

Saarpark, Merzig (D) - Competitive multiple commission

project	Multiple commissioning in the cooperative process to the concept development for the functional strengthening and connection of the inner city via the city park with the opposite river side (sports and leisure park)
awarding authority	City of Merzig (GER)
award	2nd prize + project commission for parts of the 'citypark'
services	WW+, Esch-sur-Alzette (LUX) / Trier (GER) urban design
open space bridge eng.	in cooperation with Ernst + Partner, Trier (GER) Ney & Partners, Brussels (B)
rendering	Stube 13, Zürich (CH)
facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- two-phase citizen participation procedure as part of multi-stage project commission- design and functional upgrade of city park as well as riverbank areas- concept of a bridge for pedestrians and cyclists across the river Saar- further development of the sport and leisure park- connection to the inner city in terms of urban planning/open space planning
dates and numbers	
total area	33 ha
competition phase	05/2015 - 10/2015

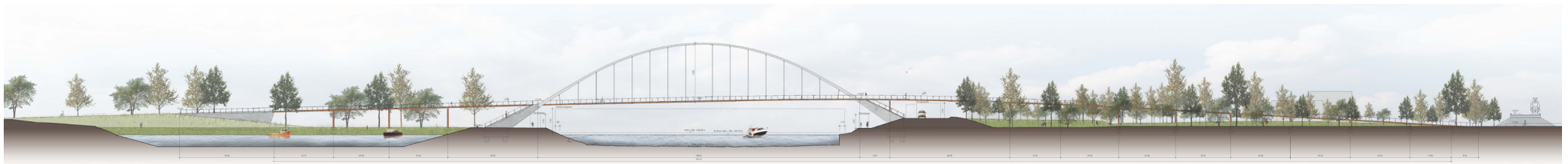
The new overall concept Merzig Saarmitte Experience aims to connect Merzig's urban core, currently isolated through the strong barrier of the river Saar, to the area on the opposite side of the river with its popular sport and leisure options. The Saar and its riverbank areas will thus once again be part of the urban centre and transformed from a segregating to a connecting element. A "red pathway" for pedestrians and cyclists, which incorporates the city's surroundings and connects existing open spaces to one another, allows for a merging and functional expansion of the two formerly separated city halves. The pathway follows a seemingly natural course through the urban landscape and manages to break through hard barriers, such as the railway line and the main road.

The overriding urban planning concept

The existing advantages of the city of Merzig, such as the short distances within the district town, will be enhanced and interconnected along a 'red pathway' for pedestrians and cyclists, running from east to west, resulting in a 'compact city'. As such, the inner city, the city park with its town hall, the Saar with its riverbank areas and the sport and leisure area are to grow and merge into a large centre – with the city centre of Merzig becoming Merzig Saarmitte. The pathway follows a seemingly natural course through the marked-out open space corridor of the urban morphology and in doing so strings together the open spaces and squares. This pathway runs not just from bridgehead to bridgehead, but through the entire city, thus also tying in with the naturally formed city artery of the Seffersbach. This corridor allows bottleneck situations such



