

Fact sheet

Reasons for a new museum

Why is the “Kunstmuseum Bern of the future” project necessary?

The two museum buildings – the Stettler Building from 1879 and the expansion from 1983 (Atelier 5 building) – are in urgent need of renovation. Serious defects exist with regard to the building services and HVAC systems, load-bearing structure (earthquake safety), accessibility, art delivery and logistics, lighting, safety and escape routes and the long-term protection of cultural assets (art depot). Operations at the Atelier 5 building may only continue until the end of 2030 for structural reasons. The Stettler Building needs to be renovated soon because the building services equipment is already over 25 years old; further postponement increases the risk of unplanned interruptions to operations and leads to higher costs for ensuring the operability of the building services equipment.

According to a feasibility study published in 2019, replacing the Atelier 5 building (instead of performing extensive renovation work) while simultaneously incorporating the Hodlerstrasse 6 building is the best solution for the museum’s renovation project. This approach focuses not on enlarging the exhibition space, but on creating a convincing overall concept that enables efficient and resource-conserving museum operations with attractive offers. Kunstmuseum Bern would not have to build expensive office space in the replacement building and also gains space by moving the bistro outside the museum.

The replacement building will enable the Kunstmuseum to create visitor-friendly exhibition halls and depot rooms that satisfy modern-day standards, open the museum up toward the city and the slope of the Aare River, and also offer new art experiences. The renovated Stettler Building, the addition of the Hodlerstrasse 6 office building and the replacement building will enable the Kunstmuseum to fulfil its mandate of protecting, caring for and sharing the first-rate cultural assets entrusted to it, allowing it to evolve in a sustainable and forward-looking way as a cultural beacon of Canton Bern.

What do museums have to be capable of in today’s world?

The Kunstmuseum Bern of the 21st century focuses on people’s needs: an inviting, open entrance to the building is just as important as attractive education rooms, barrier-free access, sufficient food service offerings and spaces for visitors to reflect, meet and exchange ideas. The renovation will enable Kunstmuseum Bern to meet international standards in terms of exhibition climate, security, protection of cultural assets, art delivery, accessibility, service quality and visitor friendliness.

What are the strengths and goals of the Kunstmuseum Bern?

Thanks to its collections and exhibitions, Kunstmuseum Bern is well received by the public and media, and is recognised both nationally and internationally as a renowned address for studying and teaching about art dating from the Middle Ages to the present day. The museum welcomes 100,000 visitors a year on average.

Over generations, Kunstmuseum Bern has become the educational and cultural centre of Canton Bern and is visited by adults, families, children, schools and companies. Outreach and education play a key role. Each year, around 400 guided tours, workshops, and group visits are offered for school classes.

What the Kunstmuseum lacks is a modern, sustainable infrastructure. More suitable exhibition rooms and state-of-the-art infrastructure will enable the museum to play more effectively to its strengths, better engage with the public and continue its successful international collaboration.

Art experience and audience

What will change for visitors?

Gentle transitions from the street to the building will make the renovated museum easily accessible and barrier-free. The entrance, clearly visible from the outside, and the foyer of the planned replacement building will welcome visitors with an inviting gesture. The new, open and bright exhibition rooms will create the conditions needed to provide a modern-day art experience. The art education centre will gain attractive rooms for its diverse offering and direct access to the newly created Aare terrace. Food services will now also be accessible outside exhibition hours. Non-commercial recreational areas and a modern events hall will transform Kunstmuseum Bern into an inclusive, public place where people can congregate and communicate.

Which new art experiences will this make possible?

Thanks to the size, flexibility, height and lighting conditions as well as higher load-bearing capacities at the new facilities, it will be possible to display all artistic media side by side without any restrictions: works on paper are then found next to sculptures, paintings, installations or videos. The museum also wants to tread new paths in the area of education: the new formats will intertwine analogue and digital art education and open up new ways for people to come into contact with art. Larger and more attractive studios with a connection to the outdoor space are planned for art education. A room is also planned where restoration projects will be visible to the public. These changes are aimed at enabling the museum to show existing activities that had previously taken place behind the scenes to a wide audience. It also plans to make the activities of the provenance research department permanently visible in one room.

How will the Kunstmuseum reach a wide audience?

The museum plans to address groups that are not currently accustomed to using the museum in a more targeted manner and get them involved in the programmes. Kunstmuseum Bern considers itself part of an inclusive society in which everyone is welcome. This requires interactive formats and opportunities to take part, and these will play an increasingly important role in art education activities.

Does the new concept include an improvement in the food service offerings?

Visiting a museum is a holistic experience. With that in mind, the plans include ample food services that are available even outside the museum's hours of operation and for events not related to the museum's operations. The winning "Eiger" project envisages a ground-level bistro in the Hodlerstrasse 6 building. It is located right next to the newly created museum square and can bring the square to life with outdoor seating. No actual restaurant is planned, however, since that is not one of a museum's core tasks. This issue was explored in clarifications undertaken in the run-up to the competition; they confirmed the fact that the food service offerings in the nearby city centre are already extremely good and comprehensive.

What does the winning project offer?

