

Ex Chimica Arenella, Palermo

Via Monsignor F. Pottino n. 3

The proposed transformation concerns the area of the former Arenella Chimica site, located in the Arenella - Vergine Maria district of the Municipality of Palermo at Via Monsignor F. Pottino. The area comprises two distinct areas, the sea-side compartment ('A') and the upstream compartment ('B'). The former Arenella chemical plant, now disused and almost totally abandoned, represents a unique and significant example in Palermo of historical industrial architecture in need of regeneration. The area boasts an exclusive vista overlooking one of the clearest stretches of the Sicilian sea,

direct access to the sandy beach, and close proximity to the Arenella district marina.

It extends alongside ancient aristocratic villas and is embedded in the cultural corridor of the historic seaside villages of the Palermo coastline. Additionally, it offers a scenic connection to Monte Pellegrino, whose slopes host the adjacent mountain-side area. The site inherently presents itself as a captivating setting with vast potential, serving as a nexus for visual and physical connections between the sea, the city, and the mountain, through reconfiguration.



Plot Area:

The extension of the intervention area (Territorial Area) is approximately 87,500 square metres, of which about 62,500.00 square metres in the "A" section and about 25,000.00 square metres in the "B" section. The buildings present have a volume of approximately 261,000 cubic metres.

Expected Land Use:

The aim of the redevelopment should entail an urban regeneration process with a low environmental impact, while also fostering social and cultural value. This objective can be achieved through partial restoration and partial replacement of the existing urban building fabric.

Due to its characteristics, context, and potential connections, the site lends itself to hosting various functions, such as tourist accommodation facilities, sports and leisure

facilities, cultural activities, craft activities and any other function compatible with the value of the area, and in line with the design principles and sustainability criteria outlined in the proposal.

Site Ownership:

Municipality of Palermo

Type of Property transfer intended:

Sale/concession of surface right/concession of development or ordinary/other

Deadline for submitting expressions of the Expression of Interest:

11 July 2024 18:00 CET

Presentation of the site and development expectations

The City of Palermo, capital of the Sicilian Region (a region with a special statute) and of the Metropolitan City of Palermo, rises at the foot of Monte Pellegrino, squeezed between the gulf and the limestone peaks from which it derives its name. Enclosed within the Conca d'Oro, spanning approximately 100 square kilometres, from the eastern hills of Bagheria and Villabate to the west. Once entirely adorned with citrus orchards, this area has undergone significant changes over time, marked by uncontrolled urban expansion famously known as the 'sack of Palermo'). Renowned as a historic art city, Palermo attracts tourists with its abundance of monuments.

The former 'Chimica Arenella' factory is located along the north coast of Palermo, in an area between the slopes of Monte Pellegrino and the Tyrrhenian Sea, in the Arenella-Vergine Maria district of the same name.



The industrial complex was built in the early 1900s by German industrialists (Goldenberg) for the manufacture of chemicals (mainly sulphuric acid and citric acid), and became the world's most important industry in the 1940s. Over the next 30 years, the factory experienced a decline in production, and in 1965 it closed due to the production crisis. It was subsequently managed for industrial promotion by the Sicilian Board, which, however, failed to revive production. In 1987 it was permanently closed.

The oldest sea-side core is characterised by a planimetric layout marked by a main road axis, Via del Pontile, extending about 150 metres from the entrance on the road to the exit on the sea, along which the main industrial buildings are grouped.

At least two types of industrial architecture can be distinguished from the original layout. A first group of buildings refers to a local, almost rural building tradition, with single-storey masonry architecture and pitched roofs: these include the entrance building, the warehouses on the street and the northern core of the carpentry workshops and cellars. A second group is characterised by salient roofs, framed structures, shed roofs, brick curtain walls and long vertical glass-block windows.

Particularly noteworthy are the machine-buildings, i.e. those artefacts where there is perfect adherence between architecture and function: this is the case of the brick chimneys and the water tower tank made of reinforced concrete.

