

Entrance is Free: A New Green Zone in the Metropolitan Center

As of September 21st, while passing along Yerevan's Baghramyan Avenue, you will no longer see the area of Lovers' Park under the cover of posters. This will not be an amusement park, but a place for peace and relaxation.

Large European cities have many such gardens, where residents may break away from their urban surroundings and have the opportunity to enjoy nature. Free of charge. That is the kind of place Lovers' Park, formerly Pushkin Park of 1995, has been transformed into.

"This is really a public initiative. When we were starting 2 years ago, the reactions of ecological organizations and society were definitely very harsh," said Boghossian Gardens project coordinator, architect Sarhat Petrossian. "People didn't believe us, lush areas were always being turned into cafes under the guise of developing public parks."

The Boghossian Foundation, which has been working in Armenia since 1994, took the 16,419 square meters of Lovers' Park area for a 25-year lease in 2006. Close to 1 million American dollars have been donated for the space.

About 1.5 hectares of the 1.6 hectares of park is greenery, including 370 trees, 4 waterfalls, 300 meters of benches, a 215-seat amphitheatre, 214 luminaries, 26 rock formations, 83 trashcans... "When we received it we had almost 300 trees in the garden area," Sarhat recounts with excitement, "of those trees, 19 were dried out and subject to being cut. We cut 16, and we decided to keep 3 for decorative significance. This year, two of those trees bloomed in our honor."

There will hardly be any queuing near the restrooms because everything in the park has been calculated in agreement with international norms. Reconstruction plans were drawn up and carried out by Swiss landscape architect Peter Rambach.

The garden is composed of both active and peaceful areas. In the active part there is a children's pool, the cafe and the restroom, and in the heart are the peaceful enclaves. Boghossian Gardens' project coordinator Sarhat Petrossian tells Tesaket's readers, "We are going to try to neutralize the noise and dust with vegetation as much as possible. In such peace, time will stop for a person."

The Boghossian Foundation has also taken all of the custodial expenses upon themselves. "Entrance to the garden, restroom, and all services will be free of charge except for patronage in the café, which will only occupy 0.5% of the garden's area," said the project coordinator. When I asked whether the garden had met his expectations, he said, "You don't just reconstruct a garden and leave it, you see the end-product 2 years later when the flora you've planted grows in."

Later on there will also be animal life in the garden. "In the spring we will bring squirrels, and there will certainly be birds," Sarhat Petrossian informed us. The garden will have about 15 workers including gardeners, security guards, and custodians.

"The revival of Lovers' Park will be the first of its kind in Yerevan, but will not be the Boghossian Foundation's last project in the fatherland," promises the foundation's website www.bg.am.

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