The exhibition space will increase moderately from 3,500 m² to around 4,000 m² (14% more). Art education will have around 135 m² more space for conducting workshops with children, youths and adults. This means the museum's renovation project is not focused on maximising the increase in space, but on creating space that is as well-suited to the museum's operations as possible. Its aim is to significantly improve the quality of the exhibition spaces, art education spaces, visitor recreation areas, and infrastructure for art delivery and logistics, cultural heritage protection, security, workshops and food services.

The art education centre will get new, spacious rooms for its diverse offering and direct access to the newly created Aare terrace. The art depots will get suitable spaces as well as a modern hanging and storage system. A modern events hall can be used in a multitude of ways. Food services can also be offered outside of the museum's opening hours.

One key element of the planned renewal to Kunstmuseum Bern is the upgrading of the public space. The aim is to make this an attractive destination for both museum visitors and the general public alike. The new museum square will serve as a meeting point and place for art in public spaces. The Stettler Building (old building), the replacement building and the building at Hodlerstrasse 6 form an ensemble. A wide outdoor staircase between the Stettler Building and the replacement building will lead down to the new Aare terrace, a public space that can be used for picnics and art education, among other things.

Sustainable museum

How sustainable is the new Kunstmuseum?

The museum's planned renovation relies on energy-efficient, climate-friendly solutions – not only during renovation, conversion and construction of the replacement building but also during operation once the project has been completed. A list of criteria, including all relevant sustainability aspects, has been incorporated into the competition programme. This is based on the SIA standard "Sustainable Architecture – Building Construction" and the detailed structure of the "Swiss Sustainable Building Standard" that builds on the SIA standard. Under the leadership of Brian Cody, Professor at the Institute of Buildings and Energy at Graz University of Technology, sustainability was a key suitability criterion throughout the competition process. The museum strives to embrace sustainability in every dimension, including environmental, economic and social aspects alike. The Kunstmuseum will use low-impact materials for the planned renovation and use them sparingly; it will optimise its operating and property costs over the course of the buildings' life cycle, make a positive contribution to the region's economy and promote cultural participation and inclusion among vastly different portions of the population.

Studies at the beginning of the competition process showed that there were no preferences regarding preservation or reconstruction with regard to sustainability over the buildings' entire life cycle. Although the replacement building will indeed consume more grey energy during construction, it will make it possible to save energy during operation, especially in the area of climate control.

How can the requirements be implemented?

To ensure that these targets can be met, several different aspects need to be addressed: building shape, energy supply, construction materials, HVAC and lighting systems. Realisation of the winning project "Eiger" based on the basic concept "Kunstmuseum Bern of the future" – i.e. including the Stettler Building and the building at Hodlerstrasse 6 – will significantly improve energy consumption compared to today, both with respect to the Atelier 5 building to be replaced as well as the building ensemble as a whole.

Plans for the Stettler Building, for example, which was built in 1879, include insulation for the roof and replacement of windows, which will also help optimise the building service installations both in terms of dimensioning and operation as well as reduce both the energy requirements and cost of cooling and heating. The building at Hodlerstrasse 6, which was built in the 1950s, will also be renovated and converted in compliance with modern-day energy efficiency guidelines and become more environmentally friendly and economical to operate. This will be done in coordination with the specifications of the Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments. The completion of the replacement building and the simultaneous renovation of the Stettler Building and the building at Hodlerstrasse 6 will enable synergies in the area of energy

supply and building services equipment; the architectural and structural details will be worked out together with building services equipment specialists within the scope of project planning.

Is grey energy also being taken into consideration?

To optimise the use of resources, regional solutions are to be found wherever possible when transporting building materials to and from the museum and when manufacturing products for the museum. Building systems and materials should be robust, easy to maintain and also ensure that they retain their value for a long time to come. The façade of the replacement building will be made of Bernese sandstone in accordance with the requirements stipulated for the UNESCO perimeter. The project calls for the two lowest existing floors on the Aare side of the current Atelier 5 building to be integrated into the replacement building, which also saves grey energy. Studies at the beginning of the competition process showed that there were no preferences regarding preservation or reconstruction with regard to sustainability over the entire life cycle. The solid construction method will indeed consume more grey energy during construction, but will make it possible to save energy on climate control during operation.

Does the net-zero target apply to operations?

Since museums are buildings that have strict requirements regarding the constant temperature and humidity levels found in the exhibition rooms and in the rooms used for cultural heritage protection, this results in comparatively high energy consumption. They must use architectural solutions capable of satisfying the climate-related requirements with the least technical effort. A CO₂-free energy supply is possible in operation as long as the electricity and district heating come from renewable energy sources.

How does the winning project contribute to energy efficiency?

The construction method to be used for the replacement building, the use of low-maintenance materials, the design and the new HVAC systems will enable resource-conserving and energy-efficient operation. The volume of the replacement building is compact: the smaller the volume, the less it needs to be heated, humidified and air conditioned. The thermal storage capacity of the substantial walls is good, which means they help stabilise the indoor climate. While the relatively small area covered by windows is also positive with respect to the indoor climate, the project is still being optimised in this regard.

The plan envisages indoor lighting that emits as little heat as possible in order to minimise the amount of energy consumed when creating the indoor climatic conditions needed in the exhibition rooms.

What about the energy supply?

