

# Brief history of the *Landtag* building

The long road from City Palace to *Landtag* Palace



L A N D T A G  
B R A N D E N B U R G



View of the Brandenburg *Landtag* building



# Table of contents

## 05

Twenty-Two Years to Find the Parliament a Permanent Home

## 06

From Medieval Castle to the Renaissance Palace of Katharina, Electress of Saxony

## 07

The Era of the Great Elector Frederick William (1640-1688)

## 08

The Palace and Prussian Monarchy

## 10

The End of the City Palace

## 11

The Demolition Decision

## 12

A New Beginning with the Reconstruction of the Fortuna Gate

## 14

Policy Decision

## 15

Fight of Potsdam's Citizenry for "Their Palace"

## 16

The new *Landtag* Takes On Shape

## 16

The Ceremonial Handover of Keys to the Parliament's President

## 17

Architect and Building Design

## 20

The New Building and Surrounding Areas in Facts and Figures



# Brief history of the *Landtag* building: The long road from City Palace to *Landtag* Palace<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Twenty-Two Years to Find the Parliament a Permanent Home

Following the reunification of Germany on 3 October 1990 and the Brandenburg *Landtag* elections on 14 October 1990, the *Landtag* and the *Land* government were at first jointly housed in the former cadet school, previously the offices of the Potsdam District Council at Heinrich-Mann-Allee 107, now home to the State Chancellery. These are the same premises at which the *Landtag* of 1946 had previously met. However, accommodating the regional parliament on these premises over the long term would have meant housing the *Land* government on the Brauhausberg, a proposal that immediately met with considerable misgivings, in particular due to their previous use as the regional offices of the SED (Socialist Unity Party).<sup>2</sup>

On 16 January 1991, the *Landtag* resolved that the Brauhausberg was to be used as the site of the future parliament. The decision was preceded by the rumour (unfounded, as it turned out) that the structural safety of the plenary chamber at Heinrich-Mann-Allee, used up that point, could not be guaranteed.<sup>3</sup> Even though experts would not recommend the indefinite use of Havelblick 8 given its inadequacy as a parliament building, the members of parliament (MPs) nevertheless moved into the building (dubbed the “Kremlin”) as soon as the most essential construction work had been completed; the first plenary session of *Landtag* Brandenburg on the Brauhausberg was held on 25 September 1991.

After protracted discussions about a permanent home for the parliament and thanks to the dedicated efforts of citizens, organisations and sponsors who had already enabled the rebuilding of the “Fortunaportal” (Fortuna Gate), the *Landtag* passed a policy resolution on 20 May 2005 paving the way for a new building in the heart of Potsdam City that would retain the façade of the old City

<sup>1</sup> Based on the publication “Das Potsdamer Stadtschloss” (Potsdam City Palace) by Hans-Joachim Giersberg (1998) and the “Baudokumentation Neuer *Landtag* Brandenburg” (Building Documentation: New *Landtag* Brandenburg), published in 2014 by the Ministry of Finance. With gratitude to the city archaeologist Gundula Christl for valuable corrections.

<sup>2</sup> Press release from the Head of the State Chancellery Dr Jürgen Linde on 19 April 1991

<sup>3</sup> See also: President of *Landtag* Brandenburg (publisher): “Von der Kriegsschule zum Parlament” (From Military Academy to Parliament). Potsdam 2000.

Palace which had been destroyed in a British air raid in April 1945 and demolished in 1959/60. The new building took three-and-a-half years to complete and was handed over to Gunter Fritsch, who was *Landtag* President at the time, by the then Minister of Finance of the State of Brandenburg, Dr Helmuth Markov, on 10 October 2013. In the 25th year of the Peaceful Revolution, the opening of this modern parliament building, set in its historical shell, signalled the closure of a gaping scar on the urban landscape of the state capital since 1959.

Completion of the *Landtag* was initially scheduled for late 2012 and the move into the new premises for early 2013. The move eventually took place from 12 to 16 December 2013 enabling the Parliament to start its work in the new building still in the very same year.

The 6<sup>th</sup> *Landtag* was constituted on 8 October following the *Landtag* elections of 14 September 2014. In her speech, newly elected *Landtag* president Britta Stark pointed out among other things: “For the first time we are celebrating the constituent *Landtag* assembly in our new *Landtag* building. It stands here right in the middle of Potsdam, in the midst of life. Since its opening in early 2014, we have been able to draw almost as many visitors as the old *Landtag* did in 20 years! Our *Landtag* is a very open house. I wish to retain this openness and I suggest that we hold an open house weekend once a year, and turn it into a feast of democracy. I want to offer our visitors not only a beautiful building but also a site of democracy in action.”

## 2. From Medieval Castle to the Renaissance Palace of Katharina, Electress of Saxony

The site of the Palace is part of the earliest settled areas of Potsdam. Archaeologists have discovered that the site has been settled repeatedly since the Stone Age, due to the location offering safety from flooding. The city of Potsdam grew out of this site over the course of time.

