

The Landtag Brandenburg

Interesting information about the new parliament building





A Place of History

The site of the former City Palace is one of the oldest settled areas in Potsdam. It had previously been home to a number of fortifications, fortresses and castles when Great Elector Frederick William built a new palace between 1664 and 1669 which was styled after Dutch architecture. Prior to crowning himself Frederick I of Prussia in 1701, Elector Frederick III added the first part of the building, the Fortuna Gate (Fortunaportal), which remained virtually unaltered until the eventual destruction of the City Palace.

In 1740, Frederick II became King of Prussia. He built up Potsdam as the royal seat of the Prussian Monarchy, and in 1745, appointed the architect Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff to redesign

the Baroque palace in the style of Frederician Rococo. The City Palace then assumed its final form, providing the basis for the reconstruction of the new Landtag building more than 250 years later. Together with the existing buildings, the City Palace made the Alter Markt one of the finest squares in Europe.

After the First World War, the palace was no longer used as a royal residence. Extensive construction created an assembly hall for the city councillors and rooms for committee meetings and parliamentary groups. The former royal palace now took on the function of an integral municipal building.



Destruction and Wasteland

Having fallen prey to the Nazi dictatorship, the City of Potsdam suffered repeated aerial bombardments during the Second World War. As a result of a major offensive by the British Royal Air Force on 14 April 1945, the City Palace and many of the buildings in its immediate vicinity burnt down. High explosive bombs left a trail of destruction through the west wing and destroyed much of the Fortuna Gate. Almost the entire expanse of the remaining façades, however, was preserved to the eaves.

In 1949, a new German state, the GDR (German Democratic Republic), was established in the Soviet zone of occupation. According to a survey, almost 80 per cent of the remaining walls of the City Palace were still intact when, in the year 1959, those in power decided to completely demolish the building. Despite ve-

hement protests by the people of Potsdam, the palace was pulled down the next year and the rubble used to create the Lustgarten (Pleasure Garden). Several citizens were able to salvage some valuable pieces of the façade.

What was once the heart of the city was now a wasteland. From the 1950s to the 1970s, various plans for redevelopment were proposed but never came to fruition, primarily due to cost constraints. A number of roads were built over the site instead and it morphed into a major road junction, losing its former significance as a key part of the cityscape. At the end of the 1980s, work began on the construction of a new theatre at Alter Markt. The shell was demolished in 1991, however, following the Peaceful Revolution in the fall of 1989.



New Beginnings

The demolition of the City Palace marked the start of a seemingly endless debate on the future development of central Potsdam. The area that had been left behind was perceived as being a gaping wound. In 1990, the city of Potsdam decided that the future development of the city centre would stay true to its historic appearance. In 1999, the city council declared the centre of Potsdam to be an redevelopment area. This included the goal of redeveloping the site of the former City Palace on the basis of the original cubature and layout and allowing for its public use.

At the end of March 1999, the “Förderverein für den Wiederaufbau des Fortunaportals” (Association for the Reconstruction of the Fortuna Gate) was established. Following its previous destruction, all that remained of the gate were its foundations. Traditional building techniques and intact original parts were used in its reconstruction, which was funded by donations. The ground-breaking ceremony was held in September 2000 and the official inauguration took place on 12 October 2002.

On 20 May 2005, the Landtag passed a resolution to erect a new parliament building according to the contour and outlines of the historic Potsdam City Palace. A subsequent nonbinding referendum in the city of Potsdam revealed clear support for a new Landtag building at the Alter Markt. The preliminary archaeological survey of the site on which the new Landtag building would be reconstructed began in 2006.

The contract was awarded to the Royal BAM Group consortium of bidders, together with architect Prof. Peter Kulka. The project agreement was signed in September 2009. The investor was commissioned with the planning, construction, financing and operation of the Landtag building for a period of 30 years. The first foundation stone was laid on 16 February 2011 and the completed building was presented to the Landtag on 10 October 2013.



Reconstruction

A donation of 20 million Euros from the Hasso Plattner Foundation to the Land of Brandenburg made it possible for the façade of the new building to be reconstructed on the basis of the workmanship and materials that were used in the original. The goal was to have the outside of the new Landtag building resemble the structure and appearance of the former Potsdam City Palace as much as possible. A further donation from this patron in 2011 enabled the roof to be covered with historically authentic copper.

