## The "Green L"

Student-council-project: design of the schoolyard at the Leibniz – Gymnasium

Entry for European Bauhaus Prizes 2023



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The "Green L" | Leibniz-Gymnasium, Breddestraße 21, 45894 Gelsenkirchen | Bartels & Klang GbR Innenarchitektur, Ludwig-Erhard-Str. 5, 45891 Gelsenkirchen



About us:

We are members of the Leibniz-Gymnasium school community which is located in Gelsenkirchen - Buer (North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany).

Subsequently, our initiative is led and organized by students that were elected by the school community. These dedicated students have made it their mission not only to stand for the interests and concerns of the school community but also to execute the student bodies wishes through the support of guidance counsellors as well as, in this case, numerous parent representatives.

Our current project evolves around the design and embellishment of our existing schoolyard:

"Our goal is to modify a schoolyard into a place that the entire school community can benefit from. It is important for the school community that the schoolyard enriches and enhances school life!"

= Unsere Schule, Quelle: Google maps



To achieve this, an internal school survey for all students to participate in concerning the hopes and wishes for the new schoolyard was introduced and later on evaluated by the student council in 2021. Based on these results, we are now focusing on the following aspects for the schoolyard design:

In the near future, the word sustainability will be prioritised! Even though our schoolyard resembles a huge concrete desert at the moment it has great potential to be transformed into something exciting:

Our schoolyard surrounds our open concrete area on two connecting sides, shaping an L-Form at the top. Accordingly, our project is called "The Green L" and refers to the naming of the school after Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.



To give nature its place and to make it tangible, the paved ground will be broken up by planted

trees. This will help to unseal the area, to zone it and to provide natural shade. In addition, seating will be integrated so that students feel invited to linger and interact with each other. These seating arrangements or as we call them "green and blue classrooms" shall be utilized on a daily basis and incorporated in the day-to-day school life.

Opportunities for outdoor exercise through climbing structures are also planned.

Moreover, a snack garden with local plants and a bee-friendly flower meadow with insect hotels are part of the environmentally friendly concept. This also includes birdhouses, which have already been painted by a few voluntary students.

