

# Bierger-Center

Between heritage and modernity



VILLE DE  
LUXEMBOURG  
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multiplicity

Luxembourg City's **BIERGER-CENTER**, which officially opened on 30 June 2014, conveniently houses all the departments you need for your administrative formalities such as the population bureau and the civil registry office. A true gem of contemporary architecture, the building combines classic and contemporary styles and fulfils all the requirements of a modern public administration office.

Place Guillaume II and the surrounding buildings have experienced a long and turbulent history and were home to a Franciscan monastery, amongst other things. It was not until 1856 that the Banque Internationale à Luxembourg (BIL) purchased the premises of the current Bierger-Center, which was previously a refuge for the Dominican Sisters of the Marienthal monastery. In 1904, BIL then sold part of its plot to the Lassner-Simonis family and another portion of land to the Sisters of Saint Elizabeth who founded a home for young girls. In 2003, the City of Luxembourg became the new owner of the latter plot of land. On 27 April 2009, the Luxembourg municipal council approved the final proposal for the new Bierger-Center and work began in spring 2010.



During the renovation and conversion work, it was essential to preserve as many of the old buildings and decorative elements reflecting different periods of Luxembourg's history as possible. When designing the new building, it was decided to link the city hall to the new Bierger-Center: the glass walkway brings the people and the public administration physically and symbolically closer together.

We are now proud to present one of the most modern and practical public administration buildings in the city. Thanks to the Bierger-Center, people living in Luxembourg City can carry out all their administrative procedures while admiring the surrounding architectural beauty.

Welcome!