All of the façades, including the front sections at Alter Markt, were reconstructed and restored in accordance with the historic plans, measurements and photographs. Building components made of different varieties of sandstone, such as cornices and pilasters, have also been reconstructed. All the surfaces have been finished by hand.

The box-type windows, with their wooden outer casings, are also in keeping with their historic predecessors. A second inner casing on the windows provides sound and heat insulation. The air that circulates between the two casings enables the natural ventilation of the rooms.

Some 307 of the surviving original building components and stone fragments were installed in their original positions. The parapets on the exterior façades have been designed and equipped to take the surviving decorative sculptures as well as new ones which will be remade in keeping with the original designs. Donations will make the recreation of decorative sculptures possible.

On 26 April 2016, the first two sculptures to have been restored (Hercules and the boy with the log) were positioned on the western façade.



Façade Design

As with the former City Palace, the sandstone used on the façades originates from quarries in Saxony, Germany. The main stone to have been used in the primary structures is Postaer sandstone. Unfortunately, none of the original fragments of plaster from the area of the upper walls survived the earlier destruction. However, natural stone components found in the vicinity did allow conclusions to be drawn about the original red ochre colour typical of the era.

The pilaster was a popular element of prestige architecture from the Renaissance era until the end of the 19th century. The original City Palace had a highly contoured base, a shaft consisting of several individual plates, and an elaborately finished capital. On the new Landtag building, the many historical variations have been reduced to sixteen types of pilaster. These differ in terms of their width and function. All in all, some 187 pilasters have been integrated into the façade of the Landtag.

To fulfil the requirements of the Land parliament for extra space, the attic has been converted into a fully functional floor. On this additional upper floor, small recessed windows, which were not in the façade of the original palace, have been integrated into the attic frieze. They are designed to be as unobtrusive as possible, are aligned to the structural divisions of the façades, and are positioned evenly with no visible jambs. The rooms on this floor also have skylights for the provision of daylight.

The three upper floors of the side wing accommodate the members' offices with small meeting rooms and the Land Court of Audit. The offices are also in keeping with the configuration of the original façade.



Interior Courtyard

The Fortuna Gate forms the main entrance to the Landtag building, and the passageway opens out into the public, interior courtyard of the parliament building. Grassed and paved areas are laid out in a geometric pattern while benches provide a pleasant place to sit.

Two illusionist pavilions, inspired by the central oval at Sanssouci Palace, catch the attention of the visitors. “Zugabe” (Encore) by artist Florian Dombois addresses the contemporary ideas of site specificity and the notion that “everything can be postponed”. The work won the first prize in the “Kunst am Bau” (Art in Architecture) competition. A design by the artist Anette Paul of Potsdam, which won second prize in the competition, was also realised on the exterior façade of the Landtag, and features the

words “Ceci n’est pas un château” (This isn’t a palace) in golden lettering.

The central wing was extended to the interior courtyard in order to accommodate the meeting rooms, the plenary chamber, and the offices of the Landtag Presiding Committee. It was also necessary to extend the side wings in order to provide room for the administrative departments, parliamentary groups and members’ areas along both sides instead of just one. The rooms are now accessed from a central walkway rather than a side corridor. Together with the balanced proportions of the inner courtyard, the modules, textures and ornamentation, with the background of the projecting and recessed façades, are in keeping with the spirit of the original.



Knobelsdorff Staircase

The Knobelsdorff staircase forms the link between the historic façade structure and the modern interior design of the Brandenburg Landtag. On their way to the foyer visitors view the staircase.

The architect Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff built the staircase as a front façade of the corps de logis when he converted the palace into a royal residence for the Prussian King, Frederick II in 1744. The space has been recreated in keeping with the original exterior and reproduces the dimensions of the interior, including the staircase and the vestiges of the remaining examples of pictorial artwork.

Six original reliefs by Benjamin Giese, in the style of Johann August Nahl, dating from 1750 decorate the staircase. Motifs from ancient Greece epitomise the power of music. Four marble Atlases by Johann Peter Benckert, Johann Gottlieb Heymüller and Johann Christoph Petzold dating from 1748 dominate the corners of the stairway dome, which is designed as a Rabitz ceiling. Areas of damage to the corpora have been retained and bear witness to the building's eventful history.