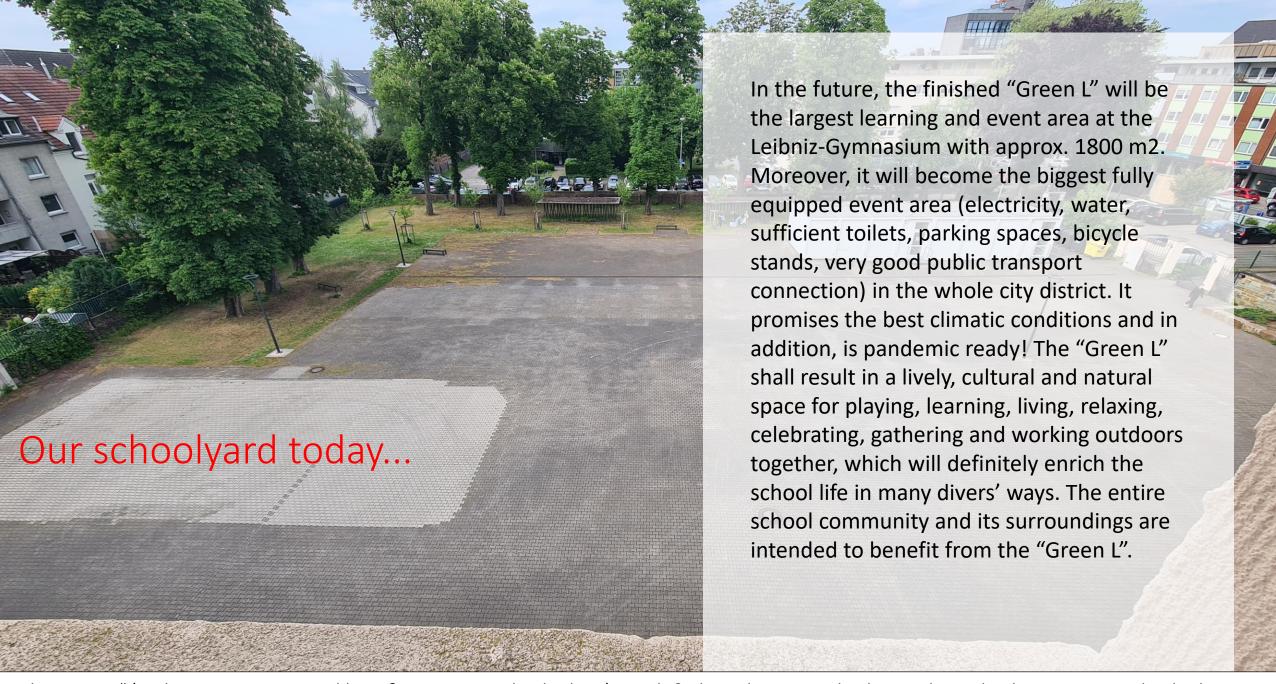


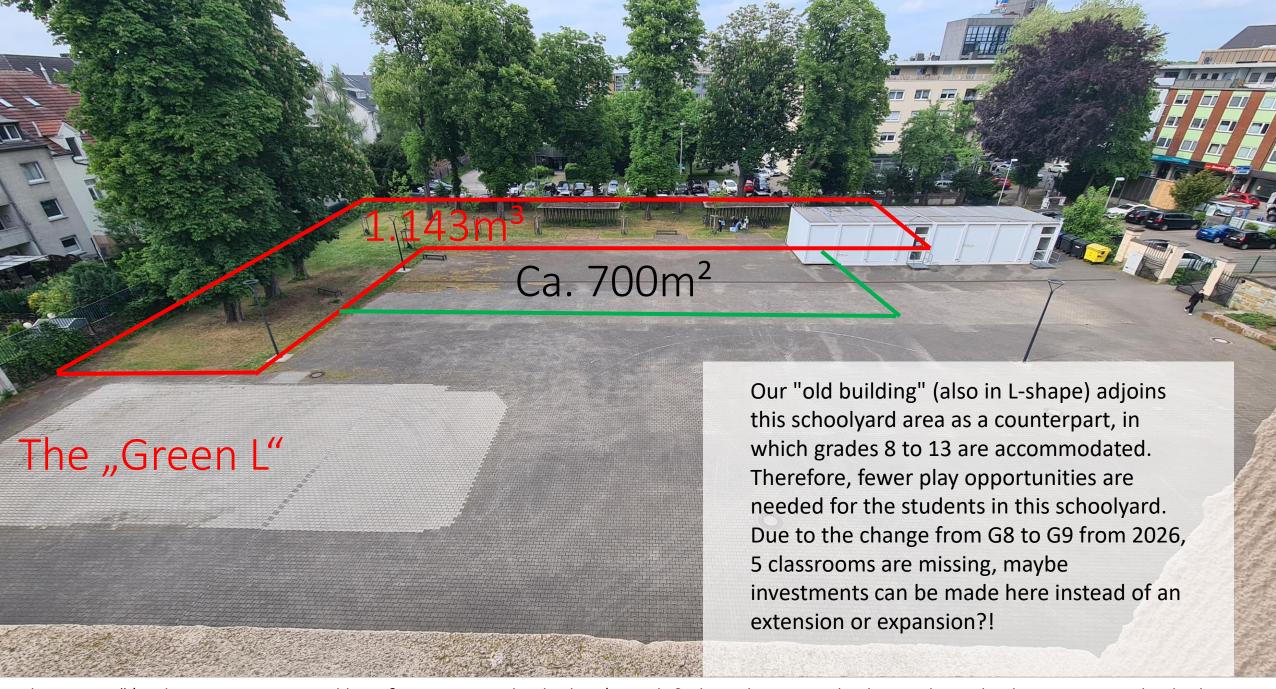
Our school with currently a little over 1000 students and almost 80 teachers and its location right in the city centre "in the middle of Buer" is a place in which people of diverse cultures clash together and encounter with each other, which signifies our humble community. Due to our schools' special location next to the art museum, surrounded by residential area and being located by the shopping streets, the schoolyard has always been used as an "inner-city walk through zone". Thus, we are accustomed to neighbourly encounters and would like to further enrich this bond. Therefore, by introducing the idea of a "local community" we would open up our place to the public in order to invite everyone to linger but also to offer a space for events organized by local communities and businesses.



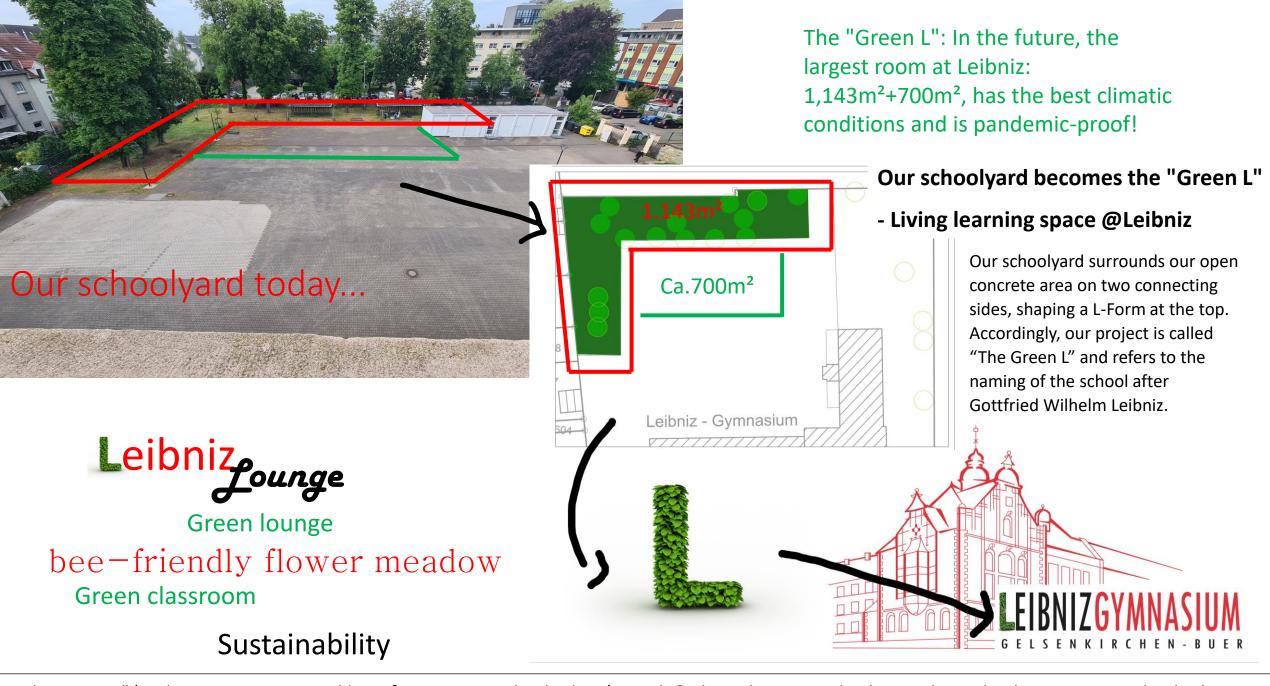
In the sense of the art museum, we would like to be a part of the so-called "cultural mile" and enhance the cultural area, which according to the city plan (urban development concept) of Gelsenkirchen and the master plan "Center Gelsenkirchen-Buer" (Domplatte to City Hall) the Leibniz-Gymnasium is not yet included in.

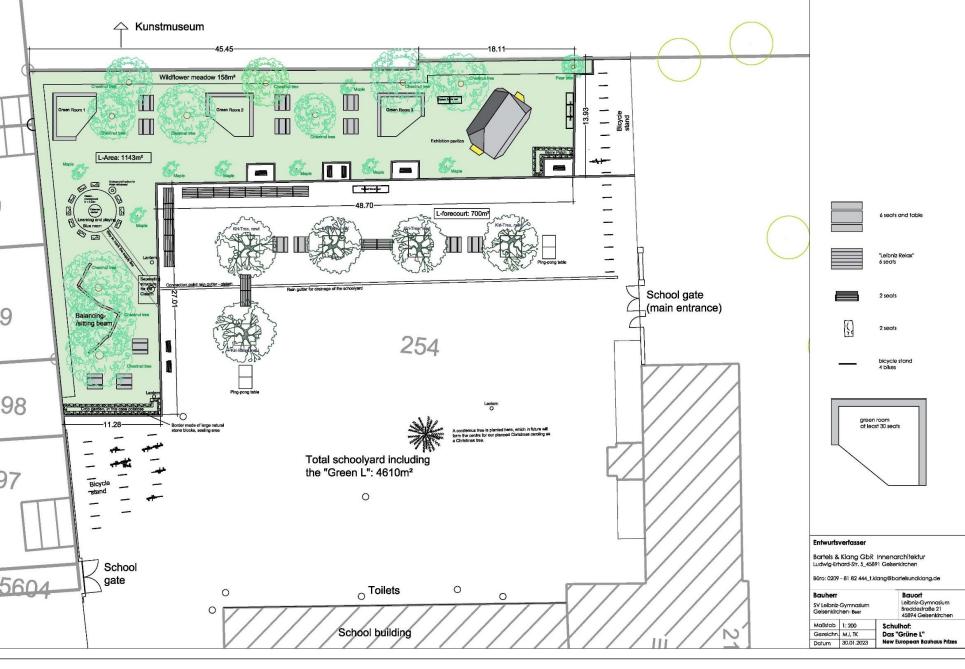
A conscious interaction with our environment, i.e. with our fellow human beings and nature, is a particularly important matter in our hearts. Apart from our broad school curriculums and profiles (MINT, bilingual branch, numerous extra curricular activities/competitions etc.) we also offer our students a lot of room for individual development.





