

PART 2: DETAILS ON CONTEXT OF DESIGN COMPETITION

1. Seafront and beach experience

The beach and seafront are integral to the touristic product of the seaside city. Ostend is known for its fine, wide sandy beaches. In general, the beaches of Ostend are regarded as relatively clean and child-friendly. The deployment of a beach team in summer has certainly contributed to this. The arrival of additional beach clubs has given the summer added immersion and a sense of quality enhancement. A high-quality and pleasant stay for the visitor during winter as well is one of the policies engrained in the current strategic policy plan for tourism.

2. Tourism in Ostend

Tourism in Ostend is important for the image and employment of the City of Ostend, areas where Ostend is seeking to generate further growth in the future. This growth must be accomplished through a widening of the season, with a focus on the months of November to March: on the one hand increase Ostend's attractiveness by investing in a high-quality product and robust marketing, and on the other hand by ensuring that the visitor has a



Ostend before and after the demolition of the ramparts. Left: (J. Libau Horeau, 1842) illustration of the dominance of the military programme in the construction of Ostend's inner city. The right-hand map (L. Sonnet, 1879) displays the creation of the new seafront and promenade, but also visualizes real estate additions (yellow), including a new kursaal and a completely new row of blocks along the coastline, leaving space for hotels and even a skating rink. (Source: Van Acker, M.; *From Flux to Frame*, Leuven University Press, 2014, p. 220)

Public infrastructure is also further developed. The first part of the beach boulevard is constructed starting in 1857. Leopold II, assisted by his advisor, German urbanist Stübben, conceives a plan for the construction of a long and wide seafront between Westende and Oostende. In 1902 the seafront is enriched with a royal décor due to the creation of the Royal Galleries between the Royal Chalet, the Royal Palace Hotel, and the Wellington racing track. During the interwar period, coastal tourism changes with the advent of mass tourism and the increase in sporting and recreational needs. The new beach tourists no longer come primarily for health purposes, but for sun and relaxation.



The stone seafront and port access of Ostend in 1858. The promenade as a public space to see and be seen.



The seafront is extended to Mariakerke, with the Royal pavilion and the growing number of tourists (1900)

During the Second World War, the seafront and buildings are severely damaged. The 1950s see the start of a rapid replacement of the Belle Epoque hotels and villas along the seafront with apartment buildings, often equipped with garages at ground level. The high-rise construction trend persists throughout the 1960s, often associated with a levelling in design and use of materials. A new type of apartment building is developed along the seafront beginning in the 1990s, on that incorporates cafés, restaurants, and shopping at the ground level, usually with eight to ten storeys. At the end of the 1990s the seafront is rebuilt with new bathing infrastructure at the beach and the opening of a new promenade between the galleries and racing track.



5. Project Zone

The design team develops a vision and voices its opinions on the general image quality for zone 1. The design site for the walkway is demarcated up to zone 2. The walkway is essentially situated between the sculpture 'Dancing Waves' (2.1) near the Kursaal (2.3), and the sculpture 'Vertigo', just past the surf club and the Venetian Galleries. The design team searches for the ideal location, taking into account the path of the buildings' shadows and the waterline.

In addition to a lateral connection, parallel to the coastline, the designers also provide (at least) one perpendicular connection with the seafront. This branch could be created for instance at the level of the Parijsstraat or the Koninginnelaan (2.2).



(2.1) starting point for the beach promenade: sculpture in honour of artist Leon Spilliaert



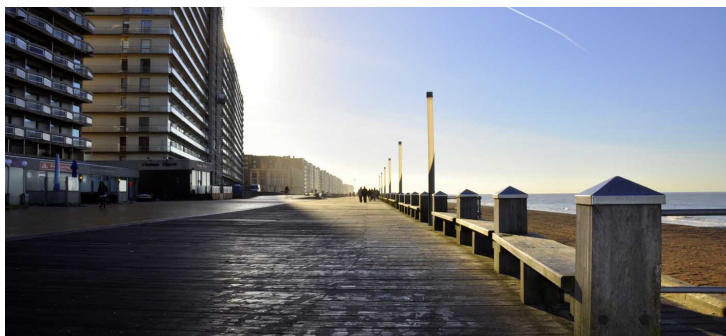
(2.2) possible location for perpendicular connection: at the level of the "Drie Gapers" gate (1931) on the Koninginnelaan



(2.3) second connection between the promenade and the seafront: Casino Kursaal Ostend (architect Leon Stynen,

6. Shadow

As soon as the summer season ends and the sun dips lower, the high-rise buildings quickly plunge the seafront promenade in the darkness of their shadows. The designers show how and when beach tourists can still enjoy the sun outside of the tourism high season thanks to a new beach walkway. The design team determines the trajectory of the walkway and other possible interventions based on a solar and shadow study.



