

The extension «Haubentaucher» of the historical Federal Archives in Bern is conceived as an engagement with the growing complexity of our urban and functional landscape.

As a result of the rejection of the proposed location on the pragmatically influenced outskirts of Bern, the Federal Archives, as the new site, undergoes a reactivation and intensification of its inherent identity. Existing underground volumes are repurposed and expanded, and historical spaces are reoccupied.

In contrast to the given perimeter, the extension of the historical Federal Archives is situated at a central location in the midst of a district, which, through transformative focuses on sports and culture, aims to achieve citywide and regional significance. A key neighbor is the Museum Island, whose visitor numbers are expected to rise to one million per year through urban planning extensions. These projects are part of a comprehensive redesign of the adjacent Kirchenfeldstrasse, which redefines public spaces and traffic areas while improving the accessibility of the archive.

A core component of the fully automated archive, which is to be understood as a subterranean structure, is the orogenesis from a concealed underground form, with its high points reaching into the urban space.

With the creation of the walkable roof, which grows out of the surroundings and culminates in an isolated plateau, the building becomes a buffer between the adjacent main traffic axes as well as a public center for the institution. This independent space serves equally the Federal Archives, the competition commission, visitors, and residents of the district. The access to the roof is via ramps, and the heights are adapted to the entrances or window openings of the surrounding buildings. The ground floor of the existing building is made accessible without barriers.

The structure is based on a folding principle of reinforced concrete, which, through its folding, becomes largely self-supporting. The reduced number of supports allows for an efficient use of space for the fully automated archive system «PowerCube», which is particularly suitable due to its high density and its ability to flexibly adjust to different ceiling heights. Above ground, the folded form becomes a space for greenery by being filled with soil.