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Our mainconcerns are:

• Experience of design and quality for all:

To get rid of the supposedly practical and low-maintenance surfaces that are not only harmful to the climate as heat reservoirs but also ugly.

• Conceptual design work:

The "L" as a basic shape and recurring element not only stands out in terms of its strong design language but is also ideally suited as an architectural Element (in terms of surface area, seating and tree arrangement) for encounters and cooperative togetherness.

Our schoolyard should be designed as an "omnipresent design for all" to be experienced with all senses. It should be constructed by closely bonding it to nature, with many opportunities for communicative exchanges and for gathering experiences through a variety of seating and creative occasions as a performance venue for projects.

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- Our challenge was to create an idyllic place that can withstand vandalism and desolation in its solid base, something that is weather resistant and thus durable and not too high maintenance for the city. In addition, it has protected areas for animals despite the frequent use. For this purpose, natural stones are being placed, which matches the used stone of our old building, in order to create a connection in the design.
- In our everyday life, our "Green L" is a varied place. However, different areas allow for individual uses, such as teaching several classes parallel to each other or even to assemble whole school grades (at the "big L"). There we can learn as a whole class or in groups. We can celebrate parties such as summer BBQ festivals, Christmas concerts, big speeches and much more!
- Thus, not only internal school activities can find their space here but a large variety of cultural
  events can take place and find its place there, of which we as well as others can benefit greatly
  from. The upgrading of the schoolyard will do justice to our renovated, monumentally protected
  building in order to create a harmonious overall picture, in addition to an urban point of view.





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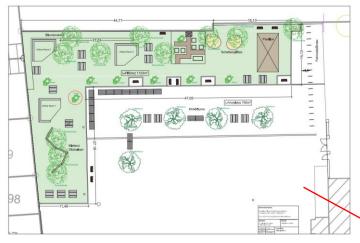


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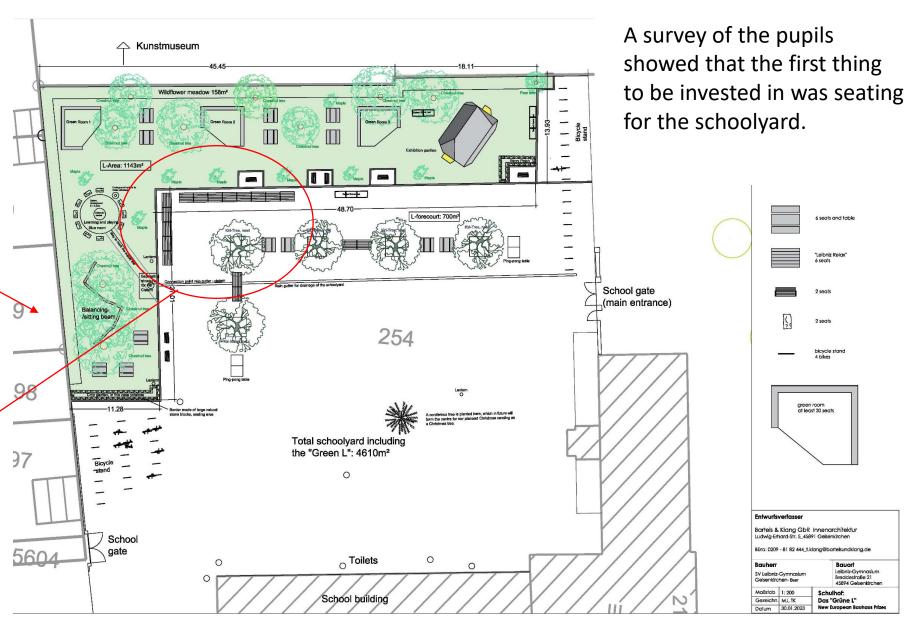
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Konzept für unseren Schulhof:



The planning continued to develop!

The big "L" is to be implemented first!



## Our first investment has already been made!

- Together with the manufacturer hygrocare, we developed a custom-made bench based on the street furniture of Gelsenkirchen.
- The bench "Leibniz Relax" which forms our central "L" is adapted to our demand for flexible use of schoolyard furniture. With a depth of 120 cm, our custom-made bench is designed for the various needs of the pupils and neighbours. It is a small stage, an elevation for the step photo, a seat for a large meeting, a place to lounge around, as well as a shelter for our insect hotel.
- The "L" will be installed in April 2023!









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## Further design of our schoolyard

Versatile seating options

- The rest of the furniture derives from the matching design series of equipment of the city and is aesthetically arranged and diverse in its usage, as a seating area, classroom bench and communication area.
- This year we can also apply for the balancing beams and these will definitely be set up in 2023, financed by the school administration Gelsenkirchen.
- https://www.seibel-spielgeraete.de/detail.php?id=2294&kat=08



"Balancing beam"
To play, climb or sit on



"Green classrooms"
For lessons in nature





Seating opportunities for meeting and joint, independent learning

Through versatile and flexible design of the schoolyard, we create a space for everyone!

Play facilities for children of all ages







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Along our schoolyard wall we would like to sow a 1.5 m wide strip with wildflowers. In this area, the bee-friendly meadow remains untouched and provides a protected habitat for many micro-organisms on almost 160 m<sup>2</sup>.

In all other areas we envisage sure-footed and regional planting and - if necessary - ecological ground coverings.





Five trees of the species "paulownia tomentosa" are to be planted in the schoolyard in an L-shape.