In future, Kunstmuseum Bern will be able to operate on a minimal amount of non-renewable energies and minimise its greenhouse gas emissions. It will

purchase renewable energy from local power companies. Even today, Kunstmuseum Bern is already connected to the municipal district heating supply of Energie Wasser Bern. This efficient source of energy will continue to be guaranteed. The greenhouse gas emission factor of the existing district heating supply is given as 46 kg CO₂-eq per MWh of district heating (2021).

Due to the planned underground structures (cultural asset conservation room) and the existing utility lines, there is probably not enough space on the property to install geothermal probes. A photovoltaic plant might also be possible on the replacement building. Due to the small space, however, its contribution to the energy supply would be minor and approval uncertain, as the Kunstmuseum is located inside the perimeter of the UNESCO protection zone.

Will the “Kunstmuseum Bern of the future” project improve the urban climate?

The redesign of Hodlerstrasse in particular offers an opportunity to improve the urban climate. Porous surfaces will help mitigate excessive heat in summer by letting water drain into the subsurface layer, evaporate again when temperatures rise and cool the surroundings in the process. Planting a new row of trees will also help make the urban environment more pleasant. Planted areas are envisaged for the planned museum square as well. Additionally, there will be a gap between the replacement building and the Stettler Building, which will allow cooler air from the slope of the Aare to flow into the city.

Is the museum also socially sustainable?

Kunstmuseum Bern considers itself part of an inclusive society. Everyone is welcome. As such, Kunstmuseum Bern wishes to cater to everyone, regardless of their age, gender, origin, education or economic or social status. With its analogue and digital offerings and programmes, the museum promotes cultural participation while actively eliminating anything that might hinder people's access. It focuses on the generations of tomorrow and adapts in an ever-changing society. Areas that are freely accessible to everybody are just as much a part of this open-door approach as the meeting spaces both indoors and outdoors where people can spend time without being pressured to buy anything; they let people breathe in a bit of museum air and experience its architecture without having to pay admission in that area.

Competition and winning project

How was the winning project selected?

148 teams of architects submitted their applications in an open two-stage architectural competition with a prequalification round. 39 were selected by the broad-based expert jury and panel of specialists, and 11 of these were subsequently invited to refine their project proposal. Three teams then took part in the revision stage.

The competition was conducted anonymously from stage one, meaning that the jury knew which 39 architectural teams were submitting entries, but not which proposal was submitted by which team. The proposals were examined in terms of their functionality, cost-effectiveness, spatial qualities, sustainability, usability, construction costs, choice of materials, etc. The winners announced in 2024 are the young and innovative office of Schmidlin Architekten (Zurich and Engadine), who have also previously won the Swiss-Architects "2019 Building of the Year" award for Muzeum Susch (Grisons).

What is the urban design and architectural quality of the winning project?

The winning project from the international architectural competition presents a convincing solution for the challenging site and is the most suitable option for further processing and realisation. The jury's reasoning can be summarised as follows:

- The renewal of the Kunstmuseum is based on a distinctive replacement building that complements the row of prestigious public buildings on the northern slope of the Aare River. The building makes full use of the height cited as possible in the feasibility study, forms a moderate high point similar to that of the City Theatre's fly tower, and fits in well with the city skyline. The free-standing replacement building forms a distinctive counterpart to the neoclassical Stettler Building, which is given significantly more space and regains its architectural independence.
- The replacement building will be set back from Hodlerstrasse, creating a spacious forecourt which will invite people to visit the museum and make it possible to use the space in new ways. This creates clear added value for both the city and the museum. The new museum square will serve as a meeting point and place for art in public spaces. The ground-level bistro in the Hodlerstrasse 6 building will become a lively part of the square.
- The Stettler Building, the replacement building and the building at Hodlerstrasse 6 will form an ensemble around the museum square, architecturally bound together by the clever spatial layout of the buildings. The three separate buildings from different eras with their individual characteristics will play off one another, giving the museum square a dynamic vibe.
- A terraced courtyard garden will link the replacement building with the bistro and draw more attention to the city walls. A wide outdoor stair-

case between the Stettler Building and the replacement building will lead down to the new Aare-side terrace, a public space that can be used in a variety of ways – as a picnic area for schools or for art education activities.

- The clarity of the urban design continues indoors. The main entrance to the Kunstmuseum in the replacement building opens into a spacious foyer visible from outside that can be accessed regardless of whether one is visiting the museum and where various activities can take place. From here, the stairs and elevators lead clearly through the entire building. A trip to the museum becomes a “two-part” visit and therefore double the experience: firstly, guests can explore the replacement building with its three stand-alone exhibition rooms located one above the other. Secondly, the replacement building features a passage to the Stettler Building, providing an insight into the character of a 19th century art museum. A spacious exhibition area under the museum square connects the replacement building with the Stettler Building and leads into a room twice the height with unexpected light and views.
- The replacement building has a unique façade which incorporates elements of traditional Bernese quarrying. The sandstone façade features a rough surface on the ground floor and becomes smoother towards the top. Carefully positioned window openings allow unparalleled views in and out. On the third floor, a skylight ceiling creates a special atmosphere.

Does this museum building fit in with Bern?