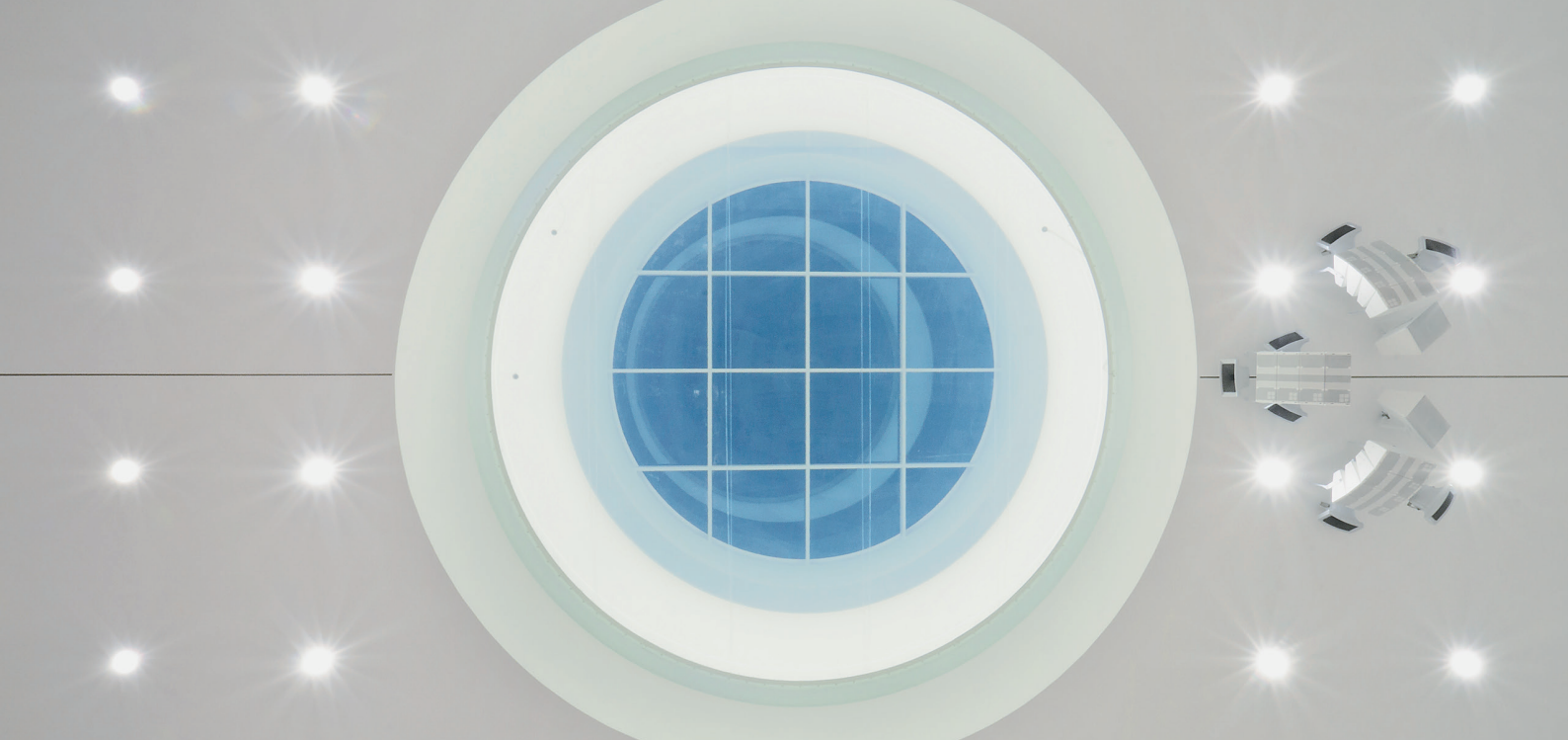
Plenary Chamber I

As the Land parliament [from the French verb „parler“ – to speak], the Landtag is a place of public debate, speeches and objections, argument, and decision-making. This is why the plenary chamber is the centrepiece of the Landtag building. It offers space for 88 members and a public gallery which accommodates 160 guests.