As the bluebell tree grows quickly, it will turn our grey schoolyard into a green oasis in no time. Due to its large leaves, it is very beneficial for the climate.

The students have been researching this for quite some time.

Nesting boxes + feeding stations are installed.



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# School garden

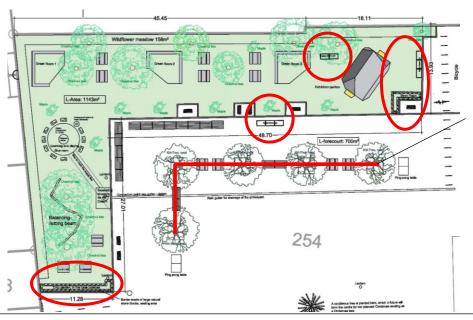
The school garden is divided into several areas in the "Green L".

In addition to useful plants, such as potatoes, snack gardens with berry bushes are to be planted in the raised beds (goji berry, ornamental quince, cranberry, blueberry, aronia berry, autumn raspberry, summer raspberry, honey raspberry (yellow), thornless blackberry, strawberry, red and black currant, gooseberry, sea buckthorn, mulberry).

In a working group, pupils can take care of the school garden together.



Beds with natural stone borders provide seating. Sculptures can be exhibited here as part of art lessons.



This is where our new trees will be in the future, providing shade in the summer.

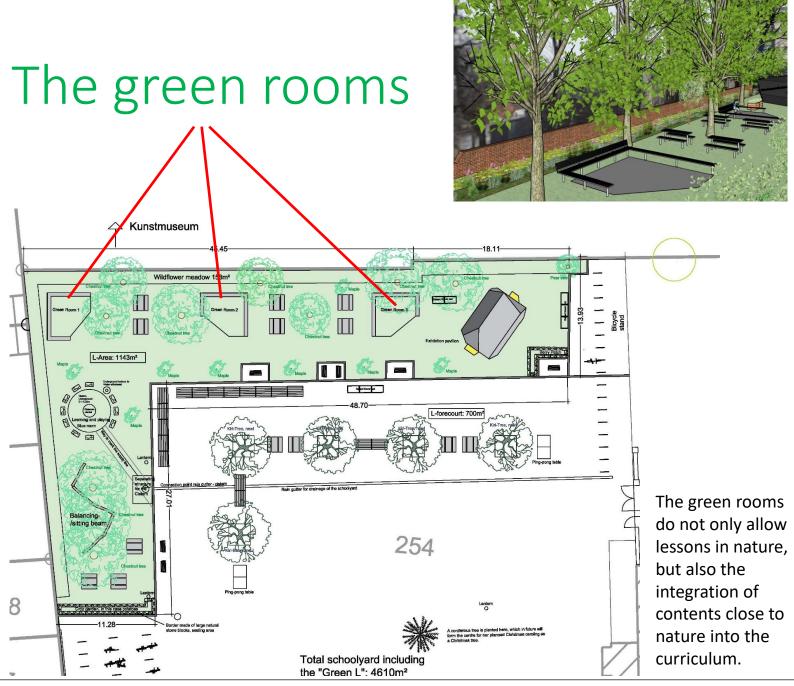
The raised beds sponsored by Baukultur.NRW will be populated with snack plants.



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# Outdoor teaching

- The "Green L" presents a chance to have lessons outside in the greenery. The Ipad transition means one no longer necessarily requires a blackboard and desks for lessons. Therefore, our schoolyard will be upgraded and revitalised, not only aesthetically.
- The time spent in the outdoor area should also become a goal and aspiration of the students future everyday life. Nowadays the relaxation in nature for the younger generation has come way too short due to long and digitally filled school days.
- The construction of green and blue classrooms offers even more room for development: the opportunity of learning whilst being surrounded by nature extends the schoolyard experience into a deeper and livelier occurrence. Moreover, it presents the possibility for instrumentalization, in which lessens shall be enhanced by the needs and goals suggested by the area of education/learning, e.g. nature drawings of the great outdoors (art) or writing poems about nature based on sensory impressions (German) as well as technical knowledge about functionality (physics, chemistry).
- New learning: The "typical classroom" with a teacher's desk, strict seating arrangement and a black board is dissolved. Our digital work via iPads allows us to work "without a black board" and completely paperless!
- The students should learn different methods that promote sustainability and subsequently teach them the conscious use of ecological resources. With the help of this project, they should develop competences, that will enhance and enrich their knowledge and thinking, which will lead them to a responsible and sustainable approach towards nature and life.

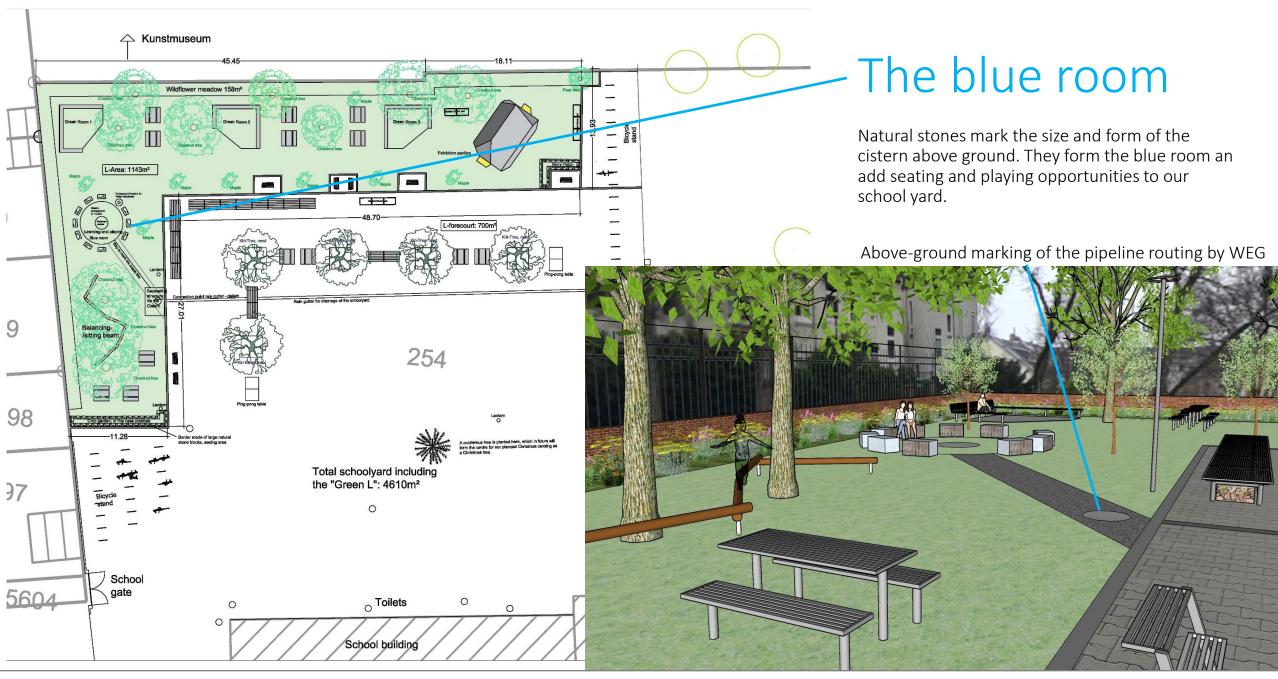




There is enough space for at least 30 students in every green room.



