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GOOD PRACTICE

# The Haus der Statistik

Renovation is more sustainable than demolition

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## Overview

A new district for administration, housing, social affairs and culture is being built on the large site of the former administrative building for the Federal Statistical Office - Haus der Statistik - in the center of Berlin. A civil society initiative had prevented the demolition of the existing building from the 1960s and, together with the administration and other stakeholders, developed the concept for the conversion - a beacon for alternative approaches to urban development.



## Background

The Haus der Statistik, directly on Alexanderplatz in the center of Berlin, was built between 1968 and 1970 and served as the headquarters of the Central Statistical Office of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). After German reunification, the building - a typical example of post-war modernism - passed into federal ownership. As of 2008, the 50,000 square meter-building complex was no longer in use and was to be sold to investors, demolished and replaced by modern office towers. There was strong opposition to this in Berlin's civil society and in the art and culture scene. This gained public attention when the Allianz bedrohter Berliner Atelierhäuser (Alliance of Threatened Berlin Studio Houses) put up a large poster on the façade of the Haus der Statistik, which resembled a public construction sign and read: „Here, spaces for culture, education and social issues are being created for Berlin“. As a result of this action, the Haus der Statistik initiative was founded, an alliance of various Berlin stakeholders for the preservation of the building complex. Berlin politicians took up the proclaimed ideas of the campaign and subsequently committed themselves to rethinking the future design and use of the district.

## Goal

Politics, administration, civil society, art and cultural stakeholders have since pursued the common goal of doing justice to various interest groups in the future use of the Haus der Statistik. This is ensured through the mixed use of the building complex for art, culture, social affairs, education, affordable housing and office space for the local administration.

The further development of the Haus der Statistik is implemented with a variety of stakeholder groups such as social and cultural institutions, artists' group, architects, foundations and associations, but also with municipal companies. The existing buildings won't be demolished and it will also be extensively supplemented with open spaces for communication and encounters that support interaction between future users and with visitors

## Activities

The state of Berlin purchased the Haus der Statistik property from the federal government in 2017, paving the way for the development of the neighborhood in the interests of the common good.

The Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing is working with the Berlin-Mitte district office, two state-owned companies and the cooperative that emerged from the civil society initiative on the development of the building complex, with civil society continuing to play a central role. Energy-efficient construction is currently being used to create space for

- the new town hall for the Berlin Mitte district (30,000 square meters)
- the municipal administration (35,000 square meters)
- around 300 affordable apartments (27,000 square meters)
- Art, culture, social affairs and education (24,500 square meters)

During the planning phase, areas in the existing building were available for „pioneer use“ by initiatives and organizations. At the start of construction in 2022, they moved into temporary buildings on site. A transfer of the pioneer uses from the planning phase through the construction phase to an early phase of neighborhood operation is planned. This means that there are already established opportunities for participation at the start of the neighborhood's usage phase.

## Conclusion

The further development and rededication of the Haus der Statistik and the surrounding area is a model for cooperative, community-oriented neighborhood development and shows alternative ways of urban development. A strong commitment from civil society actors in a consensus negotiated together with public actors forms the basis of the neighborhood development.

Transferring the process structure and experience to other projects is possible in principle, but must be done sensitively and adapted to the respective locations, partners and local initiatives involved.

## Impact

The former Haus der Statistik from the GDR era will become a place with a wide range of uses, serving the common good and not primarily the economic interests of investors. This is of great importance in view of the sharp rise in rents in the city, particularly in central areas. As part of an integrated workshop process, the various stakeholder groups and planners developed the concepts for the project together and in events that were open to the public throughout, thus ensuring that the plans meet the needs of future users. The civil society stakeholder groups were able to act as full legal partners in the project by founding a cooperative.

The architecture will meet ecological, innovative and sustainable standards, with the first buildings due to be completed in 2025 and the last in 2032.

The transfer of the process structure and experience from the Haus der Statistik to other projects is possible in principle, but must be designed sensitively and adapted to new locations and participating partners/initiatives.

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