The first recorded mention of the Slavic fort “Poztupimi” dates back to 933. The area west of the Slavic fort (at the present intersection of Heilig-Geist-Strasse and Burgstrasse) was marked out with streets and residential quarters as early as 1200. Directly beneath the carriage drive, archaeologists found evidence suggesting a moated castle built around 1320. In 1528, Elector Joachim I built a fortified castle with five towers on the site. In 1598/99, Elector Joachim Friedrich then replaced this with a small palace intended for his wife Katharina. The Palace was 60 metres long and measured 14 metres across. Its three floors contained a total of 38 rooms, including a large hall and what was known as a “Tafelstube” (dining room) on the second floor.

However, as a result of the premature death of the Electress, the new building was never fully completed. After the equally premature death of his second wife Eleonore, the Elector eventually lost all interest in the Palace and spent his time in Joachimsthal to the north of Berlin. The Palace lost its attraction and was eventually pledged as collateral.



Saved by archaeologists: 500 square metres of stone floor from the dining hall of the great Elector dating back to the 17th century. An “archaeological window” in the new Landtag building provides a view of its historic heritage.

### 3. The Era of the Great Elector Frederick William (1640–1688)

The Great Elector Frederick William acquired the Palace in 1660. He had a new palace built between 1664 and 1669 based on the Dutch model, but this rapidly proved to be too small and between 1679 and 1682 was extended to twice the original length. The main building extended over three floors. With its enlarged and remodelled “Lustgarten” (Pleasure Garden), the Palace became a prestigious residence and a dominant feature at Alter Markt in the centre of town. The City Palace had by then obtained the space it would occupy until its demolition in 1959/60, and which today is taken up by the *Landtag*.

The first floor of the main wing, the “Corps de Logis”, housed a prestigious hall, the latter-day “Marmorsaal” (Marble Hall). Situated on the ground floor below and level with the “Lustgarten” was a vaulted hall used as a pleasantly cool dining hall during the summer months while also serving for funeral wakes for members of the Elector family.

The Great Elector issued the “Potsdamer Toleranzedikt” (Edict of Potsdam) from the City Palace in 1685: He invited Protestant Huguenots, then persecuted in France on religious grounds, to live in Brandenburg in freedom and safety, and refugees were given generous privileges.

## 4. The Palace and Prussian Monarchy

### Frederick I, First King of Prussia (1688–1713)

The Elector Frederick III succeeded his father, the Great Elector, to the throne in 1688. The new Kingdom of Prussia was created on crowning himself King Frederick I of Prussia at Königsberg in 1701. In preparation for the coronation and to reflect the new royal status, several striking changes were made to the exterior of the Palace and the Lustgarten. A new entrance gate in the French style was built whereby the figure on top, Fortuna (or goddess of good fortune) subsequently gave rise to the name “Fortunaportal”. The Palace became a place of lavish celebrations and even the site of a meeting between the Saxon and Danish kings in 1709.

### Frederick William I, the “Soldier King” (1713–1740)

Given the extremely perilous state of the finances left behind by his predecessor, the Soldier King decided to sell as many

of his palaces as possible and keep only a few. The Potsdam City Palace was one of the few to remain in the king’s possession. In contrast to Charlottenburg Palace, however, it was used as a family residence rather than on state business. The vaulted basement was converted into a wine cellar in 1726. Only minor repairs were undertaken to the rest of the Palace while Potsdam was converted to a garrison city instead. As the city expanded, the regular division into districts resulted in a distinct chessboard pattern and followed the lines of the main arteries from the time of the Great Elector running towards the Palace. Urban development thus centred entirely on the Palace whose location between the town centre in the north and the Havel River in the south turned it into an important landmark visible from all directions.

### Frederick II, also known as “Frederick the Great” or “The Old Fritz” (1740–1786) and his new residence

In 1740, Frederick II became King of Prussia. He used Charlottenburg Palace as his residence during his first years in office.



The historic Potsdam City Palace



In 1743, the king moved into the Potsdam City Palace, taking up quarters east of the Marble Hall. In spite of renovations to the façade, Frederick II was dissatisfied with the overall appearance of the City Palace. With the help of architect Baron Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff, the Palace was extended between 1744 and 1751, taking on its final shape which 250 years later would become the blueprint for the new *Landtag* building.

Fundamental changes were made to the façade to give it a uniform structure. The magnificent staircase was designed to accentuate the central part of the Palace and the section leading up to the Great Hall.

Frederick II furnished the building with exquisite furnishings. Ongoing construction work around the City Palace was a further demonstration that Potsdam had been chosen as the home of the royal family, with the Knobelsdorff Palace in the style of Frederician Rococo at the very heart of the city. The interaction between the Palace and the buildings at Alter Markt gave rise to one of the finest town squares in Europe. Whilst the City

Palace was accordingly used on state business and occupied by Frederick II in the winter, another palace – also in the Rococo style – was built between 1745 and 1747 as a summer residence. This was the Sanssouci Palace to which only the King's personal guests were invited.