Bern is getting a distinctive museum building with a timeless look and a museum square lending it a sense of identity; it will be an open museum which is easy to find and not hidden behind closed walls and fragments of façades. The Kunstmuseum will become a lively place connected to the public space.

The project name “Eiger” fits perfectly: the striking, free-standing replacement building radiates permanence, its unfussy appearance represents lasting values and at the same time incorporates the grandeur of the Alpine panorama. The fact that higher, prestigious constructions stand along the edges of the Old City is one characteristic that distinguishes the City of Bern. The replacement building will fit in well with the city skyline and allow the Kunstmuseum to have an impact even from a distance; the Kunstmuseum is easy to spot when coming into Bern by train or from the Kornhausbrücke. The winning team, Schmidlin Architekten, took the opportunity to design a contemporary museum building that integrates well into the UNESCO city of Bern.

What important projects have the winning team worked on?

The young and innovative office of Schmidlin Architekten (Zurich and Engadine) has experience with complex public construction projects and deals intensively with conversions and renewals to listed buildings in urban and rural contexts. In Susch, in Lower Engadine, the team converted several historic buildings, some dating back to the 12th century, into a museum for contemporary art. The team managed to preserve the protected historic buildings

while at the same time creating new exhibition rooms that meet modern requirements. In 2019, Muzeum Susch was selected as Building of the Year by Swiss-Architects. The firm is currently working on the conversion and renovation of the Historic Museum Thurgau in Frauenfeld Castle, a listed building. In Würenlingen in Canton Aargau, the team converted a late Baroque listed farmhouse in the historic village centre into a cultural centre and added an extension; this houses the public library, exhibition rooms and a hall. In Basel, Schmidlin Architekten created an art gallery on the premises of a former car repair workshop. In 2014, the firm won the award for sustainable construction in the Alpine region for its restoration of a 500-year-old barn (Stalla Madulain project).

What should be noted when developing the project further?

When developing the project further, the façade's potential to create a flowing structure should be exploited in order to create deeper links to the surroundings. Furthermore, the extent to which remedial work is possible in the protected Stettler and Hodlerstrasse 6 buildings must be checked. When designing the outdoor space, planted areas should be included to improve the urban climate. Various needs will be coordinated with the museum's curatorial concept with regard to the multiple use of the foyer and multifunctional room. A jury committee will supervise the revision of the project. Further development will take place together with the city's Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments. The monument preservation officer was a member of the expert jury.

In what way does the winning project enable new types of exhibitions?

Thanks to their size, flexibility, height, lighting conditions and higher permissible load-bearing capacities, the rooms in the replacement building will enable Kunstmuseum Bern to present exhibitions that had previously been impossible. The new rooms and clear visitor paths form a valuable addition to the historic exhibition rooms in the Stettler Building, where the Kunstmuseum's collections and exhibitions can be experienced in renovated rooms.

Will it become more expensive to operate the museum?

The project will bring about an extensive optimisation and simplification of art and goods logistics. Goods elevators will connect all floors, and the location of the rooms (delivery, acceptance and distribution, art handling, cultural heritage protection) allows for resource-efficient operation. Safety can also be optimised owing to clear floor plans. In addition, there will also be new, efficient HVAC systems, new insulation, roof insulation and new windows, and low-maintenance materials and constructions will be used. All of this enables much more efficient operation and stable operating costs while also covering a larger area. Despite there being more exhibition space, no extra staff are re-

quired for the museum ticket desk, shop or for supervision. This has already been carefully checked. The replacement building's solid construction and the modernised HVAC systems will reduce the energy required while the layout of the rooms will improve art logistics.

In summary, the following statements can be made:

- The project can be operated at the current staffing levels with respect to supervision, cleaning, the ticket desk, the shop and building management.
- Energy consumption will fall due to the much better building fabric and the considerably higher energy efficiency of the new HVAC systems.
- Operating costs will remain stable overall.

Which considerations formed the basis for the competition's specifications?

The current building situation – characterised by a number of different levels, difficulties in handling deliveries, depositories which are too small, temporary workshops, inefficient and outdated technology and poor insulation – is insufficient and no longer meets contemporary needs. The solution concepts from a feasibility study in 2019, which propose a replacement building, allow the museum to be run in a significantly more efficient way that uses resources sparingly and keeps operating costs stable, while at the same time improving the exhibition space in terms of quality and size. If renovated using the sustainable approach described, the Kunstmuseum – nestled between pulsating city life and the slope of the Aare River – would invite people to congregate and communicate while offering space for extraordinary art experiences, contemplation and research. Together with the project planned by the City of Bern to upgrade the area between the Federal Palace and Hodlerstrasse, this would open up an opportunity to link urban spaces to the new Kunstmuseum and upgrade the entire upper part of the Old City in the process.

Costs and financing

What is the cost forecast for the project?

The total costs for the renovation of the Stettler Building, the building at Hodlerstrasse 6 and the replacement building will amount to around 133.5 million francs as at 2023 (or 147 million francs assuming inflation of 10% until 2033).

Reserves of around 10 million francs are included. The cost accuracy of +/- 25% corresponds to the current project planning status and will, as usual, amount to +/- 10% at the end as the project plans become more firmly established.