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To the second construction phase of upgrading the plant, carried out in the middle of the Fascist era, belong the two "twin" buildings erected on either side of the original thermal power station: the definition of the fronts is entrusted to large glass-block windows. An intervention of great impact is the two-storey building for the production of tartaric acid, with a rationalist spatial grid in which the façades, punctuated by modular window frames, are treated as simple screens. The extension of the complex includes the warehouses on the sea front with standardised typological features (gabled roof, mixed structure and skylights), originally serving the production of tartaric acid, and the warehouses on the northern side of the via del Pontile, originally serving the production of pectin.

The detached production unit situated on the slopes of Monte Pellegrino (initially designated for sulphuric acid production), comprises two extensive concrete-framed sheds topped with a latero-concrete vaulting and tie-rods for support. The extended facades, supported by rough-hewn stone bases, are adorned with sequential openings, wooden window frames bearing an 'English' style pattern, and concrete lattice grilles above, and strips of plaster with two-coloured strips. The third shed was characterised by a central porch portion and vaulted roof with brick pillars. The area on the sea side comprises thirteen pavilions, which are now in a very poor state of preservation (in some pavilions the roofs have largely collapsed and there is a large amount of miscellaneous rubbish, including asbestos): they are mostly abandoned.

The upstream area includes a football pitch and a five-a-side football pitch and three industrial sheds. A portion of these spaces are in use or under concession, to protect the area. The Municipality will evaluate the possibility and timing of releasing the occupied spaces as needed for the implementation of the intervention.

For further details, please refer to the documentation in the *dataroom*, which specifies the intervention site, the programme and the expected uses, the environmental performance to be achieved, and any other element useful for the project development. Among the documents in the *dataroom* is the Decree of Constraint 2307/2019 of the "Ex Chimica Arenella", in which it is specified that *"in consideration of the advanced degradation of some buildings, where verified the impossibility of restoration, building renovation interventions with the insertion of contemporary artefacts, and the replacement of structural elements are permitted; such interventions must in any case be aimed at the preservation of the identity characteristics of the existing historical buildings. Recent unauthorized constructions, which have altered the morphology and historical-architectural integrity of the complex, will have to be subject to demolition. No new structures may be planned in the vacant areas"*.

Despite being bound by stringent regulations and the requirement to maintain the overall coherence of the existing warehouses, the design approach should strive to highlight the immense potential of the former Arenella chemical plant. It should also underscore its ability to catalyse positive effects on the surrounding urban fabric. Additional development directives include prioritising the **restoration of the sea to this section of the city, which has been absent for many years**. The state of degradation will affect the costs of the transformation and this will have to be adequately taken into account in the definition of the Economic and Financial Investment Plans that will have to be developed in the second phase of the call.

The regeneration project for the area may represent an opportunity to **rethink and experiment with new and different ways of experiencing this part of the city**, which has already been affected by recent urban transformations along the coast, and to **trigger processes of social innovation, identifying a new urban polarity and a plurality of functions according to the principle of functional diversity**. Proposals will be assessed in relation to their consistency with the landscape value of the area, with the regenerative objectives of the area and the context in which it is located, and with their ability to

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respond, through design, to the aims of the call. In particular, the repurposing shall be implemented in accordance with the **"low carbon" principle**, as set forth in the C40 guidelines, **and according to the indications of the competent Superintendence Office set forth in the Decree of Restriction** (specified in the documentation present in the *dataroom*) that identifies the volumes to be safeguarded. The transformation will have to be sustainable and create new places for the community; **sustainability will cover both environmental and landscape aspects, as well as food aspects**, related to sustainable food production, enhancing the site's natural products and traditional culinary foods.

The project will also have to make the site accessible to the public, starting with the design and/or provision of an integrated accessibility system (by land and sea). It should also include the establishment of a public area designated for an urban park, possibly designed as a 'seaside promenade,' and the development of a new school complex.

The project proposals should primarily address the entire intervention area, providing an overall strategic plan that will serve as a key technical component for evaluating project quality. This evaluation will consider additional design elements aligned with the objectives outlined in the call for proposals, as detailed in the final paragraph of the form. The Municipal Administration reserves the right to evaluate proposals that concern only one of the two compartments (compartment "A" or compartment "B").