### **Frederick William II, “The Fat Scallywag” (1786–1797)**

The new occupant of the City Palace did not share his uncle Frederick II's love of Baroque and Rococo forms. He therefore handed over his apartment in the northwestern corner of the Palace to his sons Frederick and Ludwig, and had the “Marmorpalais” (Marble Palace) in the Early Classical style built at the “Neuer Garten” (New Garden) between 1787 and 1792. He also moved his residence back to Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin. He was not greatly respected due to his hedonistic inclinations. The people of Neuruppin nevertheless erected a statue to him in 1829 (reconstructed in 1998) in gratitude for the reconstruction of the town in the Classical style following a city-wide conflagration.

### **Frederick William III (1797–1840)**

Although Charlottenburg Palace remained the royal residence after the change of government, even after his marriage to Princess Luise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Frederick William III still kept an apartment in the City Palace, which was the object of numerous alterations after 1799. The couple enjoyed staying there until Luise's death in 1810.



*Comparison of the original Fortuna Gate and the replica made in 2002*

### **Frederick William IV (1840–1861)**

also used the City Palace as a winter residence during his reign. However, his ideas for redesigning it, in particular the façade to the Lustgarten, no longer came to fruition due to his illness.

### **William I (1861–1888), Frederick III (1888), William II (1888–1918)**

Interest in Potsdam dwindled considerably under the last three Prussian kings who were also Emperors of Germany. They usually resided in Berlin whilst the Palace served solely as a second residence. Out of respect for the achievement of Frederick II, none of them sought to alter the design of the building realised during the latter's reign.

## **5. The End of City Palace**

On 9 November 1918, people gathered on the site of the City Palace, disarmed the castle guards and forced their way into the building without ransacking it, however. This symbolically brought the rule of Prussian monarchy to an end.

In the wake of the 1918 revolution and the end of the monarchy, the Palace became a ward of the body administering the crown estates, itself the successor to the imperial and royal office of Lord Chamberlain. Under the agreement on the apportionment of Prussian assets and liabilities, the Palace was included in the properties managed by the State Heritage Office (Verwaltung der staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten) founded in 1927.

The Palace served as the seat of the municipal authorities during the Weimar Republic; the City Assembly held its meetings in the new palace hall from 10 September 1920 onwards. Accommodations for council staff were put up inside the building which also housed the local labour exchange and parts of the city's administration.

The "Yellow Saloon", the living room of Queen Luise, was reconstructed in 1932 and reopened to the public at Whitsuntide 1932. The museum remained in operation until 1941.



*The destroyed Potsdam City Palace*

The City Palace burnt down to the enclosing walls following a British air raid on the city on 14 April 1945. As only few of the sumptuous interior fittings had been removed to air raid shelters or other buildings for safekeeping, most furnishings left in the Palace were irretrievably lost in the ensuing fire. The exterior façade of the Palace also suffered severe damage during the raid. High-explosive bombs left a trail of destruction through the West Wing and virtually destroyed the “Fortunaportal”. By contrast, almost the entire expanse of the remaining façades survived up to the level of the cornices, albeit damaged by the fire.

## 6. The Demolition Decision

Following deliberations over whether to rebuild or to preserve the ruins, on 13 November 1959 the Potsdam City Assembly voted for their demolition. Prior thereto, the reigning Socialist Unity Party (SED) had already sealed the fate of the ruins on 12 May 1959 at the highest “politbureau” level.

The remains of the City Palace were demolished between November 1959 and April 1960. At the very start of the demolition works, the “Fortunaportal” was blown up in what was a deeply symbolic act. The South Wing, with walls that incorporated earlier buildings and thus were massively oversized, was blown up towards the end of the works and the rubble carted off to many different places. Loose debris and parts of the West Wing were used for a stadium built between 1947 and 1949 on the grounds of the former Lustgarten. Artists, architects and Potsdam residents protested against the demolition.

Fifteen architects and engineers from the city’s building planning agency (VEB Hochbauprojektierung Potsdam) expressed their displeasure with the demolition ruling in a letter of protest to the Potsdam District Council. They did not see any need for it in terms of urban planning and felt the demolition would destroy architectural harmony.

They were summoned to the District Council on 17 November 1959 and strictly enjoined from further protests against the planned demolition. At the “Schau-stelle *Landtag*” (*Landtag* Showcase) exhibition, long-serving former director of the Potsdam Museum Hartmut Knitter provided a highly graphic illustration of how out of touch the GDR authorities were. He still had a very clear recollection of a poster with the inscription “Fort mit dieser Brutstätte des Feudalismus” (“Away with this hotbed of feudalism”). The former head of the GDR Agency for the Preservation of Monuments, Ludwig Deiters, was able to list 368 preserved items. Citizens, too, had helped salvage individual pieces of the demolished ruins in spontaneous acts of rescue.

Once the demolition work had finished, multilane roads were deliberately laid over the area around the City Palace and a major intersection was built on the site of the Palace itself to erase any reminders of it. The Alter Markt situated to the northeast of the former Palace, too, waned in importance as a result.

Next to new buildings surrounding the Nikolai Church, a new hotel (today the “Mercure”) was intended to overlook the Lustgarten site.