Cost management in accordance with the design-to-cost method will ensure compliance with cost specifications. Potential risks – especially regarding the

subsoil, excavation pit and underpinning – have been carefully assessed and included in the rough cost estimate to avoid unpleasant surprises to the furthest extent possible.

Cost breakdown (cost accuracy +/- 25%)

Renovation of the Stettler Building (old building)	27.2 million
Renovation of Hodlerstrasse 6 building	17.7 million
Replacement building (including change to the Metro Parking exit)	88.6 million
Total costs as at 2023	133.5 million
Inflation (assumed to be 10% until 2033)	13.35 million
Total costs as at 2033 (including assumed inflation; rounded)	147 million

Wouldn't renovation be more cost-effective than a replacement building?

A more comprehensive renovation, which would also include the building at Hodlerstrasse 6, would be more expensive for the canton than the Eiger project, which involves extensive renovation of the Stettler Building as well as the construction of a replacement building. This is because private funds amounting to 52 million francs would be lost and the contributions from the lottery fund would also be lower.

The mere renovation of the two existing museum buildings would be somewhat more cost-effective for the canton, but in no way would meet the requirements for running a modern museum as set out in the feasibility study; this would also have far-reaching disadvantages for Kunstmuseum Bern. As the Hodlerstrasse 6 building would not be used, the administration department would remain in the Atelier 5 building; as a result, art deliveries would not be improved to the extent required. The potential savings for the canton would amount to around 1 million francs as at 2023 (or 7 million francs incl. inflation up until 2033).

A comparison of the options shows that private funds would make it possible to realise a much more attractive and sustainable overall solution for the canton. For additional costs of approx. 1 million francs (or 7 million francs incl. inflation), the canton can secure contemporary, sustainable infrastructure for the Kunstmuseum and thus create significant added value for decades to come.

	Renovation	Renovation+	Eiger
			
Short description	• Renovation of the Stetler Building and the Atelier 5 building. • No conversions, no extensions, no changes in use.	• Renovation of the Stetler Building and the Atelier 5 building. • The administration department moves to the Holderstrasse 6 building which is also renovated.	• Renovation of the Stetler Building. • Renovation of the Holderstrasse 6 building, which is used for food service facilities and administration. • Replacement of the Atelier 5 building with a new building.
Total investment costs Price level as at April 2023	70,900,000	92,000,000	133,500,000

Financing model

Private funds	0	0	-52,000,000
Contributions from the lottery fund (estimate by Dep. of Culture and Education of Canton Bern)	-4,000,000	-5,000,000	-14,000,000
Regular state funding to be applied for from Canton Bern Price level as at April 2023 (rounded)	67,000,000	87,000,000	68,000,000
Total regular state funding to be applied for from Canton Bern, incl. 10% inflation up until 2033	74,000,000	96,000,000	81,000,000

For details see Section 3.6 in the [Lecture "Kunstmuseum Bern of the future" – Renovation and Replacement Building. Cantonal Contribution to the Project Planning, Commitment Credit 2026-2028.](#)

How will the project be financed?

Planned contribution by Kunstmuseum Bern (donations/sponsorship/fundraising)	52 million
Planned contribution from the lottery fund (estimate by Dep. of Culture and Education of Canton Bern)	14 million
Planned contribution from Canton Bern	81 million
Total	147 million

The project is to be financed through public sector funds, lottery funds, private patrons, foundations and businesses. The financing plan envisages the canton covering the costs for the renovation of the Stettler Building (old building) and the costs that would have been incurred for the renovation of the Atelier 5 building. In addition, the canton is being requested to assume the costs associated with inflation, as the Kunstmuseum Bern Foundation cannot bear this risk. This amounts to costs for the canton of 68 million francs as at 2023 (or 81 million francs assuming inflation of 10% from 2023 to 2033).

In addition, the lottery fund will be asked for a total of approx. 14 million francs for the renovation of the existing buildings and for the replacement building.

Hansjörg Wyss, Chairman of the Wyss Foundation Europe, is contributing CHF 30 million through his generous commitment: 20 million francs for the replacement building and 5 million francs for upgrades to the visitor experience along Hodlerstrasse, in particular with the removal of the Metro Parking exit. He will provide another 5 million francs subject to the condition that at least another 7.5 million francs in private funds can be raised for the museum's renovation.

The financing plan anticipates contributions from private individuals, foundations and businesses amounting to 52 million francs (including the contribution from Hansjörg Wyss). As of June 2026, 41 million francs (79%) has been pledged.

How high are the total costs to be borne by the canton?

In accordance with the financing plan, Canton Bern is being asked to cover costs amounting to a total of approx. 68 million francs as at 2023 (or 81 million francs assuming inflation of 10% from 2023 to 2033) for the replacement building as well as for the renovation of the Stettler Building and the Hodlerstrasse 6 building.

The renovation of the Stettler Building (old building) is required independently of the "Kunstmuseum Bern of the future" project.