*The college of aldermen*

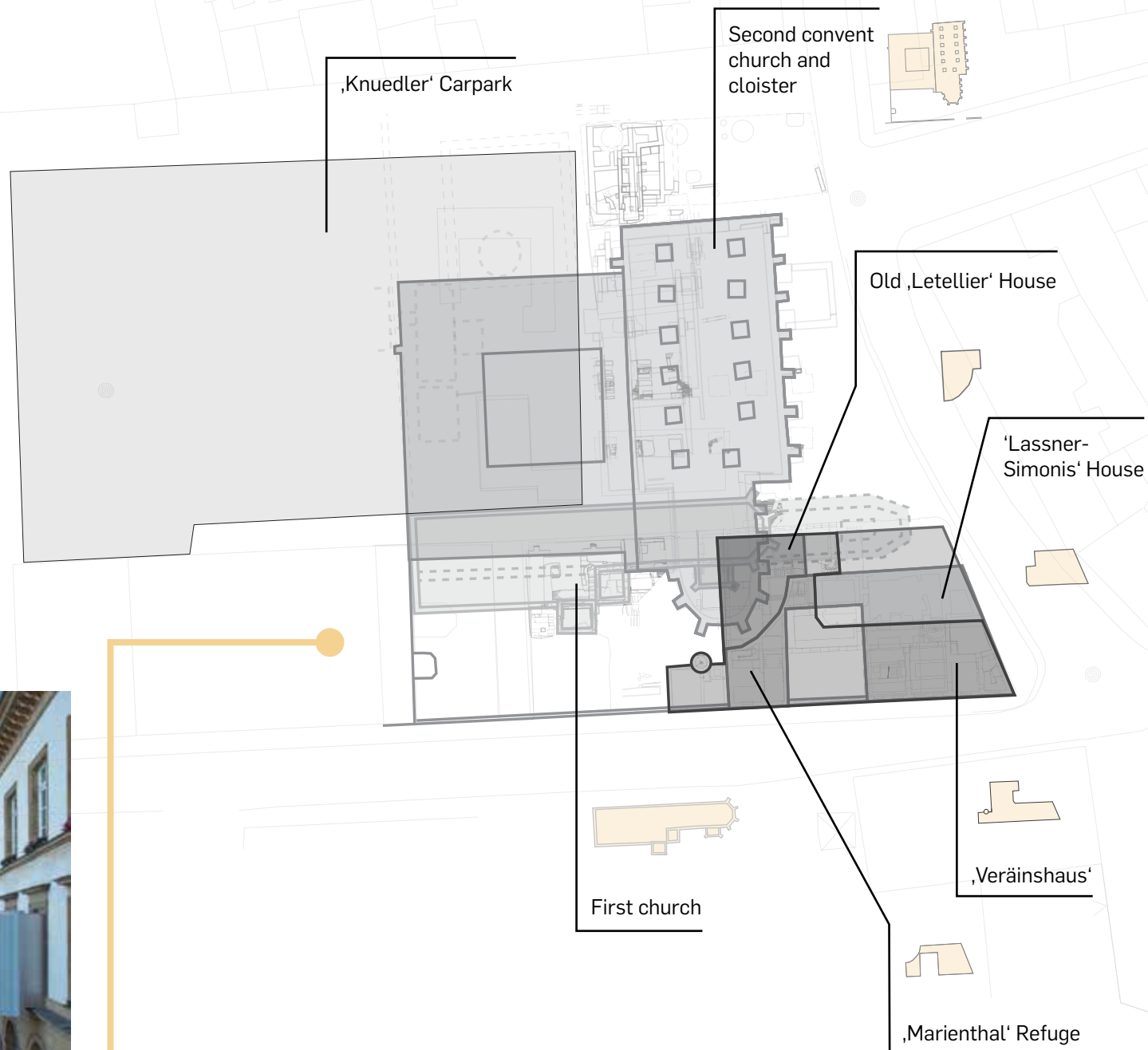




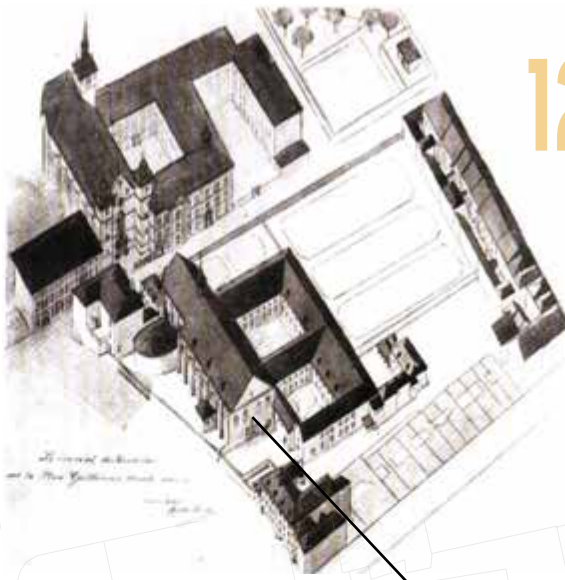
# HISTORY

The Bierger-Center building, located in the former ‚Veräinshaus‘, has had a varied history marked by numerous occupations and transformations over the centuries, making it a facility rich in both historical and architectural contrasts.

Located on Place Guillaume II, in the very heart of Luxembourg's capital, the Bierger-Center is a public administration building for the City's residents. This project reflects the City of Luxembourg's desire to bring public administration and its city hall, the centre of municipal politics, closer together.



1250



## Franciscan monastery

Around 1250, Franciscan friars founded a monastery, which was approximately the same size as the current Place Guillaume II. In 1554, the first Recollects church, named after the Franciscan order of Friars Minor, running parallel to Rue Notre-Dame, was destroyed by a fire.

In 1606, a storm damaged the second church, resulting in the monastery and its church being completely rebuilt, this time running parallel to Rue du Fossé.

Second convent church and cloister

First church



Today, only a few traces of this period remain. For example, the remains of a buttress, probably from a side chapel of the first church, can still be seen in the technical rooms on the lower ground floor of the current building. In the waiting area, the former course of the wall around the choir, which was built later by the Dominican Sisters of Marienthal, is delineated on the floor.