The only building in the immediate vicinity to have survived air raids and demolition works more or less unscathed were the former royal stables. Originally intended to be torn down as well, they were eventually preserved due to urban planning changes.

Also preserved was a section of what was known as the “Ringerkolonnade” (Wrestlers’ Colonnade) which originally linked the stables with the West Wing of the Palace. At the end of the 1960s, this initially became part of an open space in the redeveloped Lustgarten which incorporated parts of the Palace, before it was returned to its original location in 2016.

In one of the final prestige projects undertaken in the GDR, work began at the end of the 1980s to build a major new theatre on the site of the former City Palace. However, opposition to this scheme grew steadily after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany in 1989/90. Concerns were initially voiced that the new theatre could block the view of the Nikolai Church. However, the real reason that the shell of the unfinished theatre at Alter Markt was pulled down in 1991 was because it had become increasingly unpopular with residents and policymakers, being one of the last major projects of the SED regime, and people saw an opportunity to restore the area to its original appearance.

With the demolition of the theatre in 1991, the City Palace site once again reverted to open parkland and years of debate on how to revive the centre of Potsdam ensued. Mindful of the experiences during the GDR era, voices increasingly called for the restoration of the City Pal-

lace. For many, the only solution worth considering was one that filled in the large gap in the urban landscape between Alter Markt, Lange Brücke and Breite Strasse in an appropriate manner. Initially, no viable concept for either the use or the financing of the building was put forward. The large intersection in front of the Mercure Hotel alone threw up problems. Since it had been laid over parts of the Palace complex, consideration had first to be given to relocate the intersection before major reconstruction works could begin.

## **7. A New Beginning with the Reconstruction of the Fortuna Gate**

The debate on shaping the Potsdam city centre never died down after the demolition of the City Palace because the open area left behind was felt to be a gaping wound. As early as 1990, the city committed itself to ensuring that the development of the centre would be in keeping with its historical appearance. An initial spark for the scheme was provided by the “Potsdam Project” run by the Summer Academy for Young Architects of the Prince of Wales’s London Institute of Architecture (“The Prince of Wales’s Urban design task Force, Potsdam and Bornstedt 1996”). An association for the reconstruction of the Fortunaportal was set up on 25 March 1999. After the demolition, all that remained of the gate were the foundations and a few soil-covered floor slabs. Traditional building techniques and intact original parts were used in the reconstruction. The groundbreaking ceremony was held on 8 Sep-



*The Fortuna once again highlighted against the Potsdam sky*

tember 2000 and the official inauguration took place on 12 October 2002.

A 2 June 2001 report in the *Berliner Zeitung* stated: “Television presenter Günther Jauch hopes to carry on until the old Potsdam City Palace is restored at its original location.”<sup>4</sup> The people of Potsdam were particularly grateful to Jauch, a staunch supporter of Potsdam, and to Jürgen Lose, from the Federal Association of the German Cement Industry whose generous donations had made rebuilding the Fortunaportal possible. Realising this project rekindled the hope of actually implementing the City Assembly’s 1999 resolution which had declared the centre of Potsdam to be a redevelopment area, with the aim of “redeveloping the former City Palace to an approximation of its historical size and layout, and its subsequent use by the public”.

Since a new building needs an occupant and the inadequate housing of the *Land* Parliament was at the time plain for all to see, the connection was made fairly rapidly in the public mind. Given that there were more pressing problems in the new federal state, the MPs bided their time with a decision that would entail massive costs “for their own benefit”. The options looked at by the cost analysis thus also included refurbishing the Brauhausberg building, and a new building either in Potsdam’s warehouse district along the Havel River or on the site of an indoor swimming pool. However, the number of members in favour of a new building on the site of the former City Palace grew steadily.

In 2001, the City arranged for a preliminary archaeological survey to be carried out on parts of the former Palace, the first one since its demolition. Investigating an area of nearly 1,000 square metres, a 12-person team found evidence of over 700 years of building history. A relatively extensive section of the preserved structures of the City Palace and of its architectonic predecessors was examined in the process. Given the good condition of the archaeological finds, the monument conservationists suggested preserving as many of the artefacts as possible and to integrate them into the redevelopment of the area.

Also in 2001, during the Federal Garden Show the special display “Minervas Mythos” (Minerva’s Myth) exhibited the original parts, plans and photographic documentation of the City Palace that had survived.

<sup>4</sup> Julia Schmidt, *Berliner Zeitung* of 2.6.2001

## 8. Policy Decision

Tensions grew when the *Landtag* passed a resolution on its permanent home on 12 July 2001 whilst leaving open the question of its location:<sup>5</sup>

“After weighing up the political, financial and town-planning aspects of a permanent home, the *Landtag* advocates the construction of a new parliament building in the state capital of Potsdam under the following conditions:

1. The *Land* government shall, after having taken due note of available documents and reports, prepare a model for the *Landtag* offering options in terms of possible sites for a new parliament building ready for subsequent adoption.
2. Should Brauhausberg not be included in a concept for a new building, the *Land* government shall provide the *Landtag* with a concept for its future use so as to result in a concentration of properties for government activities on the one hand and a substantial reduction in rental costs to *Land* authorities for properties not owned by the *Land* on the other.
3. To secure the investment, the *Land* government and the Court of Audit shall act in close cooperation to review available private financing and the use of private management models.
4. With a view to consolidate *Land* budgets, only the requisite planning funds and – where necessary – funds for property acquisitions may be disbursed until 2004. The plans must be

drawn up in such a way as to ensure that no expenses for building works are incurred before 2004.