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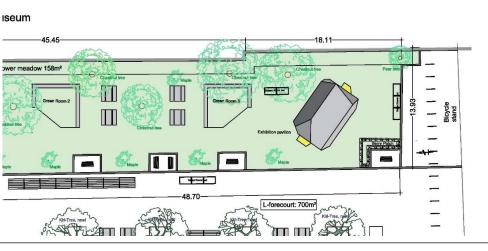
## Our exhibition pavilion from Baukultur.NRW







Originally planned for indoor use, the pavilion was made suitable for outdoor use and Baukultur.NRW is leaving it to us and sponsoring the transport, so that we still have to pay for the construction. We need €10,000 for this. We would use money from the NEB Prizes for this.

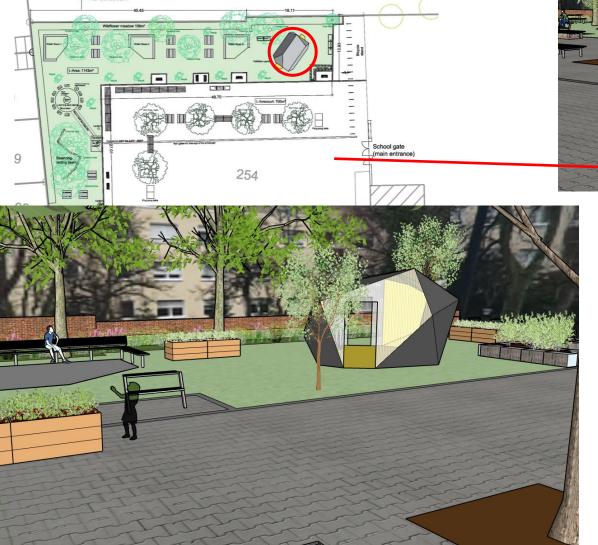




We would like to inform you here about our project - which will last for years to come - and about sustainable topics. The abstract pavilion looks like a modern molehill and fits perfectly into the sculpture garden!

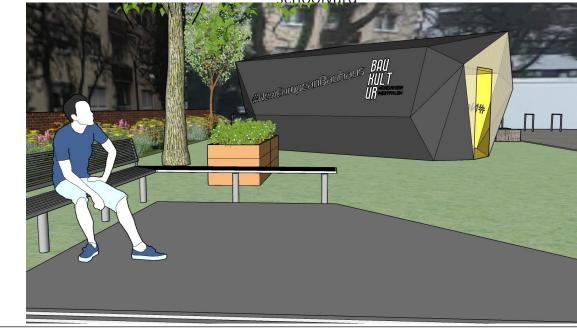
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## Exhibition pavilion





View from the main entrance to the schoolvard



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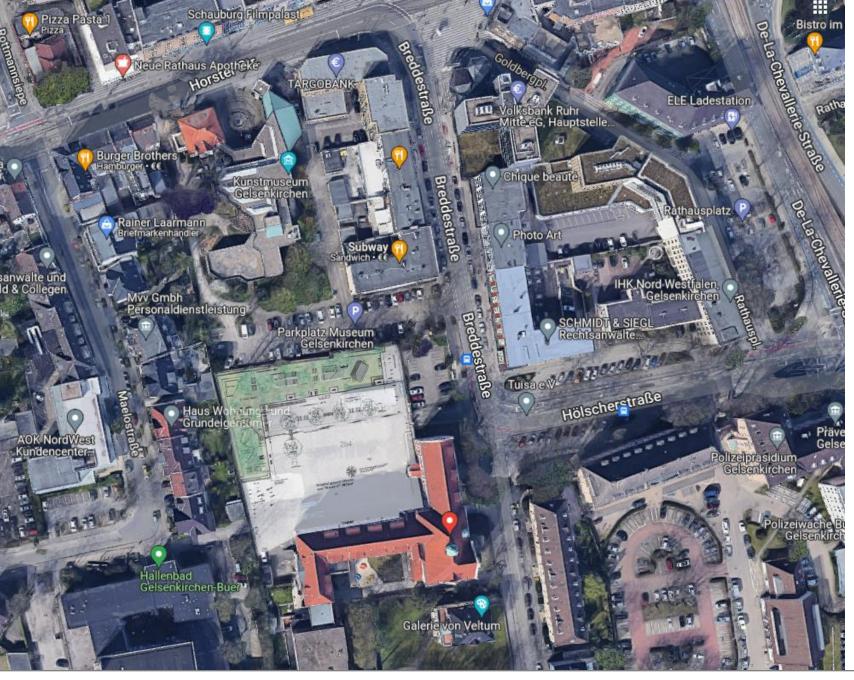
## Social situation in Gelsenkirchen

The district Buer is a suburb of Gelsenkirchen. The city is a multicultural melting pot.

- The percentage of foreigners is 22,6 % at the moment (1).
- The unemployment rate is14,5% (September 2022) (2).
- In the issue of 2022 of the "Zukunftatlas", Gelsenkirchen is in place 399 of 400 in the category "Wealth and social situation" (3)

Our first request for funding was a failure since the city of Gelsenkirchen could not meet our expectations! After extensive and long-lasting renovation and refurbishment of our listed main building "there is no more money in sight for the schoolyard renovation. In the long run, there are too many other construction sites, broken schoolyards, which have to be renovated and thus "have priority". Despite the lack of funding from outside, we wanted to act and do something for our school and the community. So the students found ways to generate money themselves to turn the schoolyard into a safe space for everyone. With our schoolyard project, we want to enhance the social life of the students and our neighbours in Gelsenkirchen.