It should be noted that 'Compartment B' will be able to host manufacturing activities compatible with the site and possibly in synergy (or not conflicting) with the initiatives proposed in 'Compartment A'.

In any case, in a general vision of the regeneration of the neighbourhood, project proposals will be positively evaluated that contain forecasts for the connection between the two lots (including the redevelopment of a section of via Monsignor F. Pottino corresponding to the royal road) and for any concessions of areas of the maritime state property overlooking the intervention area (in accordance with the Plan for the Use of the Maritime State Property Areas currently being drawn up), which will be prioritised for the subjects that will intervene in the regeneration of the area of the Ex Chimica Arenella.

In order to encourage proposals encompassing both compartments (A and B), participating teams are encouraged to consider implementing the transformation in successive phases, even within a unified design framework. These considerations, outlined in the initial phase, can be further elaborated upon in the second phase of the competition. In line with this approach, specifying a timeline for the transformation's realisation and incorporating temporary functions (temporary uses) during the intervention process will be valued. These aspects should be addressed in the design during the initial competition phase.

The legal framework governing property rights and the economic aspects of the transformation will be assessed during the second phase of the competition, considering:

- of the proposals received in the first phase;
- of the decisions taken by the municipality on the establishment of the proposed functions in the first phase;
- on the costs of transformation, including those of new urban polarities (public works).

It should be noted that, between the first and second phases, the Administration reserves the right to define a strategic-planning direction that will take into account the contents of the proposals received and the urbanisation requirements of the areas. It also retains the right to assess the estimated characterization costs, aiming to acquire economic cost figure, albeit indicative, related to potential soil remediation or asbestos disposal requirements. These costs should be incorporated into the economic and financial plans to be submitted in phase 2. In any case, the realisation and transfer of urbanisation works must be guaranteed in accordance with the relevant regulations in force.

Specific planning rules and regulations

The Municipality of Palermo has a General Regulatory Plan (PRG) approved by D.Dir. No. 124 and 558/D.R.U./2002 and C.C. Resolution No. 7 of 21/01/2004 (<https://www.comune.palermo.it/amministrazione-trasparente.php?grp=3&lev=4&id=111>).

The intervention area along the coastline primarily encompasses the "Ca" zone designated for "Receptive and complementary activities to tourism," within the "Fascia Costiera" zone, and the "A2" zone, with certain buildings classified as "historical assets." Meanwhile, the intervention area on the mountain side partly falls within the "D1" zone and partly within the "V5 - Sports facilities" zone.

In particular:

- Zone A2: Pending approval of the detailed plans, residential use and the following compatible uses are permitted
 - commercial (retail), including public food and drink establishments and public entertainment venues;
 - receptive;
 - management, including banking and insurance agencies, public and private offices and the like;
 - facilities of common interest as referred to in Article 24 of these implementation regulations that are compatible with the building and typological characteristics of the buildings;
 - nursing homes and any other type of health care facility for diagnosis and/or treatment that goes beyond a simple professional practice are permitted on condition that they are functionally independent of residential buildings.
- Historical Net: Ordinary maintenance interventions, extraordinary maintenance, restoration, philological restoration, simple and guided building renovation, renovation with new volumes, according to the definitions and prescriptions of the "P3b Scheda Norma - Interventions on buildings classified as Historical Net - Technical Implementation Rules - Adaptation to D.Dir. 558 and 124/DRU/02 of approval". Renovation works are also permitted, with the exclusion of total demolition and reconstruction of the building;
- Zone Ca: New construction for the construction of buildings for residential or office or receptive or non-hotel use. Receptive structures offering accommodation with autonomous kitchen service are not allowed in Ca zones. In order to compensate for the overall endowment of standards, public services must be provided both within the same areas, where possible, and in the adjacent free areas, with the exclusion of those destined for agricultural green areas with specialised crops;
- Zona Fascia Costiera: Building interventions intended for equipment and facilities of general interest by the relevant institutional authorities.. The new areas outlined in the plan, situated adjacent to current facilities, are primarily allocated to fulfill the coverage requirements and specific regulations applicable to each type of infrastructure. These areas are also subject to potential expansion of the existing facilities;
- Zone D1: Interventions of ordinary and extraordinary maintenance, restoration and conservative renovation as well as building restructuring and change of use with the installation of new industrial and artisan plants. Urban restructuring interventions are subject to prior executive urban planning, and in the vacant lots only productive interventions are allowed in compliance with art. 5 of Ministerial Decree 1444/68, excluding any other destination, with the sole exception of services to be used for training and qualification of personnel, connected to the functioning of the companies.
- Zone V5: Ordinary and extraordinary maintenance work on existing buildings, as well as agricultural and nursery management. In the case of areas that were unplanted on the date of the aerial photograph survey of July 1994, the provisional creation of deposits on open areas is allowed subject to the temporary authorisation of the

