

FESTHALLE BERN



EXECUTION

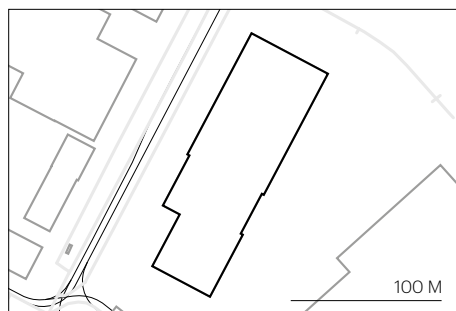
2022 – 2025

Papiermühlestrasse 50
3014 BernNEW MULTIPURPOSE HALL
FOR BERNEXPO

A modern flagship venue for live events and a showcase for energy efficiency.

HISTORY

The BERNEXPO exhibition grounds in the east of the city of Bern are among the largest of their kind in Switzerland. The site's eight exhibition halls spread over two building complexes, with around 40,000 m² of event space in 22 halls with 100,000 m² of outdoor space. With a unique range of exhibition spaces, congress rooms, multipurpose halls and outdoor spaces, BERNEXPO can market, develop and facilitate the very best live events. The Festhalle (or Festival Hall) on the BERNEXPO site, built in 1948 as a temporary structure, had



PRINCIPAL
Messepark Bern AG
3000 Bern 22

USER/OPERATOR
BERNEXPO AG
3000 Bern 22

TOTAL CONTRACTOR
HRS Real Estate AG
3073 Gümligen

ARCHITECT
Arge MRH/IAAG
c/o matti ragaz hitz
architekten ag
3097 Liebfeld

CIVIL ENGINEER
Schnetzer Puskas
Ingenieure AG
3011 Bern

HVACSE ENGINEER
Amstein + Walther
Bern AG
3001 Bern

BUILDING PHYSICS
Kopitsis Bauphysik AG
5610 Wohlen

**LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECT**
Klötzli Friedli
Landschaftsarchitekten AG
3006 Bern



come to the end of its lifespan. Between August 2022 and March 2025, general contractor HRS Real Estate AG replaced the old hall with a state-of-the-art new build under the Minergie-P energy efficiency standard.

CONCEPT AND ARCHITECTURE

The new building has a total area of 9,400 m² across three main spaces: the multipurpose hall (which, like the new building as a whole, is referred to as the Festhalle or Festival Hall), the Cube congress centre and the Foyer. The flexible multipurpose hall can host large conferences and cultural events such as concerts and theatrical presentations with up to 9,000 visitors. The architects have created a readily legible entity made up of three parts. With volumes reduced to an essential minimum, the event hall and the congress centre allow for independent usage. They are connected by a shared foyer within the inviting shelter of a pillared hall. This spacious hall



embeds the new congress and event centre more firmly in the surrounding district. The foyer within this hall is a highly public space which also forms the entrance to the exhibition grounds. It simultaneously connects and separates the different uses of the congress centre and event hall. This volume has a homogeneous shell with varying degrees of transparency.

A covered walkway extends more than 500 metres around the hall and provides a playful backdrop for outdoor events. This results in 70 column bays that recall Bern's famous arcades. The little-used area Messeplatz Süd comes to life thanks to a water feature with 20 jets, lending added value to the district.

CHALLENGES

The project proved to be extremely complex. The hall conceals one of the largest and most advanced event technology systems, which includes a 150-m² LED wall, the largest permanent LED screen of any Swiss congress centre, 27-metre screens and height-adjustable stages. Three quarters of the indoor hall areas are covered with sound-absorbing surfaces. The 70 chain motors of the hall roof enable super-quick installation of over 320 tonnes of event technology. HRS Real Estate AG drew on its experience to navigate the complicated logistics, and ensured that the public trade fair BEA 2024 went ahead despite ongoing construction work. HRS Real Estate AG again demonstrated great sensitivity in its collaboration with politicians, authorities and the public. The general contractor is proud to announce that 90 percent of the participating companies are from the local region.



ENERGY CONCEPT AND SUSTAINABILITY

The new Festhalle is setting benchmarks for energy efficiency within the trade fair landscape. The new building meets the strict requirements of the Minergie-P® standard and operates without fossil fuels. Heating and cooling is generated on the roof through a reversible heating/cooling system that uses the natural refrigerant propane. The photovoltaic system on the roof has an output of 300 kWp. Through an innovative sanitary concept, water from the sanitary flushing units is used to water the trees on the forecourt.

The new Festhalle is also a flagship project in terms of component recycling. More than 55 tonnes of dismantled steel beams were reused, saving 22 tonnes of CO₂. The client was inspired by the circular economy project 'Reuse of Steel Sections' carried out by the Verband für Nachhaltiges Wirtschaften (öbu); HRS Real Estate AG assisted with the task of dismantling the steel beams. The proportion of green spaces has more than doubled. The plane trees on Guisanplatz and the avenue of trees along Papiermühlestrasse were retained. Forty-four trees that had to make way for the new building were replaced. To further offset this loss, 15 percent of the perimeter area was designed to be near-natural; another contribution to biodiversity is the extensive roof greening with exclusively native species.

PROJECT DATA

Total costs (CHF)	approx. 110 Mio
Site area	39,028 m²
Gross floor area	21,529 m²
SIA building volume	179,026 m³