5. Companies based in the region are to be involved in the planning, execution and monitoring of the project as far as possible, within permissible legal limits.
6. The plans must ensure that the new parliament building may also be used by the parliament of a joint federal state of Brandenburg-Berlin.”

Likewise, in July 2001, the city of Potsdam created the conditions required under planning law for a new building by drawing up a *Land* development plan entitled “Potsdamer Stadtschloss” (Potsdam City Palace).

After the *Landtag* elections, the SPD and CDU coalition agreement stipulated that “...the accommodation of the *Landtag* must be lastingly improved”. In March 2005, the Ministry of Finance presented a report on behalf of the *Landtag* giving a cost breakdown and a site comparison for the redevelopment of the Brauhausberg and a new building at Alter Markt.

On 20 May 2005, the *Landtag* finally passed a definite resolution on the problem of its location:<sup>6</sup> a new *Landtag* was to be built by 2011 within the perimeter and outlines of the historical Potsdam City Palace. The city of Potsdam was asked to carry out the necessary preliminary work and thereafter sell the site to the *Land*. There was an initial lack of clarity concerning the design of the building although a budget limit of 80 million Euros was to be observed in any case.

<sup>5</sup> See printed *Landtag* matter 3/2991-B.

<sup>6</sup> See printed *Landtag* matter 4/1092-B.

On the basis of a layout and function schedule agreed with the Presiding Committee of the *Landtag* on 16 November and 7 December 2005, the Ministry of Finance commissioned a feasibility study designed to assess the practicalities of the size and functional requirements of the Alter Markt site. The study was also to examine the **conflict of interest between the desire to reconstruct the Palace and the requirements for running a modern parliament**. The February 2006 findings showed that a fully functioning modern parliament building was possible while at the same time preserving the original proportions and permitting a historically faithful reconstruction of the northern head-end section.

Initially, only the northern section on Alter Markt was to be modelled on the original. This displeased many Potsdam city councillors responsible for approving the development plan. A similar dispute broke out among city residents as well as among the policymakers in the Potsdam City Assembly (*Stadtverordnetenversammlung*) between those supporting the original and those in favour of a modern façade. In spite of the clear choice as the site of the new *Landtag*, the Alter Markt location was once again in question and the Project at a serious risk of failing.

## 9. Fight of Potsdam's Citizenry for "Their Palace"

The findings of a public opinion poll among Potsdam's citizenry between 16 and 31 December 2006 were clear: the number of those in favour of the "site in the centre of Potsdam on the grounds

of the former City Palace" was 24,172, or 42.8 %. Only 7,212 respondents, or 12.8 %, expressed a preference for the site of the former "Palais Barberini" at Alte Fahrt. The location at the "Speicherstadt" (warehouse district) was favoured by 16,089 respondents or 28.5 %, and an entirely different site by 8,287 or 14.7 % of those polled. A total of 56,473 Potsdam citizens took part in the public survey, equating to 46.1 % of the 122,407 city residents entitled to vote. The then Mayor, Jann Jakobs, declared: "I take this extremely high number of responses as a sign that there is a keen interest in the layout of Potsdam's historical town centre and that citizens feel responsible for their city and want to be involved. It has become clear that urban development should go hand in hand with a new *Landtag* building. This is also a call to action for the City assembly."

Meanwhile, supporters of the old City Palace continued to campaign for the original façade and started donation drives. The *Landtag* resolution of 20 May 2005 stated that the new building project should take the form of a public-private partnership (PPP). In accordance with the rules of procedure of the *Land* government, the Minister of Finance was put in charge of implementing the arrangement. The ongoing discussions placed the Minister under significant time pressure during the contract award procedure. On 27 November 2007, Rainer Speer, the Minister of Finance at the time, and Prof Hasso Plattner issued a public announcement that the **Hasso Plattner Trust had donated 20 million Euros** to the *Land* of Brandenburg. In the light of

the public debate, the agreement stated that the donation was “to be used to ensure that the *Landtag* building conforms to the greatest possible extent to the structure and appearance of the historical outer façade of the Potsdam City Palace, using existing original construction components, and replicas if necessary.”

Whilst this donation was good news, it also required amending the tender documents correspondingly. This allowed meeting the wishes of many Potsdamers unhappy with a modern façade. When reconstructing the façade, the plan was to incorporate fragments of the original building fabric – including some large original sculptures – that had survived demolition.

