

The Champs-Élysées in Paris will be green and refreshed

More green, fewer cars: the Champs-Élysées will begin a profound change, elected officials and experts promised on Wednesday May 11, to "re-enchant" the famous Parisian avenue by the 2024 Olympic Games.

Named "Re-enchanting the Champs-Élysées", the project carried out by the town hall of Paris, the elected officials of the arrondissement and the Champs-Élysées Committee, bringing together traders and businesses on the avenue, must be done in two stages.

The first must be completed by the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris, in the summer of 2024; the second, which will come next, has more blurred contours.

Concretely, it is at the two ends of the 2 kilometer avenue that the changes will be the most visible.

First on the Place de la Concorde side, where the gardens on either side of the "Champs", now largely faded, will be transformed.

"We are going to turn these gardens into real promenade gardens," promised PS mayor Anne Hidalgo during a press conference at the Théâtre du Rond-Point, a stone's throw from the avenue.

A hundred trees will be planted, and small obsolete streets pedestrianized, the elected socialist wishing to "restore freshness" to adapt the city to global warming.

Fewer cars

The other major change for 2024 will take place around the Arc de Triomphe, where the Place de l'Etoile roundabout will see its abundant car traffic reduced.

"On the Arc de Triomphe, what we are going to do is an enlargement of the ring" pedestrian surrounding the monument, explained Anne Hidalgo.

"It's a shrinking of the place of the car, I prefer to be clear. Because that's how we must consider the city of tomorrow," she added.

But the reduction in motorized traffic, the mayor's hobbyhorse and politically sensitive subject, does not currently concern the avenue itself, which has two lanes of car traffic and one bus and taxi lane in each direction.

On this subject, "the mayor has agreed (...) to discuss, to negotiate, I know that she has her opinions, we have ours", assured Marc-Antoine Jamet, president of the Champs-Élysées committee.

On the top of the avenue, very commercial and popular with foreign tourists, the sidewalks and street furniture, in places aging, will be renovated, promised the elected officials.

By 2024, the town hall must commit 26 million euros for all the works, to which will be added 6 million from Solidéo (an Olympic works delivery company) for the sites concerned by the Games, namely the Place de la Concorde and the Grand Palais.

And after, the Concorde

Because the challenge is to bring Parisians back to this iconic avenue of the city, laid out in 1670 and which has survived the ages.

It is necessary "to re-enchant one of the most emblematic windows of the capital, the most famous of the Parisian avenues, which suffers from having lost a lot of its splendor in the last 30 years", said the mayor of the XNUMXth arrondissement, Jeanne d'Hauteserre.

Swarming with people until the middle of the XNUMXth century, it was gradually deserted by Parisians and more taken over by foreign tourists and customers of luxury stores.

Its terraces will also have to be "harmonised" by 2024, a sensitive subject for traders which has been entrusted to Belgian designer Ramy Fischer.

"Our objective and my mission (...) is both to preserve the identity and the personality of the signs (...) but also to create a signature which in a certain way identifies the Champs as it has always done across the world," he said.

And beyond the Olympic deadline, the transformation must continue. The development of the project was entrusted to the architect Philippe Chiambaretta.

Place de la Concorde, now fully paved, will be at the heart of the changes.

It will be necessary to "facilitate the crossing", "to restore access to the monuments, the obelisk and the fountains" and to green the place, "a furnace", explained the architect.

Anne Hidalgo said she was in favor of extending the Tuileries gardens to the obelisk.