

Press release  
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## A open window on Antique Nîmes

A team from the Institut national d'archéologie preventive (Inrap) is at present excavating a site in the avenue Jean-Jaurès, prior to the construction of an underground car-park by the town of Nîmes. Curated by the Regional Archaeological Service, the excavation, covers an area of 6000m<sup>2</sup>. 400 metres long, this dig is the largest archaeological window opened onto the antique past of the city. Antique streets, residential quarters, fountains and statuary are at present being excavated from the earth.

### *Nemausus* in Narbonnaise

From 500 BC an agglomeration was established on the slopes of the Mont Cavalier. During the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC the oppidum was the capital of the Volcae arecomici. Dominated by a powerful watch tower celebrated in verse by Victor Hugo (the Tour Magne) its fortifications enclose an area of 30 hectares. Circa 120 BC, well before Caesar's conquest, this part of Transalpine Gaul was annexed by Rome. Situated on the Via Domitia, the town developed within Gallia Narbonensis. The embellishments of the town continued during the Early Roman Empire: the Augusteum, the forum, a temple dedicated to Augustus's adopted sons (the "Maison Carrée), new fortifications 6 kms. long, an aqueduct receiving water crossing the Pont du Gard and an amphitheatre (the Arènes) became part of the urban landscape.

### Understanding Romanization

Today, archaeologists are clearing a long transect between the ditch of the Gallic oppidum to the north and the Roman rampart to the south. This dig will enable a transversal reading of the antique town and improve our understanding of the main stages of urbanization of this sector of the city between the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, date of its abandon. The research aim is to better understand the process of Romanization, the progressive passage from a Gallic town towards a town in permanent evolution in contact with the new usages of the coloniser.

### Streets, fountains and statues ...

In the field, the first results show a high density of structures, in a good state of conservation, sealed by medieval agricultural soil as well as the thick made ground on which the avenue was built in the 18th century. A series of streets, some paved, structured the antique quarter. Their diverging orientations do not correspond to the classical orthogonal plan of the Roman

town. Sometimes, bordered with porticoes and fountains, they frame small groups of dwellings with original floor plans and carefully executed decorations (wall paintings, mosaics). The excavations of a well conserved basin revealed a limestone statue representing a male divinity, perhaps Neptune.

## **Inrap**

With more than 1800 collaborators and researchers, Inrap is the largest French archaeological organization and one of the foremost in Europe. A national institute of research, it realizes most of the archaeological evaluations and excavations in partnership with private and public developers: that is more than 2 500 sites a year in mainland France and in the French overseas departments.

Developer:	<b>Ville de Nîmes</b>
Curation:	<b>Regional Archaeological Department (Drac Languedoc-Roussillon)</b>
Archaeological research:	<b>Inrap</b>
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