Introducing two of Berlin’s major urban development projects

In today’s newsletter we would like to introduce Berlin’s two major development projects, which will have a great impact on its urban momentum: Europacity - the new evolving center around the main train station and the Humboldtforum - a reconstruction of the historical city palace as the new cultural center in Berlin and a place for world culture dialogue.

Europacity

We had already introduced Berlin’s plan for one of the most important central development areas in the capital (see our December newsletter from 2011).

A vibrant, futuristic quarter is emerging in the city’s new center for working, living, shopping, culture and recreation. Starting at the river Spree to the South of main train station (to the left on the image above), it will extend 40 hectares to the North - 1.3 km along the street Heidestraße - up to the Perleberger Bridge/ Nordhafen (on the right half of the image). The area is approximately double the size of Potsdamer Platz. The development of the Europacity is happening in agreements between the land owners (mainly CA Immo and Deutsche Bahn) and the state of Berlin.

Today, we would like to have a look at the recent developments in this area in the last four years: several buildings have already been completed or are in advanced construction stages. Compliant with the plan of the Berlin senate of a sustainable, ecologically friendly “Kiez”, all of the constructions are innovative and energy efficient “green buildings”. Many of them have been awarded with prices by the German Association for Sustainable Building (DGNB).

Office spaces for the new urban center

The 17 storey building was built for the French oil and gas company Total. Next to the Total tower is the “50 Hertz” building, an imposing construction in development, which shall be completed by next summer by the German transmission system operator 50 Hertz. Two other office buildings are being realised by CA Immo in the same location. One is the recently finished “Monnet 4”, which has been rented to the financial services advisory MLP and the IT company Adtran. Another is the KPMG house for the consultancy company with the scheduled opening in 2017. One more building will arise in the direct neighbourhood behind the historical „Hamburger Bahnhof“ (by Ernst Basler+Partner AG).

Looking at the area closer to the main train station, we find two new buildings directly at the Humboldthafen: “HumboldtHafenEins” was just opened this year and handed over to its tenant PricewaterhouseCoopers (by OVG Real Estate). It is called the “greenest office building in Berlin” and is one of the ten most sustainably designed houses in Germany. Next to it is the house of the Federal Ministry for Education and Research, completed last year.

To the South of the main train station there is the recently opened John F. Kennedy house (by CA Immo), the tenants of which are the real estate company Jones Lang LaSalle, a law firm White & Case LLP, an office space provider Regus and the travel company Expedia.
Next to the John F. Kennedy house, another office building „Bertha Berlin“ is being constructed (by Becken Development). The opening is scheduled for 2016, the main tenant will be the tax advisory Roever Broenner Susat Mazars.

Hotels for Europacity:

Further accomplishments in the Europacity are several hotels with nearly 2.000 rooms and more than 5.000 beds, making the new quarter to one of the biggest hotel sites in Berlin, according to the Berliner Zeitung. The choice starts from the luxury Steigenberger Hotel (5 stars, 339 rooms), the InterCity Hotel (4 stars, 412 rooms) and the Meininger (3 stars, 296 rooms) right next to the main train station (Washingtonplatz), to the Amano Hotel in the Heidestraße (3 stars, 250 rooms), the Ibis Hotel (3 stars, 170 rooms) and Motel One (3 stars, 550) in proximity to Europacity. Another four-star hotel (Barcelo) with 272 rooms is scheduled to be opened in 2018.

The residential quarter in the Europacity

While many office spaces and hotel rooms have been created in Europacity, no residential buildings have been accomplished yet. According to the recently published site layout by the senate department for urban development, more than 800 apartments are included in the current building projects for the residential quarter. This is likely to be just a part of a bigger plan, as the media reports about a more than 2500 apartments. The main residential quarter will be located in the Heidestraße. Two daycare centers and a school are planned in the area.

The KunstCampus by Groth Gruppe, a six storey building with 120 condominiums, shall be completed by 2016 and ready for occupancy by 2017. Another 550 residential units are going to be built by Richard Ditting (construction start is 2016). Most of the units (504) will be rental apartments, 42 of which will be rent controlled.

There are three more residential buildings with 169, 206 and 265 units (by CA Immo) and a six storey building with 50 units (by O1 Group) in planning in the Heidestraße. Next to the Humboldthafen, there will be another house with rental apartments and condominiums. No completion date has been advised for these constructions yet.

