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# Growth changing the face of Smichov

## Growth changing the face of Smichov

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By Shanna Howard

Four projects create largest construction site in the city

The once slumbering industrial district of Prague 5-Smichov awakens each day to the sound of construction.

And no wonder, the largest construction site in the city - more than 159,000 square meters (1.7 million square feet) of office, retail, entertainment and residential space in four developments - is located within two blocks of metro station Andel.

The noise is a necessary part of the birthing process as the area comes to life, becoming one of Prague's major polycentric centers.

The Zlaty Andel complex is directly above the metro station. On the next block to the west, cranes litter the skyline over the spots where three additional projects - Andel City, Novy Smichov and The Gate - are being built.

### Zlaty Andel

Located at the intersection of Plzenska and Nadrazni streets, the Zlaty Andel multipurpose business center, developed by Dutch-based ING Real Estate, will be the first project to be completed this November.

The 1 billion Kc (\$25 million) project, with more than 20,000 square meters of space, is set to house businesses, retail outlets and two restaurants, and will have a 224-space underground parking garage. The entrance to the Andel metro station is within the building.

Designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, the modern building will honor the location's history. The glass facade of the corner building will feature an 18-meter-high angel - inspired by the German film *Heaven Over Berlin* and intended to guard the busy intersection - surrounded by a panorama of Prague. Inside, the business offices will feature an angel fresco from the turn-of-the-century restaurant U Andel that occupied the location before it was converted to the Moskevaska (Moscow) metro, and later renamed Andel.

Excerpts of poetry from Franz Kafka, Gustav Meyrink, Jiri Orteni and Rainer Maria Rilke are featured in large red letters on the exterior of the buildings.

"It will give a new face to the location and part of the neighborhood will be converted to a pedestrian zone," said Peter Benes of Jones Lang LaSalle, the exclusive co-leasing agent, which is handling the leasing of 13,000 square meters of office space.

### Novy Smichov

One block west on the north side of Plzenska street, French developer Carrefour is building Novy Smichov, a 52,000-square-meter shopping and leisure center.

Located on the site of the former CKD factory, the center will incorporate the old Tatra factory facade on Plzenska into the new building. Artifacts from the factory where trams were once made will be on display once the center is complete.

"It's a busy area in its own right, and it's very close to the town center of Prague, the heart of Prague," said Nigel Young, the director of MIPA, the center's leasing agent. "There's no site for a shopping center this size that is closer to the center."

With an expected opening of mid-2001, the four-level center will contain a Carrefour hypermarket, 100 boutiques and retail shops such as sports, textile and electronics stores, a food court, a 12-screen movie complex, a fitness center, an arcade, and a day care center for children. The center will have

two levels of underground parking with space for 2,000 cars, and a boardwalk will connect it to Sacre Coeur park.

### Andel City

Directly across the street from Novy Smichov, on the south side of Plzenska street between the Andel metro station and the Movenpick Hotel, is the 29,000-square-meter first phase of Andel City. When complete, the center is expected to be 60,000 square meters.

Austrian-based developer UBM Bohemia started phase one in July 1999, and completion is scheduled for autumn 2001. Six buildings will contain more than 20,000 square meters of office space and one building of 9,000 square meters will have retail and leisure space. There will be 500 underground parking spaces.

"We wanted to keep the area lively after night," said Margund Schuh, operations director for UBM Bohemia, commenting on the 12-screen multiplex cinema, 24-lane bowling alley and restaurant that are planned.

Karel Borr of Ryden Inter-national Property Consultants, the exclusive leasing agent for Novy Smichov, said that Andel City will provide shopping, entertainment and leisure options for the new businesses' employees, local and new residents, or people who travel to the area. "It will be an added value for our office users."

In the future, more retail and business facilities and residential areas will be added. The next phases have planning permission, but Borr said construction won't begin until after phase one is complete.

"It's probably not the best idea to bring all the buildings on the market at the same time. However, this location is developing pretty quickly. If it [phase one] does well, the next phase will follow," said Borr. After all phases are complete, he envisions Andel City as a self-contained city center.

### The Gate

The fourth project financed by Austrian developer Immo-bau, The Gate is in early development stages. When finished between 2002 and 2005, the development will provide 18,000 square meters of usable space for various purposes. Among those buildings already planned are a 500-square-meter Art Nouveau Villa and a 1,300-square-meter Classical Villa.

Young thinks the various centers will work well together, creating a new "commercial hub" for Prague. "[Novy Smichov] is very complementary to the Zlaty Andel scheme, which only further enhances the area as a lively place to be," he said.

Both Borr and Schuh hope that Andel City will give a new identity to Smichov, which was formerly a highly industrial area like Karlin and Holesovice. Borr said he believes the new developments will raise surrounding property values and that the demand will outweigh the competition between the three developments.

"It's just really changing every day. The ugly industrial buildings are gone and there will be nice new

architecture. It will attract more people and bring jobs and a lot of money to Prague 5," Borr said.

The projects, which were initiated in 1990 and are being built in conjunction with the city strategy plan, have the city's support.

Prague City Councilor Filip Dvorak said that in addition to bringing new employers and retailers to Smichov, he also thinks the growth will decrease traffic congestion in the city center.

"The creation of a second city center is positive for decreasing traffic. It's needless to use transport to the city center for employment," said Dvorak.

Dvorak said he has talked to other council members and Prague 5 district mayor Miroslav Skaloud, and has seen support from all sides.

As is usual with areas of high construction, he said, there has been a normal amount of criticism, but that he sees the developments as a positive change for Smichov residents.

"For the preservation of a city center, we need these new developments which relieve pressure on the historical city center," said Dvorak. "It's very positive because it's the creation of a new city center and new activity: a new target for investment."

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