The plenary chamber allows members of the Brandenburg Landtag to assemble in a room that was designed and built for this specific purpose. Its semi-circular seating arrangement reflects

the importance of the democratic decisions made by the assembled members – just as envisaged by the Land constitution.

The colours of white and red that dominate the plenary chamber are derived from the colours of the Land of Brandenburg. A dome-light in the historic middle belvedere features a transparent air cushion, allowing a constant flow of natural daylight into the plenary chamber. The cushion also enhances the room's acoustics. A strip of light optically separates the ceiling from the walls of the chamber.



Plenary Chamber II

The eagle is a recurring theme in and around the Landtag building – in its gilded Prussian guise before the front entrance, in its heroic heraldic form on the flag of Brandenburg, and as an artistic design in the colour of red on the lectern in the plenary chamber. Upon the inauguration of the new Landtag building in January 2014, the plenary chamber originally featured the relief of a white eagle which was designed by the architect Prof. Peter Kulka, and positioned above the chairs occupied by the Presiding Committee. This artistic presentation of the white eagle proved to be controversial, however, and led to a lively public debate. In May 2014, a majority of the members of the Landtag parliament voted for its removal, and in its place, the lectern in the plenary chamber now features a red eagle. This was also designed by Prof. Kulka. The white eagle finally found a new place in the lobby just outside the plenary chamber.

The elevated area behind the lectern is where the Presiding Committee convenes and works. It is incumbent on the Landtag President and Vice President to take it in turns to lead plenary debates and voting. Recording clerks, who are duly appointed by the parliamentary groups from the group of elected members, assist the President and Vice President with their work.

The Minister President and his or her ministers sit opposite to the members of parliament to the left and right of the lectern. The members of parliament elect the Minister President, make decisions on the Land budget, and monitor the work of the Land government.



LANDTAG BRANDENBURG



Working Parliament

The members of parliament, the parliamentary groups and the supporting Landtag administration are also able to work in rooms befitting a modern parliament when they are outside the plenary chamber. A good example of the political work of the Landtag is provided by the committee meetings. Committee meetings, at least to a certain extent, can be described as the engine rooms of the parliamentary process. At the start of the fifth legislative term, the Landtag Brandenburg decided to make the meetings of the committees accessible to the public in the same way as the plenary sessions are already open to the public under the Ger-

man constitution. This is where battle is done over the details of an amended law, where experts and interested parties have their say, and where the course is set for the final vote.

Three spacious meeting rooms are provided for these discussions among the members of parliament, allowing interested visitors and media representatives to attend the committee meetings and follow the debates. There are a further eight meeting rooms for the parliamentary groups and other bodies.



Function Levels

Situated on the ground floor of the south wing is the Landtag foyer, which is home to the exhibition area, the cafeteria, and the cloakroom as well as space for visiting groups and press conferences. An archaeological window in the floor of the furthestmost left room makes visible part of the Swedish limestone floor from what was once the Electors' Garden and later a wine cellar.

Newly created stairwells in generously lit spaces and lifts take visitors from here to the first floor, which is home to the plenary chamber, the lobby and the Presiding Committee suite, with the offices of the President, Vice President and Director of the Landtag. Additional meeting rooms are situated at the interfaces between the side wings and the south wing, running alongside the plenary chamber and connecting it with the offices of the individual

parliamentary groups. Members of the press and visitors are taken to the press and public galleries one level up. The fourth floor is home to the Landtag canteen, which provides seating for 160 guests. The floor also features an adjoining roof terrace and library.

The total floor space of the building, including the underground car park, is approximately 19,000 m², the gross room volume 150,632 m³, and the gross floor area 34,525 m². The building is home to some 375 offices. Energy-efficient building technology keeps the running costs low and conserves resources. Intelligent lighting adapts to the natural incidence of light. The walls and ceiling feature integrated cooling and heating modules to keep the room temperature constant. The heating switches off automatically if the windows are opened for ventilation purposes.



Formal styling

The Contemplation Room, which is situated in the basement of the Landtag, provides a break from the frequently hectic parliamentary routine. An ecumenical service takes place here before every plenary session. The room is not configured according to any particular faith and is open to all comers, regardless of their personal beliefs.