The Royal BAM Group consortium of bidders under architect Prof Peter Kulka was awarded the contract. The project agreement which provides for special financing under a public-private partnership was signed on 2 September 2009. The investor was commissioned with the planning, construction, financing and operation of the *Landtag* building for a period of 30 years. In return, the investor receives contractually agreed instalments and fees for building management from the time the building is handed over. Under the provisions of the agreement, the *Land* will remain the owner of the property throughout the entire term.

## 10. The new *Landtag* Takes On Shape

The preliminary archaeological survey of the City Palace site which covers an area of around 15,000 square metres began in 2006 and was completed in January

2011 after a number of interruptions. Numerous, often surprising findings dating from the mesolithic period up to the time of its last occupancy were made in the process. Neolithic graves and earthworks, a Germanic settlement where iron was smelted, the remains of crop sites dating back to the slavic fort of “Poztupimi”, a previously undiscovered medieval defensive system with a wooden tower and moat, and completely new findings relating to the castle and palace complex from the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries were examined and documented by archaeologists.

Foundations of the castle and palace complex over an area of around 3,000 square metres below the new *Landtag* building and in the inner courtyard have remained intact. Together with architect Prof Peter Kulka, the then *Landtag* President Gunter Fritsch, Minister President Matthias Platzeck, Finance Minister Dr Helmuth Markov and Mayor Jann Jakobs **a groundbreaking ceremony was held on 25 March 2010.**

The **foundation stone was laid on 16 February 2011** in the presence of Prof Hasso Plattner who in November 2011 had funded the replacement of the proposed zinc roof with a copper roof modelled on the original. The **topping-out ceremony** was held in the north wing on **24 November 2011.**

## 11. The Ceremonial Handover of Keys to the Parliament’s President

After three-and-a-half years of construction, the new building was handed over to the *Landtag* President by the Minister of Finance on 10 October 2013.





*View of the construction site for the new Landtag building*

The President praised the work of the architect who, he said, had succeeded in implementing the compromise solution of erecting a modern *Landtag* in a historical shell in a masterly fashion.

## 12. Architect and Building Design

Prof Peter Kulka faced the enormous challenge of having to accommodate the substantially larger dimensions of the *Landtag* building within the given cubic volume of the Palace. He nevertheless decided to reconstruct the entire exterior of the Knobelsdorff façade including the inner courtyard.

The main building and the two side wings were widened to accommodate the plenary chamber, causing the inner courtyard to be reduced by a quarter of its former size while retaining the original proportions, however. The combination of historical and modern elements as well as energy-saving considerations made it necessary for the outer walls of the building to be more than 1 metre thick.



*Potsdam, 10 October 2013: Landtag President Gunter Fritsch (centre left) receives the symbolic transponder key to the new Landtag building. From left to right: Land Court of Audit President Christoph Weiser; Elona Müller-Preinesberger, Deputy Mayor of Potsdam; Landtag President Gunter Fritsch; Finance Minister Dr Helmuth Markov; architect Prof Peter Kulka; Alexander Naujoks, CEO of BAM Deutschland AG*

The architect also managed to design the inner courtyard façades to match their historical models as far as possible even though the building was given a totally new floor plan. For functional reasons, the changes to the inner courtyard are greater than those to the outer façades of the building.

The shade of the red ochre selected recalls the colour scheme typical of buildings in 18<sup>th</sup> century Potsdam.

## Entrance Area and the Historical Staircase

Prof Peter Kulka's concept provides for entering the *Landtag* via the Fortunaportal and proceeding from there to the inner courtyard which is to be a citizens' forum open to the general public.

The entrance area of the building – known as the **Knobelsdorff Staircase** – was designed to resolve the conflict between the history-laden façade of the building and its modern minimalist interior.

A dispute arose about the design of the historical staircase in June 2012 when the Mitteschön Action Group called for the original balustrade to be reinstalled.

Prof Kulka on the other hand presented the *Landtag* Arts and Amenities Commission with plans for a curved white wall with a bronze handrail instead of the forged cast-iron balustrade of the original Knobelsdorff Staircase, and the Commission adopted his proposal. Although it had previously been announced that the staircase would as far as possible retain the historical style and use original elements, the House was swayed by the architect's argument that the staircase marked the transition between the historical Knobelsdorff façade outside and the modern parliament within, or, to use his own words, "the transition to the plain and simple world".

Another reason for the decision was the safety concerns voiced over installing the remaining sections of the original balustrade. By contrast, even at the advanced stage it still proved possible to reinstate the historical vaulted ceiling.



*The Knobelsdorff Staircase in the new Landtag building*

The four Atlas figures and panels built into the staircase are originals. The architect insisted on retaining the figures in unrestored state so as not to erase the traces of their history.

On the **ground floor of the main building**, the southern section of the **Landtag lobby** contains the exhibition area, cafeteria, cloakroom as well as rooms for visiting groups and press conferences, and the **Land Press Conference**, which is also now housed in the *Landtag* building. The floor of the left of these three multi-purpose rooms features an **archaeological window** under a 4.2 x 8 metre glass panel revealing part of the Swedish limestone floor from the 1660s in what was then the Garden Room and later a wine cellar during the rule of the Electors.