Eiger



Preliminary work	13,950,700
Building (incl. reserves)	64,274,100
Operating facilities	1,040,000
Surroundings	6,551,896
Ancillary construction costs	5,296,300
Fees	23,309,800
Equipment costs / relocating art	9,045,346
Subtotal	123,468,142
VAT 8.1%	10,000,920
Rounding	30,938
Total (price level as at April 2023)	133,500,000

Financing model

Private funds	-52,000,000
Contributions from the lottery fund (estimate by Dep. of Culture and Education of Canton Bern)	-14,000,000
Regular state funding to be applied for from Canton Bern Price level as at April 2023 (rounded)	68,000,000
Total regular state funding to be applied for from the canton, incl. 10% inflation up until 2033	81,000,000

Do the construction of the replacement building and the renovation of the old building have to be carried out at the same time?

The renovations of the Stettler Building and the Hodlerstrasse 6 building as well as the construction of the replacement building cannot be carried out in stages when implementing the winning project, as the buildings and their uses are integrally interconnected. An underground exhibition space will also be created, linking the replacement building to the Stettler Building. This requires major structural and technical work that impacts both buildings and must be coordinated.

The simultaneous renovation of the Stettler Building and the realisation of the replacement building also enable planning, structural, operational and financial synergies while reducing the burden on residents: For example, a construction site only needs to be set up once, certain elements related to security, fire protection and building automation can be modernised as a whole, and the larger project scope results in larger order volumes and thus better

unit prices. Moreover, the Kunstmuseum then only needs to be closed once; as soon as the construction work has been completed, the museum will be fully functional and accessible again.

How do the costs of 133.5 million francs and 147 million francs break down?

The overall costs for the renovation of the Stettler Building (old building), the building on Hodlerstrasse 6 and the replacement building amounted to around 133.5 million francs as at 2023.

In order to ensure that costs are as accurate and transparent as possible, Kunstmuseum Bern has also tried to factor in inflation-related price increases. As no long-term inflation forecasts exist, inflation of 1% per year was assumed for the period from 2023 to 2033. This assumption of one per cent is in the mid-range of the target inflation level (0%-2%) for price stability. If the forecast of 1% per year is correct, the overall costs for the renewal of the Kunstmuseum will amount to around 147 million francs once construction is completed (instead of the current figure of 133.5 million francs).

In 2019, Canton Bern's 50% share for a replacement building was estimated at 40 million francs. This amount does not take into account the accumulated increase in construction costs from 2019 to 2023 (14 per cent), nor does it include the costs of renovating the old building. Adjusted for inflation, the cost of the replacement building is still within the target range.

Why is funding only being requested from Canton Bern and not from the City of Bern or other municipalities?

In accordance with the Cantonal Cultural Promotion Act, Kunstmuseum Bern – as a cultural institution of national importance – is financed directly by Canton Bern through a service agreement. Canton Bern assumed sole responsibility for funding at the public sector level with the Cantonal Culture Promotion Ordinance of 2013. That means the municipalities have no obligation to help finance the renovation and construction project. As part of its fundraising activities, the Kunstmuseum Bern Foundation sends requests to private individuals, foundations and companies and also examines the possibility of sending requests to the suburban municipalities.

Nevertheless, the two other public benefactors (City of Bern and Burgergemeinde Bern) remained closely linked to Kunstmuseum Bern, as they both founded the Kunstmuseum Bern Foundation together with Canton Bern on 10 September 1875.

To enable the planned renovation, the City of Bern decided to transfer building rights to the portion of the building at Hodlerstrasse 6 to the Kunstmuseum Bern Foundation at no charge. Furthermore, the city plans to upgrade Hodlerstrasse in sync with the planned new museum building; part of that includes moving the exit of the Metro Parking car park to a different location and making a coordinated effort to press ahead with efforts to redesign

Bärenplatz and Waisenhausplatz. This means that the City of Bern bears costs running into millions.

Even before the results of the competition were published, Museumsstiftung für Kunst der Burgergemeinde Bern made a gesture of support for Kunstmuseum Bern by pledging a contribution of 2 million francs. The museum foundation has now increased its contribution to 5 million francs.

Why does Kunstmuseum Bern expect inflation of 10% until 2033?

The pandemic, the war in Ukraine and other factors have caused construction costs to rise significantly in recent years. In order to ensure the highest possible level of cost transparency and accuracy, Kunstmuseum Bern has tried to factor in these price increases.

As no long-term inflation forecasts exist, inflation of 1% per year was assumed for the period from 2023 to 2033. This assumption of one per cent is in the mid-range of the target inflation level (0%-2%) for price stability. When the application for the implementation loan is submitted, the expected inflation can be updated based on forecast models from the Swiss National Bank. That means assessing the precise extent of future inflation will be easier once project planning is complete and in the application for the implementation loan, which is scheduled for 2028.

If the forecast of a total 10% until 2033 is correct, the overall costs for the renewal of the Kunstmuseum will amount to around 147 million francs once construction has been completed (instead of the current figure of 133.5 million francs).

Has the project already been considered by the Grand Council (cantonal parliament)?

Yes. In September 2025, the Grand Council approved by a large majority (91 yes / 44 no / 16 abstentions) the project planning credit of 15.7 million Swiss francs and a cost ceiling of 81 million francs for the overall project. A committee has launched a referendum against this decision. On 14 June 2026, the voters of the Canton of Bern rejected the funding with 51.8% voting "No".

What happens next following the public's rejection of the funding on 14 June 2026?