Like the Landtag building as a whole, the Contemplation Room is characterised by its simple formal styling. Its functional design

in the interior of the building reflects the constitutional duties and work of the Landtag parliament. The white walls bring an added sense of focus to the words and actions of the people's representatives. The design principles of openness, clarity and transparency displayed here further symbolise the principles upon which the democratic political system of the Land of Brandenburg is founded.

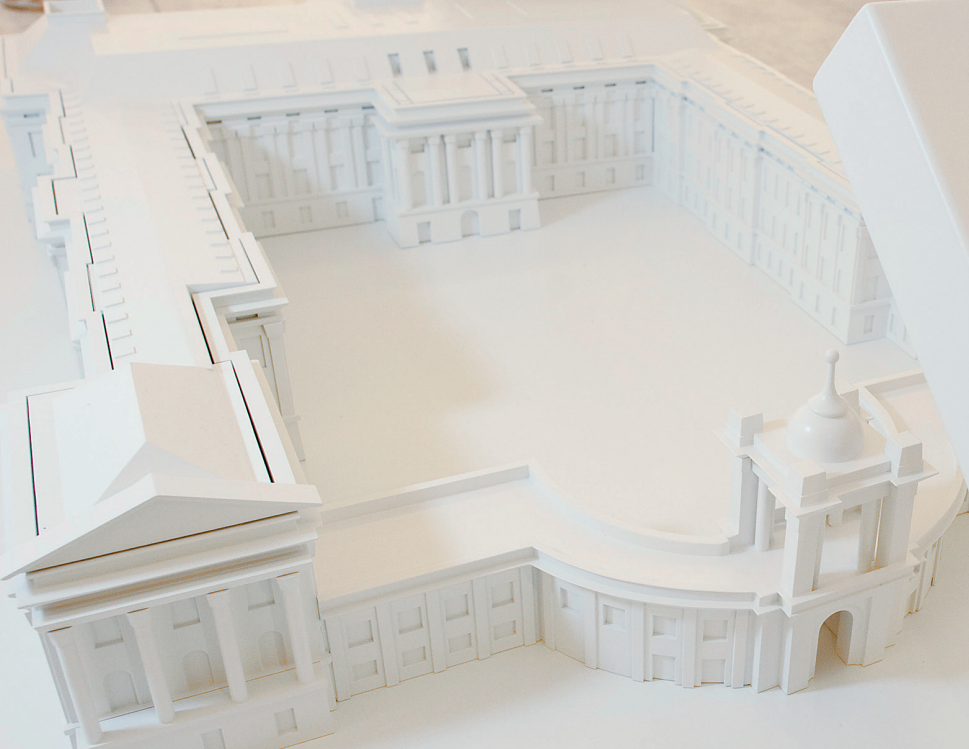


Open House

After years of making do with the site at Potsdam's Brauhausberg, the parliament building in the Alter Markt has brought the Landtag Brandenburg closer to the people in the literal sense of the words. The architectural concept of the Landtag building means that citizens aren't just occasional visitors to the building – they are users of it as well. Due consideration has been given to ensuring excellent accessibility to all of the public areas, with wheelchair access, induction loops for the hard-of-hearing, and guides for the visually impaired.

Despite the completion of the Landtag building on the site of the former City Palace, the reshaping of Potsdam city centre remains a work in progress. Following the complete demolition of the building situated at Friedrich-Ebert-Straße 4–7, which is part of the university, a lively urban residential and commercial quarter is to be built here which is in keeping with the historic struc-

ture of the plot and the dimensions of the buildings before their destruction in 1945. The new Alte Fahrt quarter now constitutes a complete series of developments, some of which have historic façades, such as the Palais Barberini, which is home to the Museum of Modern Art. The newly designed Potsdam Museum in the Altes Rathaus is now accessible to pedestrians via the historic Humboldtstraße on the east side of the Landtag building, and to the south east of the Landtag at the start of the Lange Brücke walkway a new square entitled Otto-Braun-Platz, named after the last democratically elected Premier of Prussia, has also been completed. In front of the western wing of the Landtag, part of the Ringerkollonnade, which was originally built in 1745/46, has also been rebuilt. Upon the completion of the construction work, the adjoining square, Steubenplatz, will be redesigned so that it is in keeping with the new quarter.



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