

CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF embeds Jihlava Municipal Arena into the streetscape of Jihlava, Czech Republic

Sports and culture venue combines expressive façade and sensitive, contextual approach to urban design



Photo: Laurian Ghinitoiu, courtesy of CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF

Designed by architecture practice CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF, the Jihlava Municipal Arena is a 5,650-seat sports and culture venue in the heart of Jihlava, Czech Republic. The project, commissioned via a competition by the City of Jihlava, demonstrates expressive yet sensitive design across multiple scales – from its careful integration with the cityscape and iconic façade, to arena seats designed for acoustic treatment, and a custom typeface for the venue. As well as a new home for local ice hockey team HC Dukla Jihlava, the distinctive red structure serves as a new cultural and civic hub for the people of the city.

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"The Jihlava Municipal Arena was conceived as a public building first and an event venue second. Positioned at the edge of Jihlava's historic centre, it is not treated as a standalone object but as an extension of the city itself. Through openness, permeability, and careful attention to detail at every scale, the arena supports everyday use, shared urban life, and moments of collective celebration."

– Ondřej Chybík, founding partner, CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF Architects

The arena first opened its doors in November 2025 for a pilot year to test the wide-ranging capabilities of the scheme. Since then, the arena has welcomed more than 250,000 people and hosted HC Dukla Jihlava for the 2025/26 Maxa Liga season, as well as international ice hockey, competitive ice-skating, Davis Cup tennis, European Volleyball League matches and concerts by popular musicians.

An arena for the community

The Jihlava Municipal Arena replaces an earlier ice rink which had served the city, home to roughly 55,000 people, since the 1950s. Rather than building a new isolated structure on the outskirts of Jihlava, the local authority opted to retain the site and integrate the sports facility into the fabric of the medieval city centre while expanding its offer to the neighbourhood.

"Locating an arena directly at the edge of Jihlava's historic centre presented a unique urban opportunity – such facilities are rarely built in these contexts. From the outset, our goal was to create a structure that becomes a natural part of the city: one that respects its historical context while bringing a contemporary energy."

– Ondřej Chybík, founding partner, CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF Architects

CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF's scheme includes improved access and routes through the site as well as into the arena. The building connects to its neighbours – a university, residential street, brewery and local park – with large entrances and generous glazing which allow for a near seamless flow between the arena interior and its surrounding public spaces. An uninterrupted circulation space wraps around the seating area where visitors gather and mingle, creating the atmosphere of a city square, and allows wheelchair users to easily access the disabled seating area, which enjoys some of the best views in the arena.

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The site is not open only to sports fans during hockey games. The public spaces surrounding the elliptical structure facilitate the movement of pedestrians travelling between the university and the park, including via an arcade formed by an overhanging section of the arena roof. A new staircase ameliorates a six-metre level change across the site and creates an amphitheatre setting: a space for neighbours to spend time either before matches or between lectures.

“Our aim was to create a building that lives with the city every day – beyond games or concerts. The arena is part of the city’s structure, not an isolated island. It’s a place where people meet, feel invited and welcome, and where everyday life blends with extraordinary experiences.”

– Ondřej Chybík, founding partner, CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF Architects

As well as the arena itself, CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF’s scheme includes three auxiliary buildings, two of which were pre-existing on the site: one a training hall and the other containing operational and technical facilities. The newly designed corner building – a six-storey silver cube – stands as a welcoming beacon for visitors arriving from the historic city centre. The corner building houses a fan shop and Hall of Fame on its ground floor, as well as a restaurant, a 29-room hotel for athletes and guests, and a gym and sports hall on its upper floors. Accessible to local schools and

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the wider public, a 230-metre rooftop running track is set atop the arena. This free-to-use resource, open to all via a booking system, offers views of the historic city centre and further activates the site outside of event times.

An icon for the region

Unabashedly exuberant in its design, the arena's exterior is characterised by red aluminium panels inspired by the heraldic red of the municipality and the club colours. A triangular motif repeats along the crown of the building – a reference to Jihlava's Gothic architecture and a nod to the spines of a hedgehog, another symbol of the city. The façade also features a lighting system that responds to activities inside the arena; the façade flashes when goals are scored during hockey matches and different colours can be deployed to represent the different events taking place.

"Thanks to the red façade evoking a hedgehog as a symbol of the city, Jihlavans have strongly connected with the arena. It has become a new symbol, not only of Jihlava but of the entire region; people are proud of it."

- David Beke, Jihlava City Councillor



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The materiality of the arena is simple but striking. The stands are made with prefabricated concrete that has been pigmented to match the red exterior. The steel trusses of the closed roof are exposed to support the technical requirements of the venue. The façade panels are perforated to facilitate natural ventilation and sunlight, and to give the whole complex a sense of lightness and permeability.