The Heidestraße itself, mainly developed and financed by the state of Berlin, will be expanded to a boulevard with broad pedestrian paths, tree lines and bicycle paths (the completion is scheduled for 2017). Originally, there was a plan for a water body (city harbour) in the Heidestraße, but this plan has been abandoned due to its ineligibility for EU fundings. A green city square is being developed instead. The riverside of the Spandau shipping canal will be developed to a promenade and there will be two bridges. A promenade is also planned around the Humboldthafen, for a lively place with offices, residential apartments, cafes, restaurants and shops.

The Berlin Palace - Humboldt Forum

The Berlin Palace – Humboldt Forum is another major and ambitious development project in Berlin. The reconstruction of the Berlin Palace was decided by the German parliament (Bundestag) and has a significant cultural value not just for Berlin and Germany, but also internationally. Together with the World Heritage Museum Island, it will become a focal point for world culture in Berlin’s Mitte.

The world renowned art and museum expert Neil MacGregor (currently director National Gallery, London) will head the advisory board of the Humboldt Forum to create a place "where different narratives of world cultures can be explored and debated", he says.

It is known, that the Humboldt Forum will house different museums, such as the two museums with non-European collections by the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation – the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art. There will also be the Museum of the Place showing the history of the
Berlin Palace. The Humboldt Forum will also house the exhibition “World/City/Berlin” and departments of the Humboldt-University. Furthermore, the place will offer a broad variety of events: exhibitions, theatre, films, readings, talks, dance and further events. The idea is to create a place where people meet and debate.

The Berlin Palace is named after the brothers Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt. Alexander was a world-travelled researcher and Wilhelm was an all-round academic. The idea of the Humboldt Forum is to bring together culture, knowledge and science – just like the two brothers did. The Berlin Palace–Humboldt Forum will revive the historical Berlin Mitte by establishing a new architectural and cultural landmark at the Palace Square (Schlossplatz), where the original historical Palace was before its partial destruction during the Second World War and its final demolition in 1950.

The history of the Palace goes back to the 15th century, when it has first been constructed. Since then, it has been constantly redeveloped. The Palace last appeared in baroque facades, adapted by the architect Andreas Schlüter around 1700, inspired by the Italian architecture. It remained in its baroque style until the palace has been demolished by the GDR government. On the place, 25 years later, the Palace of Republic was built. It had to be demolished in 2008 due to its contamination with asbestos. The reconstruction of the Berlin Palace commenced in 2012 on its original place.

The reconstruction will be a mix of the original baroque and modern architecture with a monument like character. This combination of the historical and modern appearance was intended in order to express the break in the history of the palace, reminding on its destruction and reconstruction.

On the outside, three of the four facades will be reproduced in their historical baroque style, as well as the three facades of one of the courtyards. The outer facade facing the river Spree (east side), will be modernly constructed (as can be seen on the first image). Original fragments and sculptural figures of the destroyed original palace will be integrated in the construction.

From the inside, the palace will be a modern building. The inner rooms will not be reconstructed, but will be built in a way that a later historical reconstruction would be partly possible.

Parts of the reconstruction project – the historical dome above the western portal and the baroque inner portals - are not in the regular budget but are aimed to be realized through donations.

The whole building complex has four storeys and is divided in three sections alongside the building, creating three public piazzas. Looking at it in the East-West direction, the western part, accessed via the western portal (“Eosanderportal”), is a large roofed entry hall with a glass ceiling. This is the reception area called “Agora”. The adjoining transverse building in the middle part of the complex has a courtyard inside called “Schlossforum”
(Palace Forum) - a public area, which will be open for public access 24/7. The eastern piazza “Schlüterhof”, named after the above mentioned architect Schlüter, is going to be a public area with gastronomy and services. It will be largely reconstructed and bordered by the adjacent modern part Belvedere towards the East.

The owner and developer of the palace is the Berlin Palace – Humboldt Forum Foundation, established by the German government. The planning work is being performed by Prof. Franco Stella from Vicenza, Italy, who won the architect competition for the Humboldt Forum, and his team.

The budgeted cost of the project is 590 Mio €, 81% of which are financed by the Federal Government, ca. 5% by the state of Berlin and the rest via donations (105 Mio, nearly 50% of which have already been collected). Donators can fund specific decorative facades or portal elements and become a part of the history of the Palace. Donations can be made at the Berlin Palace–Humboldtforum Foundation.

* Please note that the contents of this article have been researched and written according to the best of our knowledge; however they are in no way to be accepted as a legal advice or suggestion. Therefore we exclude any liability.

Sources

Europacity:

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Humboldt Forum:

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