

ACADIA Design Competition 2001

Site and Program Statement

Program Precipis

In this hypothetical project, the city of Berlin wishes to create a new kind of civic gathering place, which can build on the synergy of public and commercial information technology. Because it is a joint venture between the city, the local university and private investment, the program is a combination of public amenity, educational facility, and commercial venture.

The Inforum has two primary components, one public, the other commercial. The first is a public Information Resource Center which will provide the community with access to a broad range of information resources. The IRC will house a library including books, videos, and digital media, plus stations for viewing media, small rooms for group study, and larger classroom and auditorium spaces. In addition, the IRC includes a public space suitable for exhibitions of digital and traditional media.

The second component is a commercial facility including space for a primary corporate tenant, plus a hotel oriented toward visitors who want full connectivity and support for information technology. The complex will also include office space and support services available on a short term basis for visitors wanting to set up a temporary office.

Beyond facilities for these primary tenants, the Inforum will include commercial incubator spaces for businesses that require a state-of-the-art infrastructure of information technology. There will also be support businesses located within the complex, such as a copy center, computer support, restaurants, and cafes.

The Inforum is a public place, which will have an important presence on the Pariser Platz, the proposed site for the competition. As its name implies, Inforum is based upon the concept of a Forum, a gathering place for the community, encompassing not only its immediate physical community, but also the global community engaged through information technology. The Pariser Platz and the Brandenburg Gate, which faces on to it, have always been such a Forum for the city of Berlin and the world.

Program Elements

The following table lists approximate areas of the major program elements.

Public component		
Public/Exhibition		1500 m²
Information Resource Center		
administrative offices	200	
collection storage	1300	
auditorium	1000	
study rooms	700	
study stations	800	
conference rooms	500	
		4500 m²
Parking		3000 m²
Subtotal		9000 m²

Commercial Component		
Primary tenant		1500 m²
Hotel		2500 m²
Leased offices		
long term	600	
short term	400	
		1000 m²
Support Businesses		
copy service, retail, etc.	500	
café and restaurants	500	
		1000 m²
Parking		3000 m²
Subtotal		9000 m²

TOTAL		18000 m²
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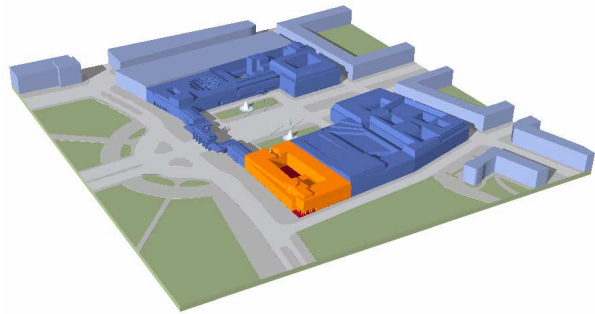
Notes:

Information Resource Center

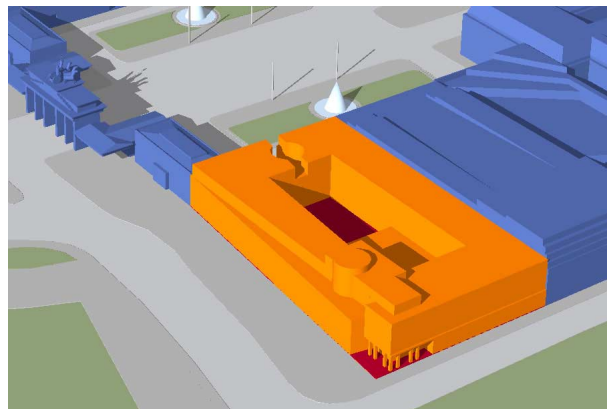
- Study rooms for small group activities requiring acoustic privacy, such as watching a video, listening to music, or conducting a teleconference.
- Conference rooms are for lecture-type presentations.
- Study stations are for individual activity.
- Study rooms, classrooms, and the auditorium all support teleconferencing.

Site Description and Massing Constraint

The competition site for the Inforum building is the site previously proposed for the new American Embassy in Berlin (This was the location of the American Embassy until World War II). The site faces the famous Pariser Platz on the North. This square and the Brandenburg Gate which forms a gateway to the square on the west, symbolizes the separation and reunification of Germany. During the years of the Berlin Wall, the gate stood just inside the wall in East Germany. Pariser Platz was almost completely cleared of bombed out buildings after World War II. Now Pariser Platz is being rebuilt to the original dimensions with surrounding buildings restricted to the original massing. The square, intended to be the “salon of the city”, is to be surrounded with head offices of large banks, embassy buildings and a luxury hotel, the Hotel Adlon, the official accommodation for guests of the government. At one time the Brandenburg gate was one of the gates on the western boundary of the city. As the city grew, the gate became absorbed into the center of the city. The proposed site is an ideal location for an Inforum building because of its central and symbolic location. It is not an unrealistic site either, because there has been some uncertainty as to whether the United States Embassy will indeed be located there (in spite of the fact the a competition for the embassy was won by Moore, Ruble, Yudell with Gruen Associates in 1996). Moreover, in the Leipziger Platz to the south, a sort of prototype for the competition building, the Info Box, a temporary bright red box of a building on stilts, was erected to provide information on the rebuilding of Berlin, Europe’s largest construction site, since the fall of the Berlin Wall.



The longer part of the northern boundary of the site faces Pariser Platz.. Another part of the northern boundary abuts the Sommer House, which in turn abuts the Brandenburg Gate on the south side. On the western boundary, the site faces the Tiergarten Park across Ebert Straße, a busy six - lane road. On the south, the site faces Behren Straße and on the east the site abuts the party wall of the Bank Administration building by Frank O. Gehry. The site dimensions are approximately as follows: North 50.7 meters, West 97.1 meters, South 58.4 meters and East 95.5 meters.



Computer models of the site area available at the following URL:

<http://acadia.arch.virginia.edu/competition-2001/acadia-competition-materials.zip>

The site is shown on the computer model on the “site” layer as an extruded, red polygon with the above external dimensions. A simple massing model of the proposed American Embassy is shown on the “US-emb” layer. The building should maintain the street line on all sides and maintain the same height of the facades as the proposed US embassy. This is a requirement of the City of Berlin. Competition entrants who choose not to follow this requirement for this hypothetical project will need to offer something that is clearly more desirable in terms of what it offers the Inforum and the urban design of the area

For additional information and images of the site and its surroundings as they appeared in December 1998, see the Web site at

<http://www.fes.uwaterloo.ca/u/tseebohm/berlin/database.html>.