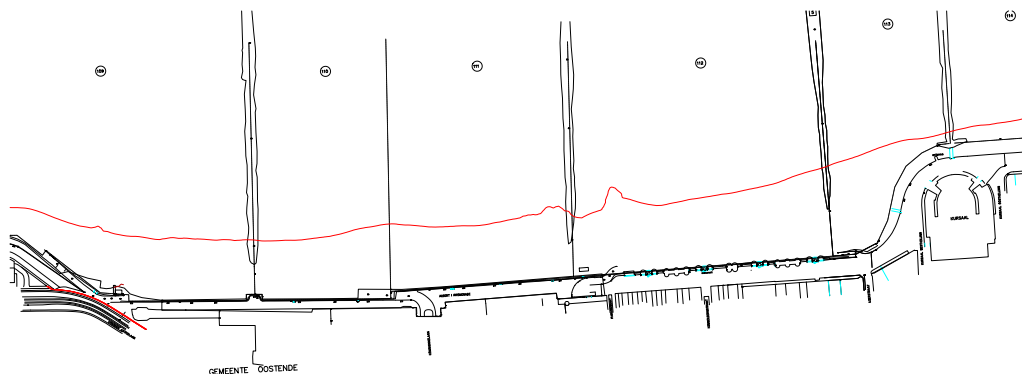
Outside of the summer season, when the sun dips lower, the high-rise buildings quickly plunge the seafront promenade in darkness for a large part of the day.



Using a solar study, the design team investigates the most favourable trajectory for the new beach walkway.

7. + 6 TAW

The design team traces the beach walkway above the TAW +6.00 line. This line corresponds with the level reached by the waves during every normal winter. In heavy storms during fall, winter, and spring, such as the notorious Sinterklaas storm, the TAW + 6.00 level can even be exceeded. One should also take into account the fact that heavy storms can cause significant beach erosion with cliff formation, undermining temporary constructions if those constructions are too close to the TAW + 6.00.



The design team accounts for the sea tides and specific weather conditions of the Belgian coast. The temporary walkway is situated between the TAW + 6.00 line (red) and the current seafront.

8. Ease of crossing

The design teams demonstrates how the design causes no hindrance to the placement of marine buoys, lifeguard duties and their logistics (lookout, boat, ...), surfers, barefooted beach visitors, ... Constructions running parallel to the waterline are provided, in other words many not render the transverse relationship between beach and sea and should disrupt them as little as possible. Preferably, the path is therefore at the same level as the sand surface. Events such as fireworks and polar bear swimming (thousands of people running into the sea for the New Year's plunge) should likewise not be hindered by the new beach walkway. Beach waste baskets should be taken into account, more specifically their placement and emptying during the summer season. The dry sand is cleaned daily in summer by means of a tractor with a sifter. At the surf club level, a crossing for kites and catamarans will be provided both during winter and summer.

The newly created beaches in Ostend will require a regular upkeep through sand supplementation. Generally this is done every 5 years, but in case of heavy storms this upkeep may be required within a narrower timeframe. The beach walkway cannot cause any hindrance for this supplementation.



The lifeguards should not be hindered by the new beach walkway



During the New Year's plunge, thousands of 'polar bears' run across the beach for a refreshing dip in the sea.



Outside of the tourism season, tractors regularly ply the beach with sand to keep up coastal defences.

9. Accessibility

The walkway is accessible to all from the seafront; so we have not only pedestrians in mind but also wheelchair users and prams. The walkway connects as much as possible to the existing steps in the seafront. The walkway never hinders the access to the beach. The walkway preserves the link with the sea and exudes an open and public character. The constructions to be put in place cannot hinder emergency services and their access to the beach with their vehicles from four specific access points (IJzerstraat, Parijsstraat, Drie Gapers, Ronde West).