Over the coming weeks, the Foundation Kunstmuseum Bern will carefully reassess the situation and determine the next steps. Regardless of the outcome of the vote, the need to renovate the Kunstmuseum Bern remains urgent. The structural and operational challenges must be addressed in order to ensure the museum's operation in the medium term and its preservation in the long term.

How much money has been pledged from private individuals and other donors?

The financing plan expects total contributions of 52 million francs from private individuals, foundations and companies. As at June 2026, private pledges have been received amounting to 41 million francs (= 79%):

- 30 million francs from Wyss Foundation Europe
- 5 million francs from Museumsstiftung für Kunst der Burgergemeinde Bern
- 6 million francs from private individuals, companies and foundations

Discussions and negotiations are currently being conducted with a large number of patrons, foundations and companies in order to secure the outstanding funding needs of 11 million francs.

Have the contributions by Hansjörg Wyss been secured?

The funding provided by Wyss Foundation Europe is contractually committed to the "Eiger" project. The funding agreement between Wyss Foundation Europe and the Foundation of the Kunstmuseum Bern was duly signed in April 2025.

Why is the Kunstmuseum taking on the Hodlerstrasse 6 building?

The Hodlerstrasse 6 building plays a pivotal role in the renovation project: the Kunstmuseum will gain a new administrative building, storage and bistro in the immediate vicinity, meaning it will not have to build any additional expensive office spaces in the replacement building. That will enable more space for art and contributes toward sustainable real estate use. The solution also offers organisational advantages: there are strong operational interdependencies between many departments at the Kunstmuseum, with some examples being art education, the archive, curation of the collection and exhibition management. Housing the museum's administration elsewhere in the city or region would also be financially inadvisable: additional rent would result in a permanent increase in the cost of operation going forward. The bistro can be run cost-efficiently separately from exhibition-related operations.

The renovation of Hodlerstrasse 6 is included in the current cost estimate.

What will the City of Bern contribute?

The Communal Parliament and City Council contribute to the success of the "Kunstmuseum Bern of the future" project in several different ways. To enable the planned renovation, they have decided to transfer building rights to the portion of the building at Hodlerstrasse 6 to the Kunstmuseum Bern Foundation until 31 December 2108 at no charge. This is possible because the current tenant, the Bern Cantonal Police, is setting up a new police centre in Niederwangen (relocation in 2028). Furthermore, the city plans to upgrade Ho-

derstrasse in sync with the planned new museum building; part of that includes moving the exit of the Metro Parking car park to a different location and making a coordinated effort to press ahead with efforts to redesign Bärenplatz and Waisenhausplatz. The costs for the upgrading of Hodlerstrasse are as yet unknown, but will amount to several million francs which will be covered by the City of Bern. Negotiations between the Kunstmuseum and the city are currently in progress to determine who will cover which percentage of the costs involved in moving the Metro Parking exit. The Wyss Foundation Europe has contractually pledged 5 million francs to Kunstmuseum Bern for the relocation of the Metro Parking exit.

Why are no works of art being sold to finance the replacement building?

Additional funds for the museum's renovation cannot be generated by selling works of art from the collection. Kunstmuseum Bern is a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Only institutions recognised by ICOM are considered to be museums according to international standards. Membership in ICOM is a prerequisite for Canton Bern's service agreement with Kunstmuseum Bern. According to the Council's Code of Ethics, museums have a public duty to preserve and safeguard the cultural heritage entrusted to them in the long term. Income from the disposal of an object from the collection should be used solely "for the benefit of the collection and usually for acquisitions to that same collection". (ICOM, Code of Ethics 2.16).

Multiple benefits

How important is the new museum for the hotel, food service and retail industries?

Experience gained through construction projects at other museums in Switzerland shows that a replacement building causes visitor interest to increase substantially in the first few years. Later, its popularity will hinge on the exhibition programme again. The replacement building will make it possible to offer more attractive services and art experiences, and that will provide an opportunity to sustainably increase visitor numbers. The aim is to increase the long-term average number of visitors by 25%. Studies show that the cultural audience generally attaches great importance not only to the cultural offering but also the food service options. A study by the Tourism Research Unit of the University of Bern that was carried out by Kunstmuseum Bern in 2024 shows that the total annual gross added value generated by Kunstmuseum Bern in Canton Bern amounts to around 10.5 million francs. For 100,000 visitors in a year, this comes to approx. 100 francs per admission.

In what way will Canton Bern and the City of Bern benefit from the new Kunstmuseum?

The Kunstmuseum Bern of the future offers a unique, holistic artistic and cultural experience with national and international appeal. Kunstmuseum Bern appeals to everyone and inspires engagement with art and social values, encounters, dialogue and interactions.

All its activities are geared equally toward audiences of all ages – from knowledgeable art aficionados to an inclusive population consisting of both residents and visitors in all their diversity. Kunstmuseum Bern is a vibrant place for extraordinary art experiences, contemplation, research and encounters. With this new infrastructure, Kunstmuseum Bern can therefore continue to fulfil its mandate of protecting, caring for and sharing the first-rate art collection entrusted to it, offering activities to school classes from the entire canton, loaning artworks to other cultural centres in the canton and providing assistance with questions relating to provenance research. The national and international appeal of Kunstmuseum Bern is preserved, and operation for the public and subsequent generations is secured. The museum's renewal relies on energy-efficient, climate-friendly solutions for renovation, reconstruction and construction of the replacement building, meaning that it also follows the sustainability strategy of Canton Bern.