Mayor, who will specify the works that must be carried out to ensure decorum, hygiene and public safety. Only small artefacts and services strictly connected to the care of green areas and their social use are allowed on public green areas.

Pursuant to Article 26 of R.L. 16/2016, "*Changes in intended use are permitted for all buildings constructed prior to 1976, including buildings already intended for residential use, tourist accommodation and craft or commercial and service activities, provided that this does not result in alterations to the volumes already built with planning permission and authorised*". The regulatory provisions of R.L. 16/2016 have a derogatory nature on urban planning instruments, within the limits of what is provided for by the aforementioned paragraph 1. They consistently allow for changes in land use without the necessity of an urban planning amendment, except in cases where interventions entail the allocation of significant areas exceeding anticipated urban standards for the property's new intended use.

Design constraints:

- Non-building restriction in the 150 m strip from the shoreline (L.R. 15/1991);
- Cemetery buffer zone of 100 m;
- Regie trazzere (Note of the Ufficio Speciale Regie Trazzere prot. 1473/2002);
- Constraint ex L. 1497/1939 "Monte Pellegrino Scenic Area";
- Civic property of 'Monte Pellegrino'.

By Decree of the Department of Cultural Heritage and Sicilian Identity no. 2307 of 21/05/2019, the real estate complex called "Ex-industrial settlement Chimica Arenella" was decreed to be of cultural interest (and therefore subject to protection according to the requirements of Legislative Decree. 42/2004) as '*a peculiar and significant example in Palermo of historical industrial architecture in which late eclectic and art nouveau buildings coexist with examples of proto-rationalist architecture, attributable to German designers, to which are added rationalist buildings of Italian origin built during the Fascist twenty-year period*'.

Please refer to the Certificate of Urban Destination present in the *dataroom* and to the urban planning file, both for the reading of the current urban planning instruments and constraints that currently regulate the transformation, and for the definition of the volumetries and building interventions that can be realised. The urban planning file contents are presented in a summarised format and should be viewed as indicative rather than exhaustive.

The details in relation to volumes may be refined in the second phase of the competition and that the provisions of the town planning instruments mentioned therein, which can be found on the municipal website, apply to the site.

The Municipal Council of the city of Palermo, with Resolution no. 388 of 15/12/2023, approved the General Directives for the formation of the General Urban Plan (PUG) that define the inspiring principles, the method, and the main challenges of Palermo's WYP, which consist in pursuing the criteria of sustainable development, ensuring the city's rights, especially the new rights of citizenship, and enhancing its role as an intercultural metropolis of the Mediterranean, a city of culture, attractive to investments, and capable of meeting the challenges of digital, energy, and ecological transitions. The general urban design that emerges from the General Directives of the WYP also acts as a framework of general coherence for the drafting and subsequent approval of a large 'Coastal Urban Planning Variant' that redefines a project for the urban areas that unfold along the coast. In the General Directives of the WYP, particular emphasis is placed on the importance of urban regeneration action for the former Arenella chemical works with functions such as receptivity, residence and services: "*the redevelopment of the precious testimony of industrial archaeology in the Arenella district, built in the early twentieth century and*

now owned by the municipality, is also an extraordinary opportunity to regenerate the seaside village of the same name and the adjacent tourist and fishing port with the beautiful tuna fishery of the Florios. The huge area of the former chemical industry, resembling a true industrial metropolis, is made up of a number of large multi-storey buildings and a number of smaller warehouses overlooking the sea, which, in a public-private partnership or through wholly private intervention (possibly through alienation), will be able to accommodate new functions of high metropolitan rank, including special accommodation and residential functions (guesthouses, student halls, hostels, co-housing), also related to yachting and bathing. The settled functions will have to have a high profit capacity to compensate for the necessary costs of land reclamation and social and environmental equalisation works serving the neighbourhood."

