



## Berlin's Urban Development: Plans and Actions of the Red-Red-Green Coalition

One year after the Berlin state election and the subsequent formation of the Red-Red-Green coalition, we looked into some of the investment areas prioritised by the current government that could have a considerable impact on Berlin's urban structure. The areas are the expansion of public transport, creation of a new cycling network, new housing development and expansion of technological infrastructure. Based on the plans defined in the coalition agreement as well as the concrete actions that have been taken since then, we would like to see what changes could take place in foreseeable future.

### New Housing Development

Lack of housing is one of top concerns of the Berlin government, whose housing programme is geared towards creating more social dwellings.

The six state-owned housing associations are required to build 30,000 dwellings between 2016 and 2021, 50% of which will be allocated to social housing (with a net rent of maximum 6.50 €/sqm).

With respect to urban improvement, 11 concrete projects are underway that will create new city quarters with a total of 37,000 new housing units in foreseeable future. These major developments will affect the following districts:

- Pankow: *Blankenburger Süden* (ca. 70 ha), *Buch* (ca. 54 ha) and *Michelangelostraße* (ca. 30 ha)
- Neukölln/Buckow: *Buckower Felder* (ca. 10 ha)
- Spandau: *Wasserstadt Oberhavel* (ca. 76 ha), *Gartenfeld* (ca. 34 ha)
- Mitte: *Europacity/Lehrterstraße* (ca. 44 ha)
- Treptow-Köpenick: *Johannistal/Adlershof* (ca. 20 ha) and *Köpenick* (ca. 50 ha)
- Steglitz-Zehlendorf (*Lichterfelde Süd*, ca. 96 ha.)
- Reinickendorf: *Schumacher Quartier* (ca. 48 ha)

The development projects *Michelangelostraße* and *Schumacher Quartier* are intended to be model projects for ecological building, social mix and innovative concepts. Planning works for the listed projects are supposed to be finalised in the current ruling period as well as the beginning of their

implementation. More locations for new building projects will be defined by the coalition.

An exceptional and major project is the long-planned redevelopment of the Tegel Airport into a research and industrial park, the *Urban Tech Republic*. Although the coalition is pursuing the closure of the airport, it is now not sure how the pro-Tegel majority in the September referendum would affect its future.

Improvements can be expected in the much-frequented and currently quite unsightly area around *Zoo Station*. The *Hardenbergplatz* in front of the station will be redesigned for a better quality of stay, while the Deutsche Bahn is currently redeveloping the station itself.

### A Green, Sustainable and Smart City

The senate has a vision of a green and sustainable city, which does not only imply sustainable building and mobility concepts, but also has quite a literal meaning – a city with plenty of green space, green housing facades and roofs.

According to the coalition agreement, unused areas should be converted into green facilities, existing parks improved and extended, sports and leisure facilities should be promoted. Denser construction concepts should be implemented to leave more open spaces and some areas to be turned into low traffic areas such as the *Historical Mitte* (a plan in accordance with

the public vote for this area) as well as the area around the *City Schloss/Humboldtforum*.

The coalition is pursuing the goal of cleaning up the Spree Canal in association with the non-profit organisation "*Flussbad*" (River Pool) that is aiming to turn part of the canal in central Mitte into a swimming area\*.

Concrete steps have been taken by the senate for the vision Berlin as a smart city. These include the finalisation of the concept *CityLAB*, a place where the authorities, business and science will be working out tangible solutions for the challenges of Berlin's status as a smart city.

The Senate has also enabled the establishment of the German Internet Institute in Berlin. Two digital transformation hubs have been opened – the *Einstein Center Digital Future* and the *Fraunhofer Leistungszentrum für Digitale Vernetzung* (Performance Center for Digital Network).

Further plans, as described in the coalition agreement, include the implementation of a fibre network, which is a priority to provide startups with sufficient infrastructure, the digitalisation and internalisation of the economy, including first steps towards an e-government. Further, the expansion of wifi throughout the city for open public access and upgrading the technology to 5G-internet.

Implementation of sustainable technologies further include an improved electric charging network with an installation of 1,000 new charging stations for electric vehicles, in cooperation with businesses by the end of 2018.

The coalition is also working on a master plan "The Solar Capital" that should result in a concrete action plan such as the assessment of all public buildings in term of their compatibility for roofmounted solar panels, as already specified in the coalition agreement.

The long overdue digitalisation of the municipal services has also been kicked off – first steps have been implemented with the online service for new company registrations.

### Huge Investments in Transport Infrastructure

The transportation programme is a major investment of the governing coalition. Its vision is to provide a significantly improved and eco-friendly connectivity throughout the city by extending the public transport infrastructure and creating a new cycling path network with long-distance "bike highways". The coalition also plans to promote electrical mobility by expanding the network of charging stations

for e-cars and by incentivating taxi companies to convert their fleets into electrically operated.

