Conversion in Heidelberg – directing the change

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There can be no progress if people have no faith in tomorrow.”

John F. Kennedy

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Heidelberg

Dear reader,

When the US Army left Heidelberg, freeing up 180 hectares that could be converted to alternative uses, it presented us with a unique opportunity. The five newly-vacant sites will be used to create a wide range of neighborhoods, offering housing and attractive public spaces, premises for innovative businesses, knowledge and research institutes, and cultural and sporting facilities. Work on the sites is already well underway, with input from urban planners, the city administration, the City Council and the general public. The first residents have already moved into the Mark Twain Village site, and an ‘innovation park’ is taking shape at Patton Barracks. At Patrick Henry Village, top international planners are creating a vision for the ‘knowledge city of tomorrow’ as part of Heidelberg’s international building exhibition (IBA).

Even without the former US Army sites, Heidelberg is an ideal place to live, and very attractive to businesses and investors. It is world-famous for its science and research. It boasts a strong economy, first-class childcare facilities, and excellent schools. And its lively cultural scene and tourist attractions such as the historic Old Town and Castle attract almost 12 million visitors every year.

Kind regards,

Prof. Dr. Eckart Würzner
Mayor of Heidelberg
Dialogue-based planning

Through public forums, planning workshops and district meetings, local people can get actively involved in the ‘dialogue-based planning process’ for the former US Army sites. The process encourages close cooperation between the city administration, the general public, planners and local policy committees. In the first phase, in 2011, guidelines were drawn up for the conversion of the sites, which were then approved by the City Council. In phase two, which started in late 2012, specific scenarios were elaborated for the development of the individual sites. The third phase consists of the practical implementation of these plans. The City of Heidelberg intends to purchase all of the sites from the German Institute for Federal Real Estate (BImA). One site has already been handed over: on January 1, 2016, the City and its partners acquired a large portion of the Mark Twain Village/Campbell Barracks area and immediately began construction. Summer 2016 saw the first residents move into newly-renovated apartments there. Designs have also been drafted for the Patton Barracks and US Hospital areas, and the redevelopment of Patrick Henry Village has been named a key project in the city’s ‘Knowledge based urbanism’ international building exhibition (IBA). No firm plans are yet in place for the Airfield area.
This roughly 43-hectare area in Heidelberg’s Südstadt district comprises Mark Twain Village – formerly home to American soldiers and their families – and Campbell Barracks, which consists largely of listed historic buildings. The City of Heidelberg and its development partners bought the majority of the land and buildings on these sites on January 1, 2016.

The former Mark Twain Village will be used mainly for affordable housing, in line with current City Council housing policy. On the initiative of the city’s Mayor, Dr. Eckart Würzner, a dedicated company – MTV Bauen und Wohnen GmbH & Co. KG – has been established to develop the site, and is to invest around 320 million euros in 114,000 square meters of residential and commercial premises there. Around 1,300 homes are being built for sale or rent, including 70 percent affordable housing. The first tenants have been living there since summer 2016.

At the heart of this district will be a local shopping center, a vocational school, childcare facilities, a residence for young people in apprenticeships, and a community center in a former chapel. The park in the center of the area will house a flagship cultural project, the Mark Twain Center for transatlantic relations.

The historic buildings at Campbell Barracks will accommodate a ‘praxisHochschule’ private vocational college, the criminal investigation department of Heidelberg’s police force, and the Kulturhaus Karlstorbahnhof cultural center. A new center for cultural and creative businesses is also planned, as are a range of other commercial premises. The central parade ground will be turned into a lively space where the public can meet and mingle throughout the day.
Map showing entire MTV/Campbell Barracks area

Source teleinternetcafé/TH Treibhaus, adapted by: Peh & Schefczik
Visualization of the Park Terrace along Rheinstraße

Source teleinternetcafé/TH Treibhaus

Visualization of the Römerstraße area

Source teleinternetcafé/TH Treibhaus

Residential courtyard on Römerstraße

Source teleinternetcafé/TH Treibhaus
Patton Barracks

Patton Barracks, in the Heidelberg suburb of Kirchheim, can look forward to a bright future as a center for IT, bioinformatics, digital media and design. The roughly 15-hectare site will be home to Heidelberg Innovation Park (HIP), a creative hub where workers in IT-related fields will develop pioneering digital products and solutions.

HIP will be not a conventional ‘business park’, but a place of interdisciplinary collaboration, with premises for businesses at all stages of their development. It will bring together researchers, start-ups and established businesses, who will benefit from their proximity to one another and to the rest of the city. With facilities such as childcare, coworking spaces, cafés and restaurants and well thought-out public spaces, it will offer attractive places to meet and socialize, and so encourage a good work-life balance. It will incorporate a sports and cultural arena seating up to 5,000 people. The first milestone for HIP will be the opening of a business development center for organic electronics. An urban design ideas competition was held to identify possible designs, on the basis of which Zürich architects Hosoya Schaefer were chosen to plan the area. Landscape architects agency ter will design the open spaces.
US Hospital

The former US hospital is located in the south of Heidelberg’s Rohrbach district. Spanning some nine hectares, the area will be used mainly for apartments, but will also house commercial premises and cultural and educational facilities. The current plans are for 600 apartments and a 7,700 square-meter park.

Particular emphasis will be placed on networking the former US Army land with the adjoining districts of Alt-Rohrbach and Hasenleiser. The entrances to the hospital site to the west, south and east will be made especially inviting. The winners of the 2014 urban design ideas competition for this area were the studios Hähnig Gemmecke (Tübingen) and Fromm (Dettenhausen).

Potential tenants are already coming forward: intensive talks are currently underway with Lebenshilfe Heidelberg and the Montessori Center. The non-profit Collegium Academicum is also planning a hall of residence for 200 students there, which will include an area for meetings and seminars.
Patrick Henry Village (PHV) is a 97-hectare area of Heidelberg that will serve as a model for the urban district of the future. Heidelberg’s ‘Knowledge based urbanism’ international building exhibition (IBA) will develop several development scenarios for the area by spring 2017 as part of its ‘planning phase zero’, with input from leading international urban design experts Kees Christiaanse and Winy Maas.

The public, City Council bodies, the city administration, representatives of trade and industry, architects and planners and many other stakeholders are engaged in a round-table planning stage aimed at translating their ideas, needs and visions into built reality. The aim of the current ‘planning phase zero’ is to draw up scenarios for the ‘knowledge city of tomorrow’, based around four topic areas. The main questions the scenarios must answer are: What form will research and business take in PHV? How should connections be established within PHV and with surrounding areas, and what part will infrastructure play in this? How will education and places of learning be embedded in the new district? What role will nature and the landscape play in PHV’s future? And: What forms will accommodation take in PHV in the future?
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