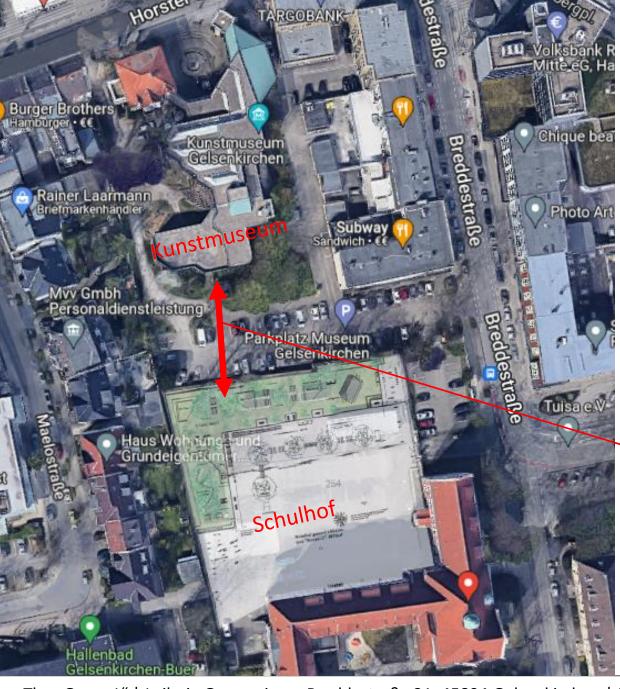
- (1) <a href="https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gelsenkirchen">https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gelsenkirchen</a>)
- (2) https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/vor-ort/gelsenkirchen/2022-32
- (3) <a href="https://www.prognos.com/de/zukunftsatlas">https://www.prognos.com/de/zukunftsatlas</a>



Our schoolyard (like all schoolyards in this area) is open to the public from 2 to 5 p.m. every day and signifies a "freely given play area" Its central location makes it an easily accessible place for many people in the neighbourhood. Until now, however, the schoolyard lacked with supplying the citizens with a place worthwhile. Since all access points to our schoolyard are barrier-free and the schoolyard is completely car-free and has numerous toilets, we believe that with our redesign we can create a place that many people will benefit from, especially since there are few public green spaces in the neighbourhood.

Young and old can linger here together: A break on the way to town, half an hour of sunbathing, as well as a brave ride on a small running bike over the remaining sealed area. The schoolyard is very connected to public transport and has easily accessible parking spaces after school hours. The usage of our schoolyard is free of charge. By supplying these offers, our schoolyard will receive the appreciation it deserves (without being trashed). Surely everyone will be attentive and respectful to their new favourite local place to be. "What you love, you protect!"

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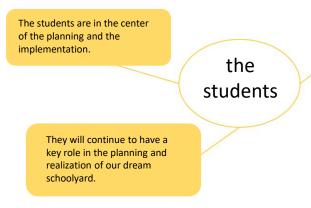
Generally, we have the opportunity to issue public invitations (through the press) for our schoolyard, as we have no space limitations, thus everyone will find an opportunity to visit us at some point. Performances in the schoolyard should also be free of charge if possible. So far, we have asked for donations at events for and on the schoolyard. Therefore, we explain our concept at every opportunity we get and usually we find enthusiastic listeners who are happy to support us with a small donation.

With a "Design for All" a place to encounter is created, culturally interesting in terms of design and projects, in order for diverse and specific basic needs to be addressed. By inviting partners beyond our holy school halls and suggesting new events for the local environment, we open the school up to an idea of togetherness in our city.

We have a spacial and personal connection to the art museum! Our already great collaboration with the art museum could literally be expanded. A path and a gate would allow direct physical access to the museum.

# History - Review of previous initiatives

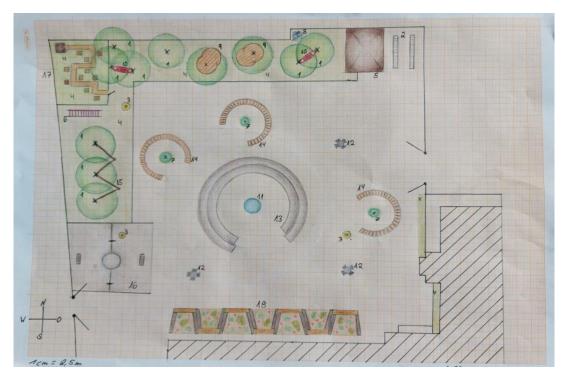
 Beginning of the project (beginning of 2021) - Participation in the competition "Schoolyard Dreams"; concept development based on pupil surveys



This is how they were involved from the start: Firstly, by collecting creative ideas for the design of the schoolyard.

"Our goal is to create a schoolyard that the whole school community can benefit from."





"It is important for the school community that the schoolyard enriches school life!"

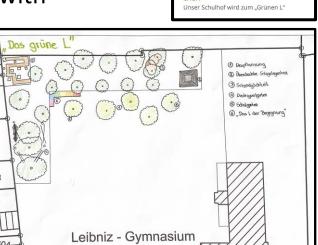
## History - Review of previous initiatives

- Beginning of the project (beginning of 2021) Participation in the competition "Schoolyard Dreams"; concept development based on pupil surveys
- 1st sponsored run in autumn 2021 for the schoolyard project:
- Renewed participation in the "Schoolyard Dreams" competition (spring 2022) and parallel participation in the Sparda Bank competition.
  - -> Activation of the parents and pupils and start of the cooperation with

cooperation with Mrs. Klang and Mrs. Paprotny from Gelsendienste.

 Appeal for donations for "Re.Start" (incl. income from sales)





## History - Review of previous initiatives

- Appeal for donations at the alumni reunion
- 2nd sponsored run in autumn 2022
   (with the remaining/ not yet considered classes)
- Mulled wine sale at the Christmas concert
- Support through
  - Den Förderverein
  - "Catching up to Corona"
- Christmas sale to the pupils
- Order of our first 9 benches for the schoolyard
- New support and advice from
  - Baukultur.NRW
  - Fire Department joint development of the new fire department access road
  - Dismantling of the old bicycle racks in the "Green L"







#### Status of the profits for the project so far:

1st sponsored run:	6,668.90 €
"Sparda" competition:	1,500 €
Re.Start-Fest / Donation:	2,633.03 €
Alumni reunion / Donation:	200 €

2nd sponsored run: 7,142.46 €

Parents' Day: 50 € Mulled wine sale: 240 €

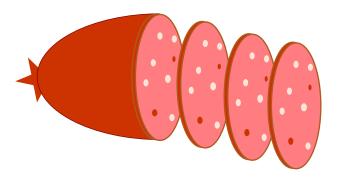
Support from the Förderverein: 1,500 €

From the budget

"Catching up with Corona" 5,500 € Christmas sale to the pupils 150.50 €

Amount collected in 2022: **25,584.89 €** 

### **Our tactic: Salamitactic**



Slice by slice closer to the goal

We always want to invest the money directly to show the successes.

