

Living and working by the river: Duisburg Rhine Park

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Duisburg, October 2005

Duisburg is situated on the Rhine. The only problem is that you cannot see the Rhine. Plans to change that have existed for quite some time. In Hochfeld, not far from the city centre, one of the city quarters from the national/regional programme 'Social city', Duisburg is now slowly coming closer to this goal. Because large-area industrial use is receding, over the last few years there life by the river has begun to come closer to reality for the local Duisburg inhabitants.

In the 'Rhine Park' which covers, after all, an area totalling 58 hectares, a start is now being made on the development of a park with a river-bank promenade. This first construction phase is to be completed by 2008. After that it will continue, step by step, up to the vision of a new city quarter for living, working and leisure.

The location. The Rhine Park is situated on the right-hand high bank of the Rhine between the Culture Harbour in the south and Rheinhausen Bridge in the north. In the east, densely populated housing estates adjoin the area. At present, on the area which in future is to be the park the extensive production shops and warehouses of a wire rod mill are still to be seen which, however, are to gradually disappear in a south-north direction. On the other hand, the rail tracks of the Port of Duisburg management company 'Duisburger Hafen AG' ('duisport') directly on the banks of the Rhine leading to the coal terminal at the tip of the Outer Harbour will continue to be used temporarily.

The idea. With the help of the Rhine Park, 'Duisburg will come down to the Rhine'. Behind this principle lies a long-cherished urban development plan which will be taken into account for all future planning. The City Council resolved as early as August 2000 to pursue the plan of the 'Green Ring'. Green and open spaces around the heart of the city and in a south-westerly direction towards the Rhine should be linked with each other in a ring in order to permanently improve the quality of life and the working environment in the city. With the development of the Rhine Park the first module of the plan 'Duisburg to the Rhine' is being tackled.

The financing. A major project like the Rhine Park cannot be achieved without public funding. The total investment cost of the first construction phase alone amount to about 37 million euros. Besides the European Union, three ministries of the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia are participating in the financing: the Ministry of Environment and Nature Conservation, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (Emscher-Lippe Ecology Programme), the Ministry of Building and Transport (promotion programme 'Social City') and the Ministry of Economics, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Energy (regional economic promotion programme of the Land of NRW). In 2005, thanks to the commitment of extensive promotion funds a start was made on the implementation of the first construction phase, an approximately 27 hectare-large green area directly by the Rhine. The attractive public park grounds are to give the private business sector an incentive for further building development. A 3.5 hectare-large construction site in private ownership is already available for marketing. A further 17.5 hectares of construction land are, during the second building phase, to

become the service, technology and residential location. During that phase the park grounds will be enlarged by a further 9 hectares. On the basis of the existing potential development areas and the planned overall structure up to 4,000 new jobs could be created there.

The aim. A new perception of the city from the outside and the inside

Following a Europe-wide planning competition the Rhine Park is to be implemented in accordance with the plans of the Berlin offices Atelier Loidl und TOPOS. The planning was carried out for the approximately 40 hectares of open land and land to be developed of the Rhine Park which already to a large extent belongs to the city of Duisburg. The site which has been occupied for 'more than 150 years for industrial use' is accordingly to gradually 'link high-class business development with urban living, leisure and recreation and thus generate a sustainable variety of functions'. In the concept of the Berlin designers it is stated that the leitmotif of the planning is the opening-up and orientation of the new quarter towards the Rhine. In that way a new perception of the city from the outside as well as by its own population itself will be made possible.

The use. Extensive park grounds with open meadowland towards the adjacent buildings and an urban promenade along the Rhine characterise the open spaces of the Rhine Park. The building development plan envisages a splitting-up into different areas of use. The main areas of trading and services are concentrated in the north-west, north-east and east of the area, while the residential buildings are to be constructed in the interior of the area. Along the avenue as well as on the park promenade, on the other hand, a mixture of services, residential use as well as locations of hotels, catering establishments, high-class retailing and culture are to be implemented.

The time schedule. In 2006 extensive soil decontamination work is to start. Only after that can a start be made on the redesign as such of the area in accordance with the plans of the winners of the first prize. The project is to be implemented by EG DU Entwicklungsgesellschaft Duisburg mbH.