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## THE SITE OF CANADA'S EMBASSY IN BERLIN

*In April 2005, Canada will officially open a new building designed to house Canada's Embassy in Berlin, Germany. Located in the heart of the city, the Embassy has been designed and built to reflect Germany's importance to Canada as a G8 partner and a central player in the European Union.*

The site of Canada's new Embassy in Germany is rich in historical and modern-day significance. Anchoring the northwest corner of the newly reconstructed Leipziger Platz, the building literally bridges the wall that separated East and West Berlin following World War II. In fact, a remnant of the old wall, now plastered with graffiti on both the East and West sides, is still visible just a few metres away from the front door of the Embassy.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the country's reunification in 1990, plans began for the rebuilding of the historic city centre. Leipziger Platz is now re-emerging along the lines of its original 18th-century creation as an octagonal entryway to the heart of Berlin. Canada's Embassy is situated between these two historic city squares. Destroyed in World War II, Leipziger Platz subsequently became part of the infamous "no-man's land" that separated East and West Berlin between 1961 and 1989.

In 1993, Hilmer & Sattler Architects designed an award-winning vision of the future of Leipziger/Potsdamer Platz. This design retained the original layout of both Leipziger and Potsdamer Platz. Hilmer & Sattler's vision for the area was to build open and freely arranged structures like the Kulturforum in the West, and the more geometrically controlled, dense urban fabric of the 18th century in the East.

Canada wanted its Embassy to contribute to the bridging role of Leipziger Platz. Its "Northwest Passage" enables pedestrian access from Ebertstrasse to Leipziger Platz, while providing a window into Canada through the architecture and materials used in its construction and the plasma screens positioned at eye level throughout the passageway. At the same time, the building conforms to the city architects' master area plan, which establishes guidelines for the form and height of the construction, as well as the appearance of the façade.

The design for the new Leipziger Platz means that the Canadian Embassy enjoys a strategic location in the heart of Berlin, with views onto both a park-like setting and a dynamic urban scene, including a sight line to the historic Reichstag and Brandenburg Gate. It is adjacent to the major commercial and public transit hub represented by Potsdamer Platz, which includes several interconnecting subway lines. The Embassy building contributes to the renewal of Berlin, while expressing its presence in an imaginative and contemporary manner.

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