When the planning is further finalised, concrete savings can be made for the next goal!

The goal is that the planning with all costs, approvals, etc. stands and the next slice is always realized.







It is impressive how much the pupils care for their schoolyard!











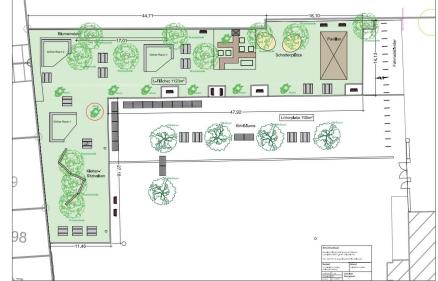


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# What we did in the schoolyard workshop:

The NRW Chamber of Architects supports us with an interior architect who leads the schoolyard workshop:

- Measuring "The Green L" and its surroundings together
- Finalise the planning of the schoolyard with the right measurements
- Determine the overall concept (final coordination)
- Build a presentation model together
- Further analysis, how many bicycle stands do we need?
- And the old bicycle stands and the containers have to go.
- What else is important?
- How do we want to sit here in the future
   and what do we actually look for? > Feel the genius loci!
- Read the urban development concept:
- Guiding Plan Centre Gelsenkirchen-Buer

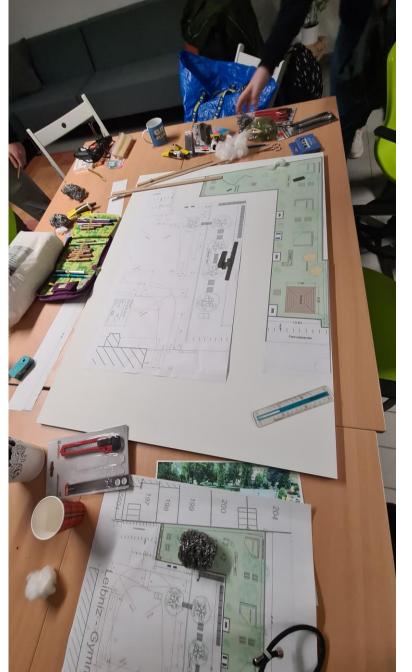






We plan and build a model!



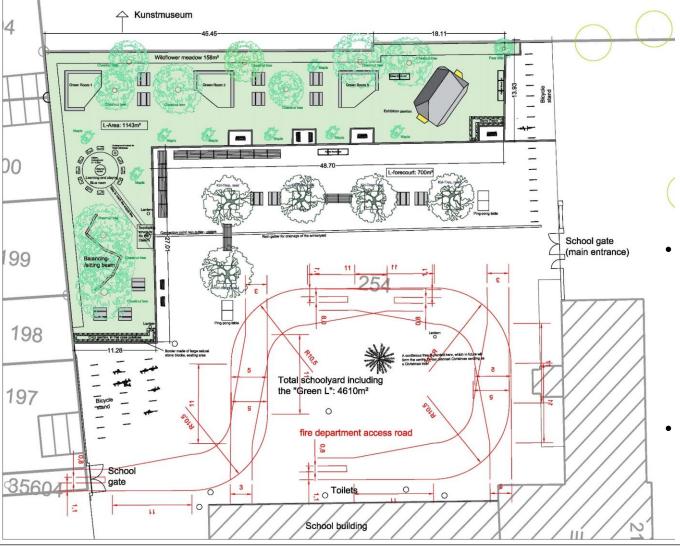


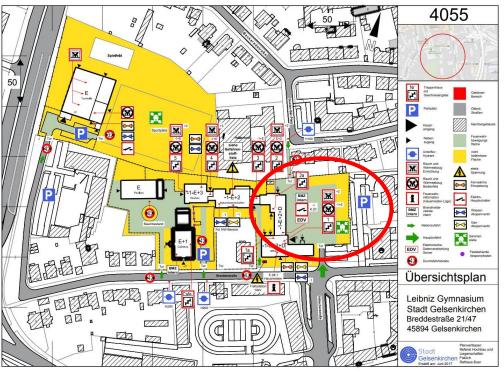




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• At a meeting of the schoolyard working group with the Gelsenkirchen fire department, we presented our concept for the schoolyard, as our schoolyard also serves as a fire department access and staging area.





- We wanted more space to expand the "Green L's." They explained to us that we were not to move much further beyond the two green grass areas. However, we were able to solve this issue and find an arrangement that worked for both of us, as can be see in the plan. The fire department was able to comply with our interior designer and our arguments.
- With the help of the consultation, we were able to ensure that in the event of a fire, every pupil has a safe place in the schoolyard and that the fire department can get to the front of the school without danger.

- The project participants gain insights into interesting professions and about demographic developments.
   Through this project our students develop a sense of achievement. That they are participating in something good and worthwhile, something lasting long enough to make a difference. All of those aspects solemnly achieved through their own commitment and willpower. Consequently, expanding their skill set in many ways.
- Teachers are already figuring out how to integrate "outdoor teaching" into their lessons and subject.

  However, the interaction leaves an equally big mark on the extern partners: a -positive-image of the "youth of today" with their concerns and hopes. They have an admirable attitude towards sustainability and many valid ideas but no lobby.
- Parents and teachers supported with their active help, from cake donations to program points and voting in small competitions. The students themselves raised the most money with sponsored runs! Thus, we were able to order our first nine benches at the end of 2022 for about 21,000 €, which will be specially made for us and installed in the spring of 2023!
- The group of students is continuing to work on and to modify our concept regarding the design of our schoolyard which is still in progress.