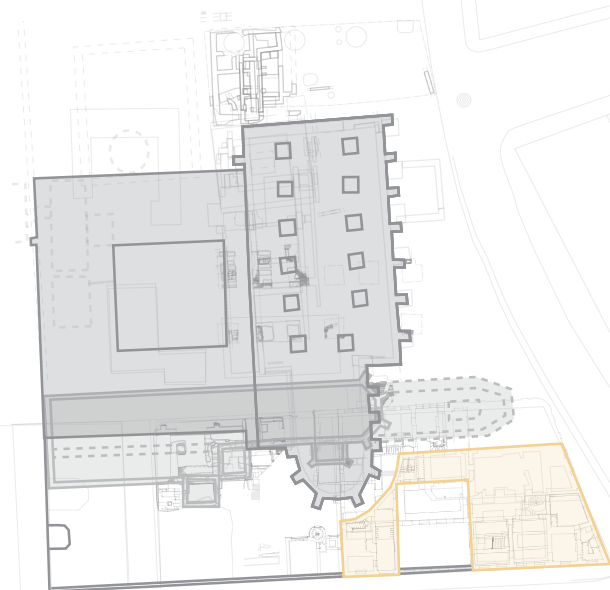


Markings of the refuge

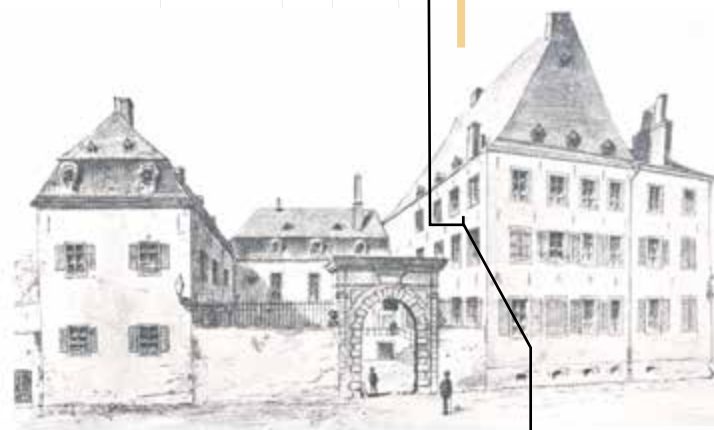




Refuge for  
the noble  
Dominican  
Sisters of  
Marienthal



1691-1783



Exterior wall of the  
old refuge located  
inside today

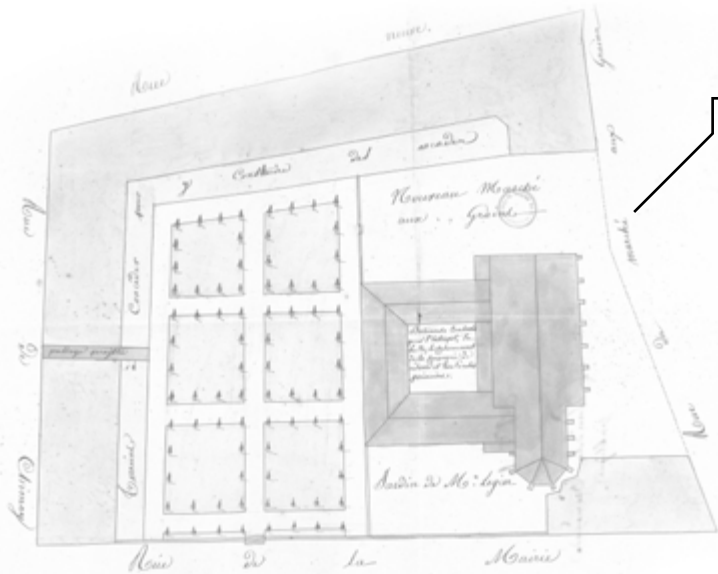
In 1691, the Dominican Sisters of the Marienthal convent bought the land behind the monastery church from the Franciscans to set up a refuge, their city residence. Following the architectural style of that time, it was built around a cour d'honneur, a three-sided courtyard, and had a beautiful façade looking out onto Rue Notre-Dame. The central wing was very narrow because the whole complex was situated very close to the adjoining Franciscan church.

