

Assessing the development potential of Sihlcity's surroundings



The area surrounding the Sihlcity Shopping and Adventure Center in Zurich has changed dramatically since the Center's opening in 2007. In light of these changes, Sihlcity's owners commissioned EBP to examine and assess the development potential of the Center's surrounding neighborhoods with an eye to devising an appropriate response.

Back around the year 2000, the site of the former Sihl River Paper Mill in Zürich-Wiedikon marked the very border of metropolitan Zurich. The Sihlcity Center opened its doors at the site of the former paper mill in 2007, essentially establishing itself as Switzerland's first urban entertainment center. In addition to providing a place of employment for around 2,300 individuals, the Sihlcity Center currently attracts around 24,000 visitors every day.

Repurposing to account for development changes

Since the opening of Sihlcity, metropolitan Zurich has expanded well beyond the Sihlcity location. Entirely new city districts have sprung up (e.g. the Hürlimann district, with its new spa, office buildings and residential buildings, and the development of the Binzallee site), existing districts have undergone renewal and densification (e.g. the Binz Commercial Zone and the Quad at the nexus of Manessestrasse, the SZU railway and Sihlcity) and traditional locations have been converted to serve new purposes (e.g. Manesse Plaza, Waffen Plaza, etc.). Moreover, development at the Green City site in Manegg has significantly changed the cityscape south of Sihlcity.

The members of the Sihlcity Owners Association (SOA)

Client

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Facts

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Project Country Switzerland

Contact persons

Sarah Fuchs
sarah.fuchs@ebp.ch

Debora Heitz
debora.heitz@ebp.ch

responded to this new environment by commissioning the “Sihlcity 2020” study, whose aim was to evaluate the public spaces around Sihlcity and identify urban renewal measures targeting these spaces, for instance, measures designed to better link the center to its surrounding districts. EBP supported the study by completing an assessment of the surrounding area’s development potential.

From an island on the outskirts to city maker

In the context of our assessment of the development potential, we examined the ways in which Sihlcity is currently connected to its surrounding neighborhoods. Using this as a basis, we were then able to sketch development scenarios for the spaces in the immediate vicinity of the center so as to enable the adventure center to move beyond its existence as an “island on the outskirts” to assume the role of the city maker. In the context of sketching these scenarios, we focused on the links between Sihlcity and key locations in its immediate vicinity and beyond. We also examined the recent structural and developmental history at specific circumscribed locations in the surrounding area. In light of the high degree of spatial and morphological fragmentation, we broke down the surrounding area into five sub-districts to facilitate our work.

Highly granular data published by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office enabled us to represent structural and developmental features relating to the area’s residents, employees and housing units.

Based on these examinations and on-location walk-throughs, we were able to identify and prioritize approaches to rejuvenating Sihlcity’s surroundings and strengthening the “Sihlcity” brand. To account for future developments, we also highlighted uncertainties and remaining procedural tasks.