With the objective of guaranteeing the effective possibility of transforming the area, through a regenerative process based on the principles of sustainability, and taking into account the market and territorial needs, which have profoundly changed since the date of approval of the current PRG, the Municipal Administration reserves the right to evaluate the design outcomes of the first phase of the competition in order to initiate a procedure for an Urbanistic Variant; in this perspective, it is confirmed that it is possible to present design proposals that consider additional functions and implementation methods with respect to those indicated in the PRG, in compliance with the objectives and strategies of the competition announcement.

City climate priorities and environmental challenges

In 2019, the Municipality of Palermo joined the 'New Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy' (<https://www.comune.palermo.it/paesc/index.php>), by which signatory cities committed to the target of a 40% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030, and at the same time to address climate change adaptation. In addition, the 'PAESC - Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan' was approved, the implementation of which will make it possible to: achieve a reduction in CO₂ emissions at the local level of at least 40% by 2030, accelerate the decarbonisation of the territory, implement concrete measures and projects and a local adaptation strategy indicating some measures to prevent the risks deriving from climate change, improve the quality of life of its citizens.

The city of Palermo is also involved as a partner in the study and implementation activities of the euPOLIS project (<https://www.comune.palermo.it/landing/progetto-eupolis.php>) and as a follower city to demonstrate and replicate the results of the project and to support the green infrastructure actions initiated by the Municipality in the natura 2000 network sites 'Valle dell'Oreto', 'Monte Pellegrino', the new urban parks and the coastal strip. The euPOLIS project aims to replace or combine expensive traditional engineered systems built to protect the environment with natural systems to create resilient urban ecosystems at lower life-cycle costs while improving public health and well-being. The project addresses critical challenges such as low environmental quality, fragmentation and low biodiversity in public spaces and water stress by introducing a structured approach to activate the hidden resources and services of existing natural and engineered urban systems and regenerate and rehabilitate urban ecosystems.

In 2019, the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan of the City of Palermo (<https://www.comune.palermo.it/pums/index.php>) was adopted; the PUMS "is a strategic planning tool that, in a medium to long term time horizon (10 years), develops a system vision of urban mobility, preferably referring to the area of the Metropolitan City, where defined, proposing the achievement of environmental, social and economic sustainability objectives through the definition of actions aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the mobility system and its integration with urban and territorial planning and developments". Through the PUMS, the municipal administration defines a 'concert' of coordinated actions for the planned and programmed government of public and private mobility in its territory.

The project should appropriately consider the environmental contents and objectives of the Plans and Projects described above.

For aspects relating to the environmental risks and priorities of the site, please refer to the specific urban planning and constraining regulations outlined in the previous paragraph and to which reference is made.

Missions and Indicators

Projects should respond to the following challenges/missions, considering the C40 guidelines, and potentially the sustainability objectives and indicators endorsed by the Agenzia del Demanio for its building interventions (materials included in the *dataroom*).

Projects are invited to address the ten challenges in an integrated manner, in particular the mandatory and priority challenges related to Low-carbon mobility, Climate resilience and adaptation, Sustainable water management and Social inclusion and community engagement.

Challenges/missions for the complex:

- 1. Green buildings and energy efficiency (mandatory)**
- 2. Clean construction and building life cycle (mandatory)**
- 3. Low-carbon mobility (priority)**
- 4. Climate resilience and adaptation (priority)**
- Sustainable lifestyle and green jobs
- 6. Sustainable water management (priority)**
- Circular resources and sustainable waste management
- Green space, urban nature, and biodiversity
- 9. Social inclusion and community engagement (priority)**
- High-quality architecture and urban design