

Prague: changes in development planning

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Capital's management wants to change the current system of urban planning - particularly there are plans to create the post of advisor for architecture and urbanism, to change functioning of the Department of City Development (URM) and the Zoning Plan Department and start working on some kind of rules of the game.

According to the deputy mayor for zoning plan, Josef Nosek (Civic Democratic Party), the city has not any active approach to development planning. "The current approach, when the city waits until individual entities prepare their projects and then just issue its opinion, is passive. Our inability to maintain the zoning plan without thousands of changes is detrimental to the city. Aimlessness and wandering in urban development lead to anarchy, chaos and bad results, from which everybody loses eventually."

By the end of the year Prague wants to change the operation of the Department of City Development (URM) and the Zoning Plan Department in order to eliminate duplication and make planning easier and quicker. At present, both municipal officials and people from URM give their opinion on proposals for zoning. According to Mr Nosek, some people from URM will be transferred to the Zoning Plan Department. URM will continue processing zoning plan, the principles of territorial development and concentrate on digitalization of data. Prague also wants to introduce the post of advisor on architecture and urbanism. This person should be a respected expert. This advisor should be associated with Nosek and Prague mayor, but it should not be dependent on city's political leadership. "I expect from him to prove the ability to think in context and retain insight in solving problems," Nosek said. According to the architect Pleskot, it will not be easy to find such a person. "But if it succeeds, it will be something fantastic," noted Pleskot. Together with experts Prague would like to develop a kind of memorandum or statement summarizing what Prague is and how it should evolve.

Experts have criticized Prague for a long time for having no concept of development and being subject to pressures from lobbyists and property developers. They also argued that the current development has been guided mainly by short-term individual interests of the political representation. Therefore they established the initiative Za novou Prahu (For New Prague) and called Prague's representatives for a debate.

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