Directly above, on the **first floor**, lies the centrepiece of the building, the **plenary chamber** (formerly the Ballroom / Marble Hall), together with the area of the Presidency which houses the office of the *Landtag* President. A heated dispute was



*Presentation of the white eagle originally installed in the Plenary Chamber*

caused by the decision of the *Landtag* Arts and Amenities Commission to follow the architect's suggestion of mounting a white eagle in the plenary chamber rather than a red one as is the emblem of the *Land* of Brandenburg. While the CDU parliamentary group tabled the motion at the Plenary to have the white eagle then installed above the bronze door replaced by the state coat of arms, the majority resolved on 15 May 2014, at the request of the government supporting coalition and after consulting the architect, to take down the white eagle and install a red one with the lettering "Landtag Brandenburg" on the lectern.<sup>7</sup>

The **second floor** houses a visitor's gallery and two press galleries. An office for the current Minister President and the RBB public broadcaster premises are also located on this floor.

The **fourth floor** houses the *Landtag* canteen which seats 160 people, a large terrace and a library.

### West wing

The ground floor of the West Wing is home to the parliamentary department of the *Landtag* administration. Located directly above on the **first floor**, are the main rooms of the **SPD parliamentary fraction** with the group and committee room in the head-end of the building facing southwest.

The **second floor** houses the **parliamentary fraction DIE LINKE**, likewise with a large committee room which also functions as a group meeting room.

This layout is repeated on the **third floor** which is occupied mainly by the **CDU parliamentary fraction**.

### East wing

The **ground floor** of the East Wing houses the administrative department of the *Landtag*, while the first floor is home to the parliamentary group **BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN** and further administrative offices.

The **second floor** houses the offices of the **AfD parliamentary group**.

The **third floor** is home to additional offices of the AfD parliamentary group as well as those of the **BVB/FREIE WÄHLER parliamentary group**.



*The lectern in the plenary chamber since August 2014*

<sup>7</sup> See printed *Landtag* matter 5/9021-B.



The east wing façade viewed from the inner courtyard

### 3. The New Building and Surrounding Areas in Facts and Figures

#### Construction Costs

€ 119,7 mio.

#### Façades and Monuments

The façades were modelled on the original building and again feature ornamental sandstone decorations. Some 307 original parts of the Palace (remnants) were incorporated. The western side of the outer façade bears an inscription in gold lettering with the words “Ceci n’est pas un château” (This isn’t a palace), expressing an idea of Potsdam artist Annette Paul.

The parapets of the outer façades were designed and equipped to take existing decorative sculptures as well as additional figures to be recreated in keeping with the original models. Originally, the parapets housed 76 sculptures of heroes and gods of antiquity, the so-called Attica figures.

Several surviving Attica figures are located in the sculpture repository of the Berlin-Brandenburg Castle and Gardens Heritage Foundation (SPSG) while another eight have been on permanent loan on the roof of Humboldt University at Berlin since 1966.

According to the agreement that was reached in April 2014 between the *Landtag* President, the Lord Mayor of Potsdam, the Director-General of SPSG and the Potsdam City Palace Association, to implement the resolutions on *Landtag* reconstruction, a concept is to be worked out for the gradual restoration and re-erection of the figures on the outer façades. The realization of the concept is also dependent on the success of the Potsdam City Palace Association to secure the necessary funding by way of donations. Since the reopening of the Palace, five Attica figures have been returned to the roof, and a group of eagles has been positioned on the Fortuna Gate.<sup>8</sup>

#### Inner Courtyard

The inner courtyard of the former Potsdam City Palace covered an area of 6,325 square metres; the courtyard of the new *Landtag* Brandenburg occupies around 4,800 square metres on a plot size of 11,500 square metres. The courtyard is the site of two illusionist pavillons derived from the central oval of Sanssouci

<sup>8</sup> Also see the website of the association, <http://www.stadtschloss-potsdam.org>.



*The public inner courtyard*

Castle by Cologne artist Florian Dombois who won the first prize of the 2011 Percent-for-Art-Contest (Wettbewerb “Kunst am Bau”).<sup>9</sup> The inner courtyard which is surrounded by magnificent façades in keeping with the original appearance thus remains largely free of any structural impediments. The inner courtyard open to the public, the sweeping entrance area and the roof terrace emphatically underline the *Landtag* building’s claim to be an open house for all citizens.

### **Plenary Chamber**

The centrepiece of the *Landtag* is the 472 square metres plenary chamber. It provides seating for 88 members, as well as a further 33 seats for government members, the *Landtag* administration and stenographers. It also has a gallery for 160 visitors. In the event of a merger of the states of Brandenburg and Berlin coming about, the existing 88 parliamentary seats can be extended to accommodate a possible 150 members.

<sup>9</sup> Also see the pamphlet *Kunst am Bau for the Brandenburg Landtag* from the *Landtag Brandenburg* publication series.