## Prospective goals & visions

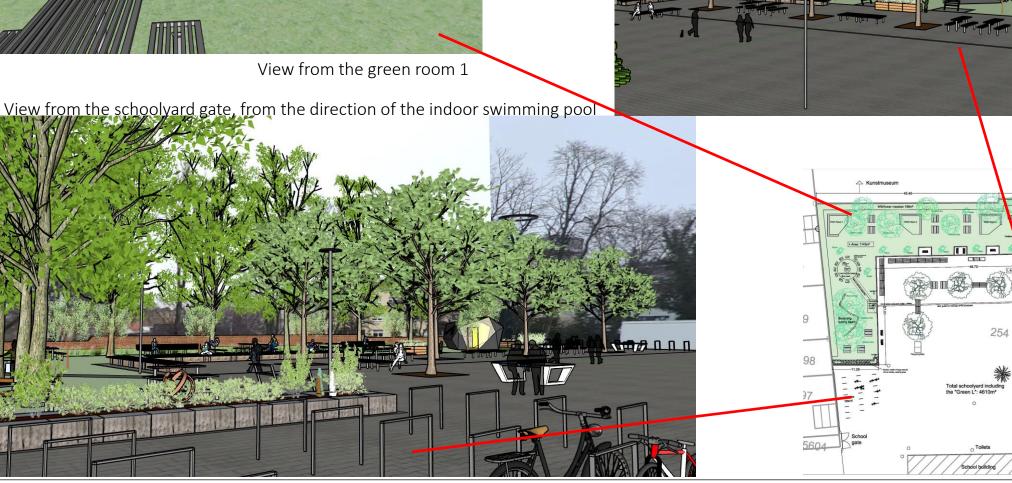
- 3rd participation in the competition "Schulhofträume" (Spring 2023)
- Further projects to earn money (carnival party, soccer match)
- Applying for further design objects for the schoolyard(Balancierbalken, Slacklines)
- Installation of the first benches (April 2023) + inauguration party
- Planning of a cistern for the "blue classroom", collaboration with Gelsenwasser
- Work groups for designing the schoolyard(e.g. creating a school garden, building an insect hotel, etc.)
- Project-days (s.a.)
- Further sponsored runs
- Participitation in various competitions in 2023 to hopefully generate larger sums of money and to draw the
  attention of the media to our project in order to move forward with our concept.
- Further actions to win participation of students and parents in terms of collaboration/design: e.g. involvement relating profession or talent (in planning and executing)
- Enhance transparency in terms of the development and achievements of the project (for students, parents, neighbours) through publishing on the school homepage /facebook. Makes the project more popular and motivates more people to help/be interested in it.
- Close cooperation and collaboration with the city and the school administrators

# The "Green L" from different perspectives This is how it could become...



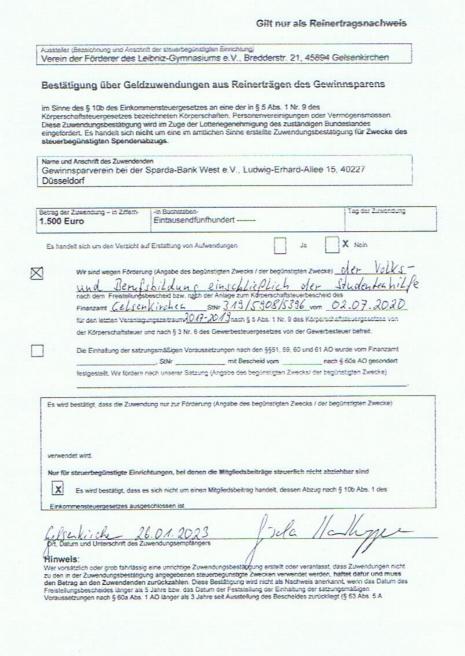








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We already won the competition of the Sparda-Bank in 2022!

# Consent of the City of Gelsenkirchen, School Administration

"Dear Mrs Klang, Dear Mr Scharnowski,

The planning you submitted for the redesign of the schoolyard at Leibniz Gymnasium was examined by the committees involved with regard to feasibility and sustainability and was generally approved. I hereby promise support for the implementation of the greening project and the creation of play, rest and exercise areas within the scope of the possibilities of the school administration. The design planning does not stand in the way of any planned measures and will significantly increase the attractiveness of the location.

Thank you very much for your commitment."







BAUKULTUR NORDRHEIN-WESTFALEN Leithestraße 33 45886 Gelsenkircher

Städtisches Leibniz-Gymnasium Breddestr. 21 45894 Gelsenkirchen-Buer Peter Köddermann Geschäftsführung Programm

T 0209 402441-10 F 0209 402441-11

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Mittwoch, 25.01.2023

Letter of Intent "the green L"

#### Approach

Since 2022, BAUKULTUR North Rhine-Westphalia has been increasingly dedicated to the thematic fields of "Phase 0" of urban design and "Green Cities and Regions". The approach to building culture refers to raising awareness of the designed environment, to the qualification of built spaces, to alternative planning and communication processes, and to questions of sustainability that are important to building culture.

BAUKULTUR Nordrhein-Westfalen supports the project "The Green L" of the municipal Leibniz-Gymnasium, Breddestr. 21, in 45894 Gelsenkirchen-Buer.

#### The project

From the perspective of architectural culture, the open and student-driven design and planning process for the redesign of the schoolyard is of particular value. The transformation of the previously sealed schoolyard area into a sustainable green space for school and public use with a high potential for identification in the form of a voluntary project demonstrates an outstanding commitment to civil society. From BAUKULTUR North Rhine-Westphalia's point of view, the project leads to a place of urban nature, to a place of extracurricular learning and, last but not least, to an inner-city spatial development that can have a positive effect on the urban climate. An important essence of the project is not only to address the topic of "spatial development in climate change" theoretically and creatively together with pupils, but also to implement the considerations, approaches and ideas in a dialogue-led process at all levels of meaning. On the one hand, this includes a high degree of identification potential and many voluntary achievements by the pupils, and on the other hand, it allows a diverse school space to emerge that invites dialogue, discourse, even after completion. The linking of a "green classroom" with supplementary leisure



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activities and different garden and nature spaces represents the spatial spectrum of the project and leads to a special equipment of the schoolyard. For the operation and care of the green space, voluntary services of maintenance management are also required from the pupils. This creates a continuous engagement with the space beyond the constructional implementation.

#### Contribution

Baukultur Nordrhein-Westfalen is very happy to support the school and the local actors in their process of redesigning the courtyard area. This support includes the possibility of professional contributions, the provision of design and functional objects as well as small-scale financial support for the project.

with kind regards

Peter Köddermann director program

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## List of sources:

- Photos: Mareike Zovak, Jonas Klang, Tanja Klang
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