

The Stadium Becomes an Urban District – the City of Kaiserslautern Leads the Way

Kaiserslautern, Germany, April 21, 2022. The news that the Fritz Walter Stadium in Kaiserslautern could soon form the center of a new quarter in the city is exciting not just for soccer fans. This is because some of the space in and around the sports arena could also be put to good use when matches are not being played, such as for residential, shopping and working. Unparalleled in Germany, the concept is highly attractive for clubs, local authorities and investors. The Frankfurt team of Drees & Sommer SE, a Stuttgart-based consulting company specializing in construction and real estate, drew up a master plan for the new district on Betzenberg hill in Kaiserslautern. Workshops and events for citizens will be some of the ways in which the neighborhood will be developed further.



Will real life also be playing at this venue soon? A master plan positions the Fritz Walter Stadium at the center of an urban district. © Drees & Sommer SE

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Based on the repurposing options for the Fritz Walter Stadium, a multifunctional district could soon emerge on the Betzenberg, enhancing the venue in every respect. 'Tradition needs a future. By expanding use of the stadium site, we could create a place where not only FC Kaiserslautern plays, but also life itself,' says Dr. Klaus Weichel, Lord Mayor of the City of Kaiserslautern. According to the city's preliminary plans, the area around the stadium would include residential blocks with facilities for seniors, a day-care center for children and a medical center. Physical exercise also plays an important role: a *house of sports* will provide space for physiotherapy, sports schools, clubs, a sports academy, and events. A rehab center or yoga school would also be possible in the facility. Events space, a hotel and a spa are planned across from the stadium. Office space, multi-story parking garages and restaurants/cafés are also included in the plans for the new district. Multi-story apartments and town houses will provide living space on the edge of the neighborhood. Modern co-working spaces and startup locations could be realized in the south stand or in the box tower directly at the stadium. Additional container modules would provide short-term use at lower cost.



Room for creative ideas: the remodeling will create space for startup companies directly at the stadium.

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'The Fritz Walter Stadium has a lot of unused rooms and spaces, especially in the east and south stands. These do not affect the games or the spectator stands in any way,' explains Kaiserslautern's Lord Mayor.

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Dr. Stefan Weiler, Managing Director of the Kaiserslautern City and District Economic Development Corporation (WFK), says: 'To bring the future to Kaiserslautern, we need attractive spaces for creative ideas. This makes the stadium the ideal home for young companies, while the site offers opportunities for housing. A stadium is not like any other building. With this remodeling proposal, the city is positioning itself as a true innovator.'

Vibrant Districts Boost the Economy

Once implemented, the urban development planning in and around the stadium will not only revitalize the Betzenberg area, but also secure the stadium's economic viability and ease the financial burden on the local authority. Thomas Hengen, Managing Director Sport at 1. FC Kaiserslautern, comments: 'The pandemic alone has shown that too much economic dependence on spectator numbers in the stadium can put financial pressure on clubs. Nowadays, the high investment required for a stadium cannot always be covered if it is used solely for soccer matches, conferences, and other events. As a result, additional sources of income are a good way to ensure the future viability of the stadium.'

Frank Bornmann, Partner at Drees & Sommer SE and project leader at the company's office in Frankfurt am Main, adds: 'Costs that cannot be recovered through events become a burden on clubs and local authorities.' On behalf of the stadium company, he and his team are providing support for the master plan, which is intended to place the Betzenberg at the center of an urban district. 'The neighborhood concept and restructuring in the stadium area are almost essential for many clubs and local authorities to remain economically viable. Soccer alone is not enough – sports facilities can no longer exist in isolation.' And there is enormous potential for extending the sites: 98 stadiums with capacity for more than 15,000 people are currently spread across all German states.

The current master plan for Kaiserslautern envisages that future income from lettable space and rent will be used partly to recoup the expenses incurred in remodeling the site, marketing it and financing it. 'This repurposing creates financial options and leeway for us to support 1. FC Kaiserslautern in consolidating the club and its sporting future. We do not have these options in the current situation, either as a city or as a stadium company. Making commercial space available would bring additional money into the coffers in times of low rental income,' says Lord Mayor Dr. Klaus Weichel.



New housing, shopping and a *house of sports*: the new quarter on the Betzenberg hill will lack nothing. © Drees & Sommer SE

Focus on Climate and Quality of Life

The Stuttgart-based company Drees & Sommer has been involved in the neighborhood planning since 2018, with responsibility for designing the master plan. After initial market and location analyses, a team of experts from Real Estate Consulting as well as Sports and Entertainment defined a development concept and drew up a business plan for the city. The master plan includes a comprehensive energy concept to provide environmentally friendly energy for the entire site, by using renewable energy sources. In addition, energy storage systems are planned for use within the district. Specific measures such as mobility hubs in the neighborhood will seamlessly link modes of transport, making mobility sustainable and geared towards future needs. Various means of transport, such as car sharing, bike sharing or city bus lines, will offer residents alternatives to private cars. A water management plan with local wastewater treatment options rounds off the concept.

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Citizens Involved in Shaping their Neighborhood

Existing real estate and structures provide the starting point for developing the site. The next step is to develop the topics of society; energy and climate; mobility and transport; real estate and resources; digital transformation; and efficient Infrastructure in expert workshops with stakeholders and other persons involved. This will include dealing with the individual development modules, adapting the development plan, and specifying the plans for repurposing the Fritz Walter Stadium.

The results from the workshops will serve as a basis for citizen involvement: in an initial event in early summer, citizens will be invited to actively contribute their ideas to the development process and to be involved in shaping the neighborhood development. 'Social aspects are at the core of vibrant urban development. To create a neighborhood for all, citizen participation in its development must be enabled and encouraged,' explains Frank Bornmann, Drees & Sommer's head of project.

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