### **Utility Area**

The building’s utility area, including the underground car park, measures around 19,000 square metres, its gross cubic volume around 150,632 cubic metres and its gross floor space around 34,525 square metres. The building measures about 94 × 123 metres and has a height of approximately 21.40 metres. The building has a total of **390 office workstations**. The underground car park has 166 parking spaces (including 9 parking bays for the disabled) and 100 parking spaces for bicycles.

### **Royal Stables and Wrestlers’ Colonnade**

The Palace complex also included the royal stables which today are home to the Potsdam Film Museum. The stables were built in 1685 as an orangery to the west of the former City Palace in the historical centre of Potsdam, and are the city’s oldest preserved structure. They were given their modern-day form in the 18th century by master builder Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff. He extended and improved the building which had by then been converted into horse stables for Prussian royalty.



*View of the visitor gallery from the plenary chamber in January 2014*

The stables were connected to the City Palace by the Wrestlers' Colonnade. This colonnade was erected in 1746 to a design of von Knobelsdorff, and originally consisted of 14 pairs of pillars that served as an open, clearly-demarcated pedestrian route set apart from the area of the pleasure gardens. The colonnade got its name from the eight groups of wrestlers and fencers created by famous Potsdam sculptors and erected between pairs of pillars.

Approximately half of the length of the Wrestlers' Colonnade was destroyed in the British air raid on Potsdam. After the demolition of the City Palace ruins, the preserved section was moved a few hundred metres from its original spot, near today's Mercure hotel. It then stood on the edge of the "Neuer Lustgarten" (New Pleasure Garden) alongside the "Neptunbecken" (Neptune Basin) near the landing pier of the White Fleet.

In 2016, the remaining part of the Colonnade was returned to its original location. It consists of six pairs of pillars and four groups of wrestlers or fencers.

It was not possible for the full length of the Wrestlers' Colonnade to be reinstated on the original site, however, because a tram line now runs between the stables and the *Landtag* building.

### **Otto-Braun-Square**

Under the patronage of then *Landtag* President Gunter Fritsch, a project was inaugurated in memory of Otto Braun. Except for brief interruptions, from 1920 – 1932/33 Otto Braun was the Prime Minister of the Free State of Prussia which during his time in office rose to become a "bastion of democracy" against its enemies from both the Left and the Right. It gave rise to both functionally competent government institutions staffed by personnel steady of principle and steeped in democratic values who resisted upcoming National Socialism up to the end.

On 19 December 2012, the Municipal Assembly of Potsdam resolved to name the open square between *Landtag*, Lange Brücke and Alte Fahrt within urban redevelopment area SAN-P13 and resulting from the new *Landtag* construction "Otto Braun Square". This was the first time that the democratic traditions of Prussia were publically recalled here in Potsdam.

On 19 March 2013, Lord Mayor Jann Jakobs, *Landtag* President Gunter Fritsch, State Prime Minister Matthias Platzeck and the Chairman of the Municipal Assembly Peter Schüler officially unveiled a signboard on the banks of the Havel River between Lange Brücke and the newly risen *Landtag* bearing the words "Otto Braun Square".

The project was successfully completed on 30 September 2013 with the display of a bust of Otto Braun for the new square and an accompanying publication detailing the life and times of Otto Braun.<sup>10</sup> The bust is a replica of the Otto Braun bust erected in the Otto Braun Hall of Berlin State Library Building on Potsdamer Strasse. Following the completion of the new square, the bust was installed there permanently in November 2016.

*Landtag* President Fritsch made the following comments about the idea of honoring Otto Braun by name: “For the open square created by the construction

of the new state parliament, there can be no more appropriate name than that of the great democrat Otto Braun. His life and work represents a major part of our democratic tradition which today we must once again defend against extremism from the Right. With its historical shell and modern interior, the new *Landtag* will act as the focus of parliamentary consensus for the *Land* as a whole and a point of attraction for visitors from near and far.”

---

<sup>10</sup> See Manfred Görtemaker (publisher): Otto Braun. Ein preußischer Demokrat (Otto Braun, a Prussian Democrat). Berlin 2014.

Published by: *Landtag* Brandenburg, Public Relations

Author: Katrin Rautenberg

Edition: 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewed and supplemented edition, February 2020

Photographs: *Landtag* Brandenburg (p. 2, 7, 8, 13, 17, 19, 20, 21);

Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin (p. 10);

Erik Kemnitz (cover photo);

Hans-Christian Schink (p. 18, 22)

Produced by: Bonifatius GmbH, Paderborn

This publication is published by *Landtag* Brandenburg as part of its parliamentary public relations work. It is available free of charge. It may not be resold. It must not be used for the purposes of an election campaign.







L A N D T A G  
B R A N D E N B U R G

**Landtag Brandenburg**


Alter Markt 1, 14467 Potsdam

Telephone 0331 966-0

Fax 0331 966-1210

[post@landtag.brandenburg.de](mailto:post@landtag.brandenburg.de)

[www.landtag.brandenburg.de](http://www.landtag.brandenburg.de)

 [twitter.com/Brandenburg\\_LT](https://twitter.com/Brandenburg_LT)