The walkway must be sufficiently wide to allow for pedestrians to walk in both directions (with wheelchairs and/or prams). The exact width of the walkway is argued by the design team.



The beach walkway must enhance the accessibility to the beach for wheelchair users and the disabled



Bicycles and go-karts remain limited to the seafront.

The width can be variable.

Pedestrian traffic on the new beach walkway is difficult to harmonize with bicycles or other recreational vehicles such as go-karts. The beach walkway is first and foremost a tranquil area for strolling along the beach. The seafront however allows for comfortable bicycle rides. By separating traffic, the seafront and beach experience is rendered more enjoyable and safe for both target groups.

10. Architecture

The following conditions apply to the Provincial Spatial Implementation Plan (PSIP) for the creation of new constructions or the renovation of existing constructions:

They are created using durable and aesthetic materials;

The utilized building materials must be harmonized with the surroundings both regarding the type of materials and their colour;

Adequate attention must be paid to the accessibility for all;

During the erection of temporary constructions, anchoring and setup must be such that the terrain can simply be restored to its original states every year;

A new construction below the seafront level with access to the beach is only permitted when this does not require a lowering of the beach level;

A construction, above or below ground, cannot have a negative effect on the seawall level, be it during the construction phase or during the operational phase;

Along the high tide line, a sufficiently wide, continuous, obstacle-free space must be provided on dry sand to allow free access for recreational users, with a minimum width of 5 metres.

The design team defines the use of materials and the general construction logic for the beach walkway. The designers thereby take into account the use of materials for other temporary constructions on the beach such as beach cabins or beach bars. Weather resistance must be kept in mind when choosing materials. In case of a temporary walkway, a light construction that is easily stowed is preferable.

Resting points and photo spots can be provided along the walkway. The designers thereby verify whether the beach walkway is predominantly a two-dimensional element, or whether the walkway can also incorporate three-dimensional figures locally, such as a bench or a broadened area with photographic merit. Is the beach walkway purely geared towards beach walks, or can the beach walkway also constitute an architectural landmark for Ostend? In other words, does the beach walkway blend into the landscape, or does it become a visible icon of the Ostend beach experience?

11. Sea-land-scape

The soft and dry beach in this part of the coastal area is characterized by a highly limited presence of benthic organisms and the complete lack of dunes, dune formation, and embryonal dunes. The creation of a temporary boardwalk during the winter months therefore has no effect on plant and animal life. In order to allow tourists to get to know the natural elements that wash ashore (shells, seaweeds, echinoderms, ...) it might be a good idea place this walkway close to the tide line. However, this is a difficult proposition as the tide line is not constant, and constantly shifts depending on the tide cycles and climatological conditions. architecturaal en objectmatig ontwerp.



Sur les planches de Trouville (1870, Monet)

The design teams define the relationship between the walkway and the surrounding landscape, and voice their opinions on the usage of the area between the seafront and the new walkway. This way the proposition rises above a purely architectural and objectified design.

12. Maintenance

During winter the beach walkway will be exposed to Aeolian sand drift. Sand blowing onto the construction could become a serious problem. In order to ensure the accessibility of the walkway, the path must be easy to clean. The choice of materials and construction techniques should reflect this. On the other hand, the wind could also hollow out the sand. For instance, beach cabins often have to cope with the wind blowing away the sand from under the floor, leading to stability and accessibility issues. The team demonstrates how the design is to be

maintained, and estimates maintenance frequency. All constructions placed on the sand must also be graffiti proof.

13. Logistics

The construction and teardown technique is an integral part of the design. Along with the requisite construction drawings, the designers propose a schedule demonstrating how to easily install and tear down the walkway. The designers also illustrate how the materials can be transported and stored; taking into account the recurring installation costs, the possibility for storage during periods of non-use, the ease of installation and removal and the equipment required, the equipment for maintenance works, ...



The designers account for the effect of the wind on the new beach walkway, and the possible hollowing it can cause.



The construction of wooden fencing topped with dried heather along the beach walkway of Deauville to limit blown sand and thus limit walkway maintenance.

