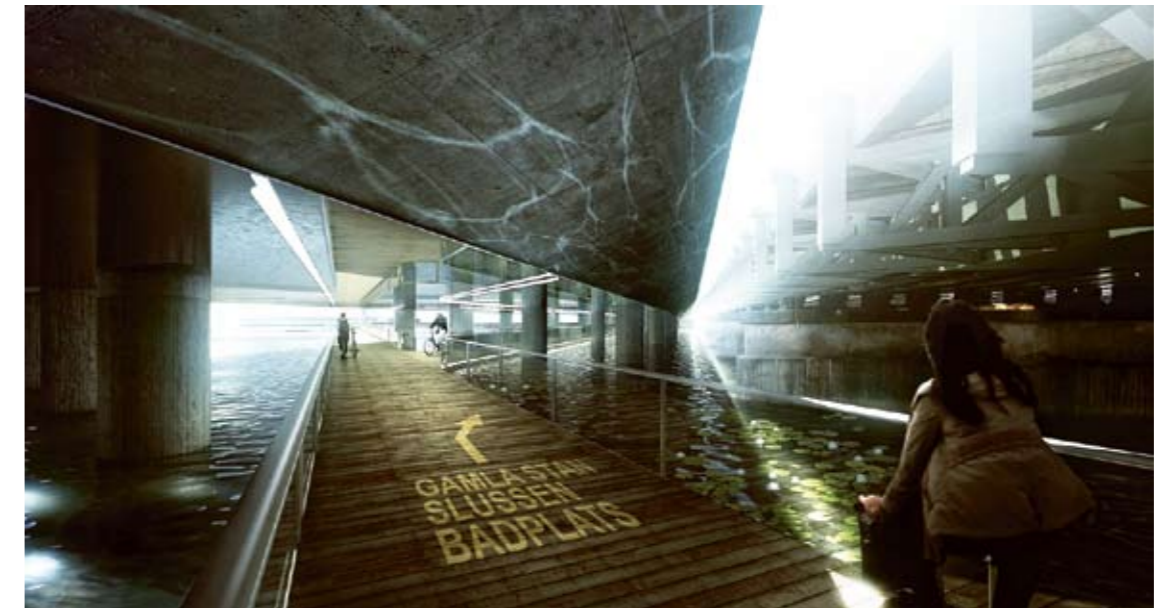
UTOPIA ARKITEKTER

"Our ambition was to transform the barren and gloomy quays at Tegelbacken beside the heavy traffic into a beautiful and congenial green space. With gardens that are not only floatable but also moveable, one could adapt the surroundings with the seasons. The Tegelbacken quays of today are an area of heavy traffic; a lot of concrete and the noise make it very inhospitable.

The bridges make new car-free transport routes, which will create new movement patterns, and the islands create new green and recreation areas in one of Stockholm's best, but also most step-motherly treated, areas.

Stockholm's Floating Gardens would be the most centrally located beach in northern Europe in the summertime beside the floating gardens, a palm house and a café.

When the leaves fall, the island park will be adapted to the season. And perhaps they will be replaced to make room for winter activities. The noise from the traffic is dampened with the help of a fountain and the underwater lighting makes the whole area beautiful, serene and secure at night."



WHAT NEXT?

We ask Regina Kevius, city commissioner.

The proposal from Utopia Arkitekter was voted for by the Stockholm people and apparently won by a wide margin. What has happened with the proposal since the competition ended? Is there an intention to follow this up and pursue whatever possibilities there are to make this happen?

If someone wants to pursue this project, if they believe in the idea and they are prepared to finance, build and run it, they are very welcome to get in touch with the Stockholm Board. Before anyone proceeds they will have to acquire a land allocation agreement – after that, Stockholm can show that a will exists. We welcome the opportunity to move the discussion forward.

What's your personal view of this proposal?

It is a lot better than how the site looks today. Now it's desolate, insecure and inaccessible. This is an exciting proposal. Placing things on water is always a sensitive subject in Stockholm, but compared to what the site looks like today things can only improve.

I saw a quote from you saying that too many proposals from architects in Stockholm reach a dead end. Why is that? What is the biggest hindrance to projects going ahead?

Financing. I'd like to see financial backing behind the different proposals already in place when they are submitted to a competition. And I would like to see quality and interesting architecture being valued more when we allocate land.

Architects I have spoken to say that interesting projects are rebuffed for being too controversial or not suited to the current cityscape, but then Stockholm would never have a chance to develop.

That time is long gone. We are currently working on a new architecture program that will be ready next year, which is all about encouraging exciting new projects. We have to stop compromising things to death. At the moment we reduce width, height and form and we end up with too many square white buildings with flat roofs.