"We conceived the arena as a building that should feel approachable and welcoming while also meeting the complex technical demands of a large venue. The structural and material palette of exposed concrete, red prefabricated tribunes and a precisely articulated façade establishes both durability and character. The angular façade and its crown-like top give the arena a strong identity, connecting it to the city's historic skyline while expressing a contemporary character."

– Ondřej Chybík, founding partner, CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF Architects

Thanks to its flexible design, the arena can host concerts, performances, conferences and trade fairs, as well as ice hockey and other sports events. The basic capacity of 5,650 spectators for hockey can be expanded to more than 7,400 with additional seating in retractable stands. For hockey matches, seats wrap around the ice across two tiers (instead of the typical single tier for arenas of this size), whereas concert-goers can occupy the floor space and a large curtain covers the upper tier to provide a more intimate and acoustically treated space.

Collaboration: It's all in the detail

CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF has taken a holistic approach to the design, considering every element of the arena experience, from cityscape to spectator's seat, and in places expanding their own brief to fulfill the full potential of the project.

Following CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF's initiative, the neighbouring park – Smetanovy Sady – was added to the scheme and has been refreshed by its original landscaper, **Zdeněk Sendler**. The park also features a new sculpture, 'Game' by Czech artist **Krištof Kintera**, who has repurposed railings from the previous ice rink into a large typographic sculpture that greets visitors to the arena and reads 'SOUHRA-PROHRA-VÝHRA' (teamwork-defeat-victory).

Thanks to the involvement of **David Karásek** of Czech seating manufacturer Kovostal, the arena features Highlands, a custom-designed folding seat that doubles as an acoustic treatment for the large hall. The underside of the seat is

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moulded with a geometric pattern which absorbs sound and reduces the echo in the space and the seat has been recognised at both the Red Dot Design Awards and Elle Decoration International Design Awards.

Hand-cast triangular light fixtures are embedded in the concrete walls of the building's interior, made by the Czech glassworks **BOMMA** to a design by CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF. Furthermore, five large-scale light installations by **Tech-fabrika** are integrated throughout the arena. Based on the studio's design, four reinterpret the heritage of the Vysočina Region and one reimagines the Dukla club logo.

Supporting the accessibility of the venue, graphic designer **Lukáš Kijonka** has developed a wayfinding system and typeface which references the triangular motif of the façade.

"We wanted the arena to be a place not only for sport and culture, but also for relaxation, social encounters and active leisure – a venue alive 16 hours a day, 365 days a year. I believe we have managed to fulfil this vision."

- David Beke, Jihlava City Architect



Photos: Pavel Barták, courtesy of CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF

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Notes to editors

For more information and high-res photography, please contact CHK@zetteler.co.uk.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name Jihlava Municipal Arena

Design CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF Architects

Client City of Jihlava

Location Tolstého 4679/21, 586 01 Jihlava 1, CZ

Investment EUR 80,000,000

KEY DATES

Project 2019–2025

Competition 2019

Construction start July 2023

Completed November 2025

CREDITS

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Structural and civil engineer AED project

Services engineer AED project

Main contractor Gemo

Arena landscape Tomáš Babka (Grupeto)

Park landscape Zdeněk Sendler

Wayfinding system Lukáš Kijonka (Times New Realism)

Seating design CH+K with David Karásek

Seating manufacturer Kovostal

Park sculpture Křištof Kintera

Photography Pavel Barták, Fabrice Fouillet, Skyworker, Lukáš Kenji Vrábel, Vojtěch Veškrna

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About CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF (CH+K)

CHYBÍK + KRIŠTOF is an architecture and urban design studio founded in 2010 by Ondřej Chybík and Michal Křištof in Brno, Czech Republic. Today, the 70+-strong team also operates from offices in Prague, Bratislava and London.

Integrating architecture, urbanism, research and education, CH+K reimagines cities through the lens of Creative Reuse – a design approach that reflects a commitment to cultural continuity, social engagement and environmental responsibility.

The studio's work spans cultural and civic landmarks, public spaces, residential projects, and masterplans, as well as temporary activations. Flagship completed projects include Multipurpose Urban Arena, Jihlava (2025), Nusle Brewery residential neighbourhood, Prague (2025), Lahofer Winery, Dobšice (2021), and a self-initiated refurbishment of Zvonařka Bus Station, Brno (2020).

The practice is currently working on commissions in major European cities, including London, Vienna, Berlin, Tirana and Prague. It has received more than 50 design accolades and awards, including the AR Design Vanguard NYC, a Mies van der Rohe Award nomination, and the prestigious Europe 40 Under 40 Award. The studio's work has also been exhibited at major festivals, including the London Festival of Architecture (2024, 2026) and the Venice Architecture Biennale (2025).

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