14. Relationship with other projects

The design teams demonstrate how their design interacts with the following subprojects:

Other temporary beach infrastructure

The beach showers, area posts, waste baskets, existing signage, lifeguard posts, toilets, ... must be taken into account. The designers receive a map showing these elements.

Beach bars and beach cabins

In case of a temporary constructions (i.e. only during the fall and winter months) adjacent constructions such as the beach bars and the beach cabins will be removed. In case of a more permanent walkway, it is demonstrated how the beach bars and the beach walkway could enhance one another. The location of beach bars and other beach structures remains. Access to these locations is stimulated by the project. The integration of public toilets, changing areas, information points, etc. is also an added value.

Surf club

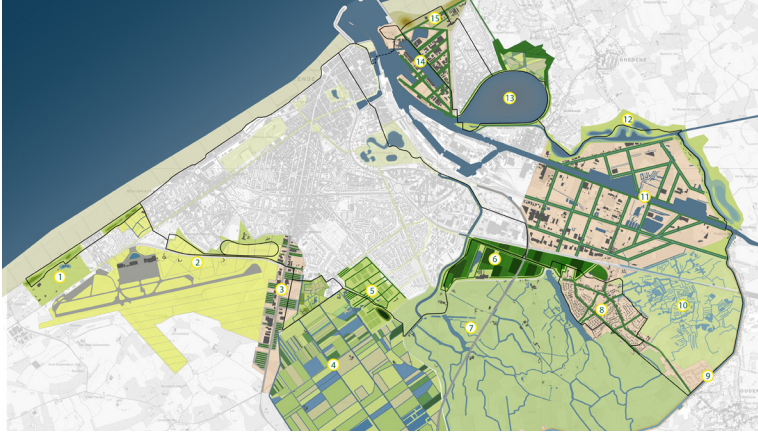
The surf club located within the design zone cannot experience any hindrance from the walkway (e.g. regarding accessibility of the water). The beach walkway should maintain a safe distance vis-à-vis the launching area for surfing kites, so that they cannot present any serious and immediate danger to the public.

Green Ribbon

The design zone harmonizes with the Ostend Green Ribbon. The Green Ribbon is an ambitious and innovative project that seeks to give new meaning to the green spaces and landscapes around the city. Under the motto of 'Ostend is more than just the sea', fifteen green zones are connected across a distance of thirty kilometres, creation ties between the urbanized periphery and open landscape. The beach walkway can form the final element, the missing link for the Green Ribbon. Pedestrians exploring the Green Ribbon can continue their journey via the beach walkway.

Events

The Ostend beach hosts various events, including outside of the tourism season. For instance, January of each year sees the “New Year’s plunge” event. The New Year’s plunge takes place on the beach of Ostend in front of the “Drie Gapers” gate (near the city swimming pool and the Thermae Palace Hotel). Some 5,000 polar bears dive into the North Sea. Other sports events such as mountain biking, land sailing race, beach fishing competitions, shrimp fishing, ... make use of the beach. According to City regulation ‘Beach and Dunes’, beach sports activities are permitted only as of 01 December until the first weekend prior to the Easter holidays (or until 01 April if the Easter holidays begin later), and only between groynes 7 (near the Thermae complex, in line with the Sportstraat) and 9 (near the Luikstraat and Henegouwenstraat). The water sports events can only be practiced between groynes 1bis (near the Halvemaandijk) and 3 (in line with the Victorialaan near the Spinalodijk); and between the groynes 7 (near the Thermae complex in line with the Sportstraat) and 9 (near the Luikstraat and the Henegouwenstraat).



The Green Ribbon takes cyclists and hikers through the wealth of green landscapes outside the city's urbanized periphery.



The new beach walkway can form the final element of the Green Ribbon.

15. Participation

The design team also makes a proposal for involving the public in the preparations for the realization. Can the beach walkway become the object of a broader participation process and how can both tourists and locals be involved? For instance, could the public or corporations be given a chance to co-finance through crowdfunding? How can this be made a part of a broader communication campaign? Moreover, the City of Ostend is also considering an exhibition displaying the design proposals from different teams to the general public.

16. Name

The designers also make a proposal for a name for the beach walkway.