Car drivers, however, will face some difficulties. The government plans to enforce parking fees in the entire inner city area (legal conditions are yet to be evaluated). New speed limit (Tempo-30) areas will be implemented, whereby some main roads could be affected. The federal project to extend the city highway A100 to Berlin-Lichtenberg will not be pursued in the current term of office.

On the positive side, there are major development projects, that have the potential to significantly improve Berlin's transport system.

The tram network is set to be largely expanded by several new tram routes and stations.

These new connections should already go into operation by 2021:

- Hauptbahnhof – U Turmstraße
- S Schöneweide – Adlershof
- Rahnsdorfer Straße – S Mahlsdorf (extension to a double-rack railway to improve frequency)

Construction works for five further routes will start before 2021:

- Alexanderplatz – Kulturforum – Kleistpark – Rathaus Steglitz
- Turmstraße – Mierendorffplatz
- S+U-Bahnhof Warschauer Straße – Hermannplatz
- Blankenburger Pflasterweg – Heinersdorf
- Pankow – Heinersdorf – Weißensee

These routes are set to be built in the medium-term (construction start before 2026):

- S-Bahnhof Schöneweide – Sonnenallee – Hermannplatz – Potsdamer Platz
- Potsdamer Platz – Wittenbergplatz/Zoologischer Garten
- Mierendorffplatz – Jungfernheide – TXL airport/ Development area Urban Tech Republic
- Pankow – Wollankstraße – Turmstraße – Mierendorffplatz – Luisenplatz
- (Alexanderplatz-)Spittelmarkt – Lindenstraße – Hallesches Tor – Mehringdamm
- Johannisthal – U-Bahnhof Zwickauer Damm

The senate is also pushing for a faster development of the new S-Bahn regional rail service S21 (a north-south connection of the *Ringbahn* surrounding the inner city) developed by Deutsche Bahn. The implementation of the first part of the overall structure

\* The project is supported by the Federal Ministry for the Environment and Berlin's Senate for Department for Urban Development and the Environment

linking S-Wedding and S-Westhafen to Hauptbahnhof has been facing unexpected difficulties, the second and the third sections, Hauptbahnhof – Potsdamer Platz and Potsdamer Platz – Yorckstraße, were put on hold. The Berlin government is asking for a resumption of the halted projects as well as for keeping the initially planned, but later abolished construction of a new station, *Perleberger Brücke*, in the first section (see more about Project S21 in our [September 2015 newsletter](#)).

For Berlins bicycle-affine population (over 70% of Berliners have a bike and over 10% cycle to work every day), the senate has set a vision of a vast cycling path network, comprising a total of 100 kilometres of long-distance routes (bike "highways") – minimum five kilometres long, 3-4 metres wide, and separate from the car traffic, which will offer cyclists direct and fast links from outer districts to the inner city. Additionally, the coalition is planning to create new and improve existing cycling paths. Routes along all main roads will be required to have a minimum two metres width and, where possible, be physically separated from car and pedestrian traffic. Critical areas with a high risk of accidents, e.g. corners on intersections, will be redesigned. Furthermore, the government wants to provide cyclists with parking stations at main interchanges such as *Zoo Station*, *Gesundbunnen*, *Ostkreuz*, *Südkreuz*, and *Hauptbahnhof*. So far the vision. The coalition wants to carry out feasibility studies, planning, as well as initial construction works in the current tenure. The senate has also already started re-designing some of the intersections for an improved safety.

To date, the authorities have approved the implementation of 47 new and the renovation of 39 existing cycle paths. Eight long-distance routes\* (from initially 30) have been preselected and ranked in terms of their potentials. The first route (Neukölln – Treptower Park along the A113 and the extension of A100) will undergo a feasibility study this year, the remaining seven to follow. Only indications regarding possible realisation dates are missing.

Last but not least, the coalition wants to complete the BER airport as soon as possible and put it into operation", the agreement says. However, no new opening dates have been released to date - nearly one year after the paper was published. As already mentioned, the future of Tegel Airport is currently unclear.

## Conclusion

No doubt that the programmes on coalition's agenda, if and once implemented, will greatly improve the overall livability of the German capital and particularly appreciate the affected districts. Most of the projects

have long been overdue such as the creation of new housing and technological infrastructure, while others are welcome extras for considerable upgrades.

What is also reassuring is to see that concrete actions have already been taken in some cases and time lines have been defined for certain projects. The coalition promises "speedy" actions (a frequently appearing key word in the coalition agreement), e. g. relating to bike and transport infrastructure, development of city places and other plans.

On the other hand experience has demonstrated how protracted and tedious such development projects can move forward (most famous example being the BER airport). This makes it hard to believe that changes can be brought about as fast as the Berlin government suggests. We wonder, for example: can the first new tram routes really go into operation in less than four years from now? While we are looking forward to the potentially transformative changes, we keep observing the progress with a good amount of scepticism.

**Please note that the contents of this newsletter have been researched and written according to the best of our knowledge; however they are in no way to be accepted as a legal advice or suggestion. Therefore, we exclude any liability.**

## Sources

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\*An image of the eight routes can be seen [in this article](#) by Berliner Morgenpost