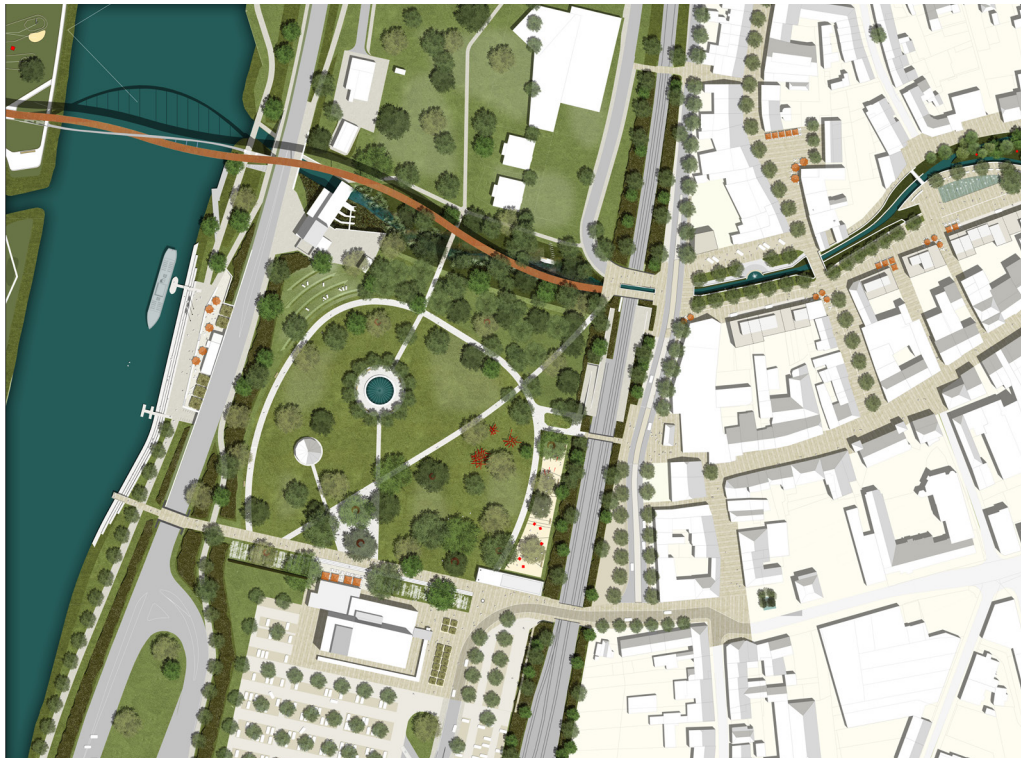
site plan



intersection West-Ost

as the dense Halfenhaus development and the extremely tight passage underneath the railway line to be avoided. To optimise these areas would be very costly and technically elaborate. Very little effort, however, would be associated with incorporating a safe crossing point in the middle of the road. The open square 'Am Viehmarkt' intuitively leads the public to the pathway. A key element of this synthesis is the new pedestrian and cycling bridge. This provides not only a quick route between the two city parts but also – thanks to its location and height – a myriad of outlooks and insights into the surrounding city and natural landscape. The intuitive use of this pathway allows visitors to the Saarmitte to easily access the area. In the inner city area, the new bridge ties in with the meandering Seffersbach, continuing its gentle flow along the northern part of the city park over the river Saar to the sport and leisure park and even beyond to the western lying city areas (Hilbringen, Seitert, Ballern). Here too the

strong barrier provided by the motorway is minimised. The pathway is completed by the connecting main routes either side of the Saar, which will be upgraded, in parts complemented and enhanced through a series of new functions and attractions in terms of leisure, recreation and nature options. The result is the development of a complementarity between the sport and leisure park and the city park as well as the inner city, all of which complement one another in their functions without competing with one another. They satisfy both day-to-day requirements as well as demands for specific activity and leisure options, which given their tourism appeal will also attract cross-town visitors. This new access will form a strong backbone for the city of Merzig and non-vehicle traffic and foster positive interaction between the city areas.



site plan, city park

Corridor decision and course

In addition to the already mentioned structural restrictions surrounding the pedestrian zone, the course of the corridor emerges from the urban morphology, characterised by the open space of the existing water flow. The main bridge including the walkways naturally blends in with the cityscape and incorporates the naturally curved form of the Seffersbach.

The city park

The city park. Merzig's city park is already highly sought after for its rest and recreation benefits and will to the greatest extent possible remain unchanged in its structure. It will be carefully rejuvenated and functionally strengthened in parts through small-scale interventions. A few areas require restructuring:

1. The area around the town hall: Until now, the town hall has not been obviously associated with the city park. This is to be changed through an integration process on both a design and functional level. The integration with the park will take place primarily through a spacious step installation, which will tie into the upstream promenade and provide an open access to the park. The promenade also plays an important connecting role between the riverbank of the Saar and the urban core.
2. The area around the Seffersbach: Since the new bridge ties in with this area, there is an opportunity to highlight the already existing plantings, the stream and the pump station through a 'treetop track', which can be experienced from a height. The area will be designed in close harmony with nature and be more of an introverted space. The pathway links to the nearby stadium, camping site, canoe club and animal park at the Blättelbornweiher will be further enhanced.
3. The eastern park area will see the creation of a generous sand playground for Merzig's youngest citizens, fronted by a new city park 'portal building' with information for the city's residents and visitors as well as accessible toilet facilities. It forms a distinct gateway into as well as out of the park.
4. Newly installed turf steps between the pump station and the park resolve the height difference and are a welcome invitation to linger. At the same time, they form a harmonious spatial conclusion to the city park. From both a functional and design point of view, the existing bastion (with its former kiosk) has been deemed hardly worthy of preservation. This area will nevertheless be separated due to a closure of the L174, so as to remain a peaceful place to linger.
5. In a bid to supply additional places to linger right inside the city park, 'boomerangs' (seating crescents) are provided under the trees. This sees the old tree population merging with modern seating architecture in a welcome invitation to relax in the shade.

The eastern Saar bank

On this side of the city park, the 'urban terrace' featuring steps leads to the water, encouraging residents and visitors to rest, relax and watch the world go by. Here the river Saar comes to life and becomes accessible to people. This is also where the passenger vessels dock Drinks and snacks are available from mobile 'food boxes' which, in the event of a flood, can simply be temporarily moved.

Downstream, urban elements are found in the form of simple smooth surfaces that can be used for numerous activities. In addition, the 'quay squares', embedded approximately 10cm into the ground, can be flooded in winter and used as a navigable ice surface. They turn the bank into an exciting meeting point for active people and passers-by.

The sport and leisure park

Already now, this park-like area boasts very attractive leisure facilities such as a marina, swimming pool, tennis courts, performing arts tent and recently established climbing park. In order to further enhance the connection between these particular elements and to incorporate them in an overall programme context, the services on offer need to be appropriately expanded and the surrounding natural space adapted. In the north, four lakes are created, three of which are designed in close harmony with nature. Wooden footbridges allow for newly emerging biotopes to be discovered and individual decks at the water's edge provide an invitation to catch some sunrays, relax and watch the world go by. Two additional commercial ventures complete the picture: the stilts hotel, already in the planning phase, and a wake boarding zone on the largest of the new natural lakes – opposite Merzig's baths. The sport and leisure offers will furthermore be complemented by the following attractions, which are free whenever possible and made from natural elements:

- A nature playground consisting of a small cableway garden with three cableways at different height levels, a water playground, in which children can play with water without any risk of danger, and the cross-soccer-golf field, in which golf balls are replaced by a football.
- A pump track course: featuring earth mounds for ultimate biking fun.
- An expanded outer cycle path network with parallel running track for cycling and running enthusiasts.

The western Saar bank

The peninsula upstream of the marina is deliberately uncoupled from the cycle path and designed in harmony with nature. Along this path, a work of art and a square provide a visual link to the opposite bank of the Saar. Along the Saar, in the area of the bridge pillar, seating blocks will be established close to the bank, inviting people to linger. There will also be barbecue and picnic opportunities.