The old wall of the refuge can still be found inside the Bierger-Center building and divides the current room where the counters are located today. |<sup>2</sup>

# 1783-1804

## Disappearance of the monasteries

The fate of this extremely important home to spiritual, religious and cultural life was ultimately sealed in the 18th century. The monasteries were dissolved between 1783 and 1796 after the rise of secularism and French revolutionary troops took the fortress in 1795.



Place Guillaume II in 1811

The Recollects of the Friars Minor were disbanded and the former refuge of the Dominican Sisters was inhabited by senior officials from the 'Département des Forêts', a former department of the French First Republic to which the Duchy of Luxembourg belonged between 1795 and 1815. In 1804, Napoleon gave the Franciscan monks' possessions to the City as compensation for confiscating the former city hall, now the north wing of the Grand-Ducal Palace.

## Exchange of land

Luxembourg City wanted to build its new city hall on Place Guillaume II and therefore entered into negotiations with the tobacco manufacturer, Jean-Nicolas Neyen, who owned the land as well as the old refuge since 1816. Neyen received part of the remains of the Franciscan monastery in exchange for the land adjacent to the current city hall. In 1856, Neyen's widow built a large townhouse with a courtyard and garden on the new plot. Letellier House is still there

# 1816-1863

today and named after her son-in-law who lived there with his wife, Anne Virginie Neyen.

In 1827, the City launched a competition for building the new city hall, which finally opened its doors in 1838 on Place Guillaume II.



Letellier House looks out onto Place Guillaume II, to the left of the Bierger-Center entrance.<sup>13</sup>



# The Banque Internationale à Luxembourg (BIL) head office

When Jean-Nicolas Neyen died in 1856, his widow sold the former refuge of the Dominican Sisters of Marienthal located opposite Notre-Dame Cathedral, to BIL, which set up its first head office there. The bank undertook all the work required for banking operations to convert it into a head office and filled the space left by the refuge's former inner courtyard. The new building runs along Rue Notre-Dame.

BIL Building in 1893



1856



Today, the Bierger-Center entrance is in exactly the same spot as the entrance to the first BIL head office on Rue Notre-Dame. <sup>4</sup>

1904-2003



## ‚Veräinshaus‘

In 1904, BIL sold the northern part of its plot of land to the Lassner-Simonis family. After it was converted to house the Lassner company, the Sisters of Saint Elizabeth bought what was left of BIL's former head office and founded a home for young girls. This home served as a base for young girls who came to Luxembourg City from the surrounding countryside in search of work or education. The Sisters of Saint Elizabeth also purchased Letellier House and its garden when the premises came up for sale in 1911. The complex hosted injured soldiers in the First World War, was a residential and retirement home for the Sisters and finally became a ‚Veräinshaus‘, a meeting place for various Catholic associations. The City of Luxembourg buys the ‚Veräinshaus‘ in 2003.

### A strategic position for a strong identity

The Bierger-Center was located on several sites before finally being moved to Place Guillaume II in 2014. It first opened in 2001 in Centre Hamilius and then moved to the corner of Avenue Monterey and Boulevard Royal in late 2011. In 2003, the City of Luxembourg decided that the Bierger-Center and Luxembourg's registry office should be moved to the heart of the capital so current and future citizens can perform all

administrative paperwork in a single location that is accessible, modern and suited to the needs of an ever-growing clientele. Located next to the city hall, the Veräinshaus offered ideal conditions to fulfil the City's ambitions.





