DETAILED PLAN: REDESIGN OF VATHIS SQUARE, ATHENS (GR)

The main goal of this proposal is to pedestrianize three car-oriented streets, along with part of a fourth street. While these areas are now car-free, alternative routes for vehicles have been provided, and pedestrians can enjoy a much safer and calmer urban space. Additionally, nearby parking spaces and ramps for underground parking ensure accessibility.

In addition to zoned functions, the integration of various uses and a mixed character are emphasized. The aim is to create a multifunctional public square.
The functions located on the peripheral paths of the new square are slightly separated from its core for specific reasons:

- Participants requested a dedicated space for the collective garden, which is proposed along the pedestrianized section of Acharnon Street.
- The playground is also situated in a distinct area. In terms of safety and noise, participants suggested placing the play equipment in a more enclosed spot, away from the central part of the square. Thus, the playground is proposed on the pedestrianized Kamaterou Street, near public restrooms and bike racks.

In addition to pedestrianization, two new pocket parks are proposed, as shown in the Detailed Plan. One of the pocket parks includes a ramp that leads to underground parking. This underground parking, combined with other parking areas in the vicinity, helps alleviate traffic congestion. To address noise from vehicles, four water walls are added to create white noise. The design and placement of these walls are inspired by the surrounding axes and viewpoints.

An amphitheater with a stage is also introduced, as requested by participants. The topographical "plunge" created by the amphitheater is conceptually linked to the stagnant waters of the Kyklovoros stream, which once flowed below the area, resulting in a deepening of the ground. The "reappearance" of water is symbolized by the water walls.

For public furniture, all benches are made from recycled cement or concrete materials. Based on participants' suggestions, new wooden kiosks for shade, as well as wooden tables and seating beneath the kiosks, are provided. Wood is chosen for the furniture due to its suitability for Athens' hot, sunny climate.

Free public restrooms are located in the western and southeastern corners of the square, with drinking fountains spread throughout. To promote ecological behavior, large wooden recycling bins are placed around the square, along with bike racks. For energy efficiency and sustainability, LED urban lights are proposed, and numerous trees and softscape elements are added.

The proposed trees—sour orange trees, almond trees, and black locust trees—are well-suited to Athens' climate and are already present in the area. The historical poplar tree that was cut down in the past is replaced on the opposite side of the new Vathis Square. A circular wooden bench will be placed around the poplar to provide shade and oxygen. Near the amphitheater, a "break" in the paving tiles allows for softscape ground, which could function as a bioswale to support stormwater management.

Accessibility is a key consideration in this design. All wooden furniture, public restrooms, and drinking fountains are accessible to people with mobility difficulties and wheelchairs. The amphitheater is also designed to accommodate wheelchairs, with an electric wheelchair lift available. A section of Marni Street is elevated to the level of the new square to ensure accessibility between both parts of the square. To enhance safety when crossing Marni Street, traffic lights will be installed, and cobblestones are proposed for the section of Marni that connects the two sides of Vathis Square to reduce traffic speed. Large, smooth paving tiles will be used throughout the square to minimize vibrations and improve accessibility.

The wooden tables and seats shaded by umbrellas will continue to be used by existing food service vendors and cafes, as they are now. This is the only part of the square where private entities use public space. Lastly, arts, including graffiti on the backs of the water walls, as well as music and dance events on the stage, political speeches, and demonstrations, are encouraged, as per participants' preferences.