The city, both in its role as a capital city and as the canton's main city, benefits in several ways from the renovated museum: in addition to the cultural policy benefits and the new opportunities it opens up for the hotel, catering and retail industries, it also offers a unique opportunity to coordinate the re-designing of Hodlerstrasse with the museum's replacement building, thereby upgrading the city from an urban development perspective. Further benefits will also come from the planned improvements to Bärenplatz and Waisenhausplatz, which are independent of the museum's renovation but will be coordinated with it, linking the urban space with the more attractive Kunstmuseum. The entire upper part of the Old City will become more important and gain appeal. All the improvements bundled into this overall project offer promising prospects for the City of Bern.

Will the renovated Kunstmuseum compete with the museum district?

No, the offerings complement one another. The triangle formed by the art venues on Hodlerstrasse, Zentrum Paul Klee and the museum district near Helvetiaplatz will strengthen the profiles of both the City of Bern and Canton Bern. The Kunstmuseum aims to collaborate with the museum district, particularly with respect to marketing and mutual projects in the area of art and art education. And as in the past, close mutual support is also possible through works on loan. The further development of Kunstmuseum Bern and Zentrum Paul Klee in conjunction with the development of the museum district is a major opportunity for Bern to position itself as a place of culture and museums, both nationally and internationally.

The schedule

On 14 June 2026, the voters of the Canton of Bern rejected the funding with 51.8% voting "No". Over the coming weeks, the Foundation Kunstmuseum Bern will carefully reassess the situation and determine the next steps.



When and for how long will the Kunstmuseum be closed?

As the project is currently on hold, it is not possible to comment on this at present.

What does "Kunstmuseum Bern on Tour" have to offer during the closure?

While the museum is closed for construction, exhibitions and co-productions are being planned in collaboration with a variety of art institutions in Canton Bern. There will be close collaboration with Spiez Castle, for example, which has exhibition facilities where important sets of items from the collection of 19th century Swiss art can be put on display. It will be possible to experience many of the museum's masterpieces that are not normally allowed to travel in new constellations or uncommon settings. This will be complemented by a playful offering that grants new digital access to the collection.

New Hodlerstrasse

How will Hodlerstrasse look in the future?

An important part of Kunstmuseum Bern's planned renewal is the City of Bern's upgrade of the public space on Hodlerstrasse. The aim is to make this an attractive destination for both museum visitors and the general public alike. This involves moderate traffic abatement measures in addition to the construction plans (moving the Metro Parking exit, redesigning the street).

The paving and intense greenery provided by the row of trees will lend the street a completely new look. Visually, Hodlerstrasse will also follow on from the look found at the paved Bärenplatz and Waisenhausplatz squares and greatly improve the visitor experience in the central perimeter of the upper portion of the Old City. This opens up an attractive, vibrant space in the middle of the city that is accessible to the general public and where people feel at ease.

Which traffic concept is planned?

The City of Bern is responsible for planning the traffic concept and upgrading the public space on Hodlerstrasse.

The time leading up to the completion of the replacement building for Kunstmuseum Bern should be used to gain experience with meeting places in the spirit of "learning by planning". In the view of those involved, this will ensure that the best possible solution can be implemented once the new museum building has been completed – that a solution can be found that satisfies the interests of all stakeholders, i.e. those of the museum, the city and the general population as well as those of businesses and neighbourhoods.

The approach to date had planned to achieve the traffic abatement by temporarily closing Hodlerstrasse to private motorised traffic outside rush hours, with the exact modalities to be adjusted in further planning. In-depth clarification work has shown that, depending on the specific design, such a solution would entail disadvantages that should not be underestimated (e.g. increased traffic in the neighbourhoods, lack of ways to turn around if physically blocked off) and that other measures can be used to achieve the upgrades needed in the museum's street-side surroundings. First and foremost among these considerations is the idea of an attractive meeting place, which will be designed in sync with the new museum building and the renovation of Bärenplatz/Waisenhausplatz.

Will all parking spaces be eliminated on Hodlerstrasse?

For the most part, no parking spaces are to be provided for motorised private vehicles in the area in front of the Kunstmuseum. The parking and delivery situation will undergo an in-depth analysis during the detailed planning phase. One important factor is that the interests of business traffic must be taken into consideration.

Is the planned relocation of the car park's exit feasible?

The only way to upgrade and revitalise Hodlerstrasse to the desired degree is by moving the Metro-Parking exit introducing a new traffic regime. The exit must be relocated in order to create a public space in front of the entrance to the replacement building and make it easier for pedestrians, cyclists, etc. to reach the Kunstmuseum. In-depth clarifications have confirmed that the relocation of the Metro car park exit is possible from a structural perspective. The exit will be moved to the area where the entrance is currently located. This arrangement makes it possible for people to leave the car park and drive toward the lower portion of the Old City; the old ramp at Hodlerstrasse can be removed at the same time.