## An ambitious project: comfort and practicality

When designing the new Bierger-Center, Luxembourg City felt it was extremely important to preserve the old buildings and decorative elements reflecting different periods of Luxembourg's history, while at the same time complying with standards and regulatory and safety requirements. The project proposal by the architectural firm STEINMETZDEMEYER successfully met the challenge, offering modern amenities while respecting the historic structures and materials.

Converting and renovating the Bierger-Center required specific expertise and skills from a variety of trades across a broad spectrum of sectors. The multidisciplinary team managed to make these fragile areas user-friendly in a non-intrusive way. The end result is a modern facility that is both accessible and welcoming to the City's residents.







Bierger-Center





# A building with multiple functions

In addition to being the Bierger-Center and Luxembourg's registry office, the new facility also features a new ceremonial hall, five residential units, a garden and a glass walkway connecting the city hall to the new building.

R-1  
R-2

Technical and logistical rooms

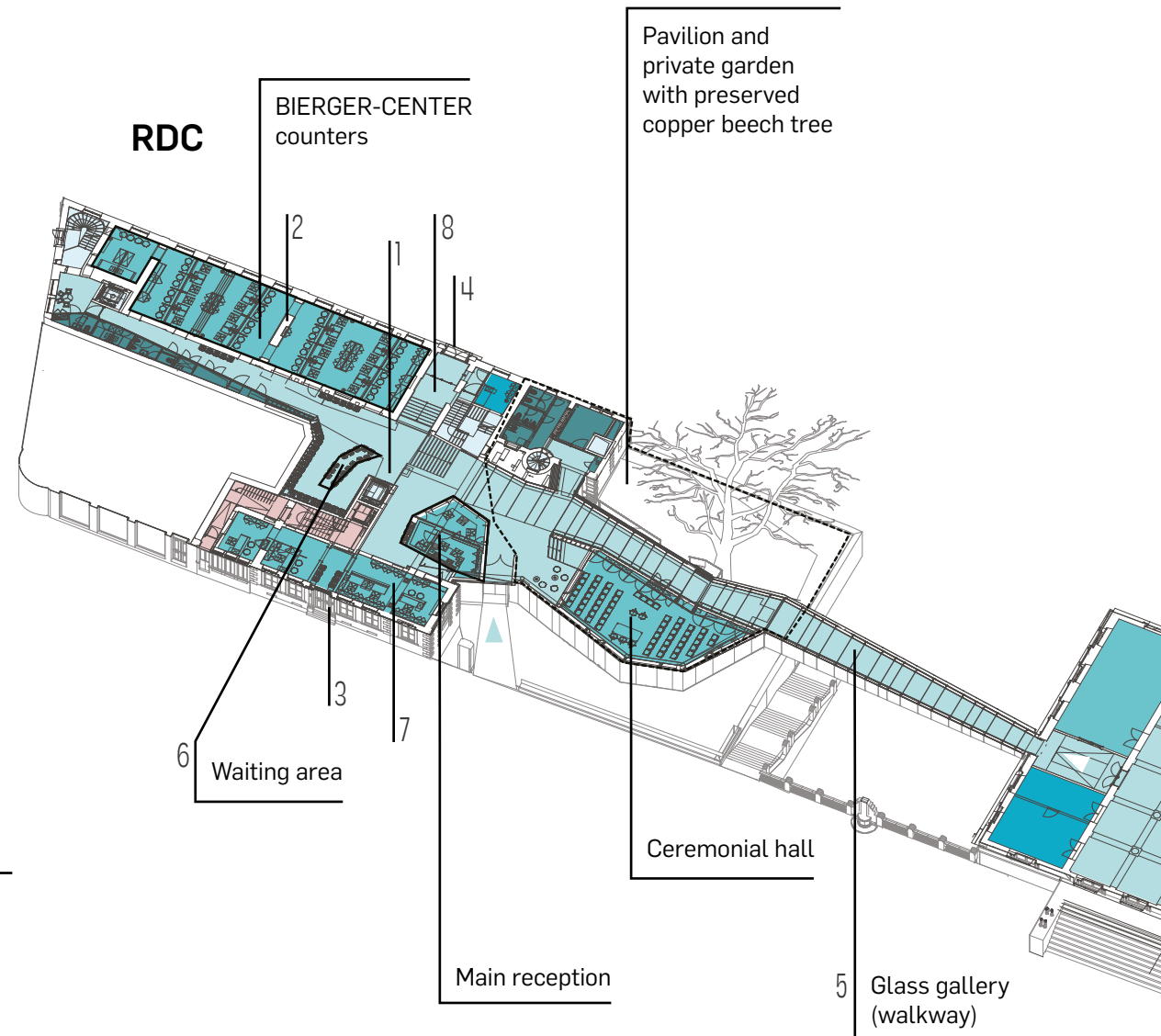
PUBLIC BIERGER-CENTER

PRIVATE BIERGER-CENTER

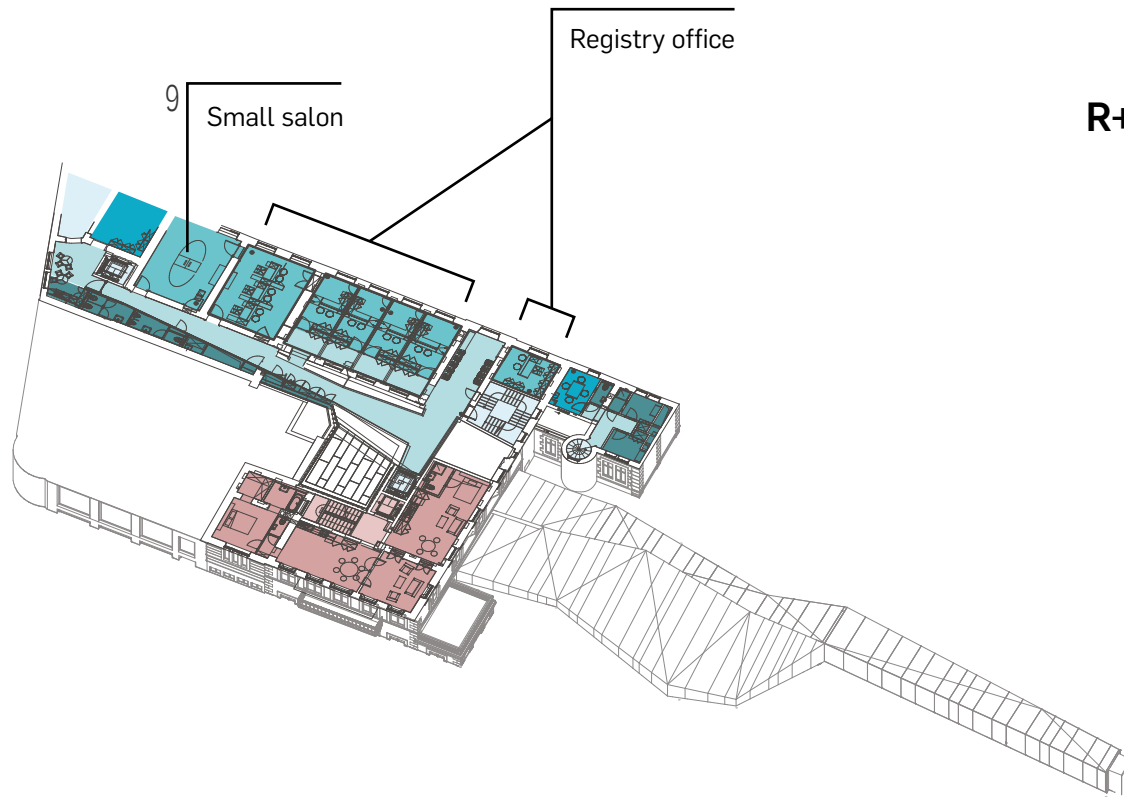
SERVICE SPACES

RESIDENTIAL UNITS

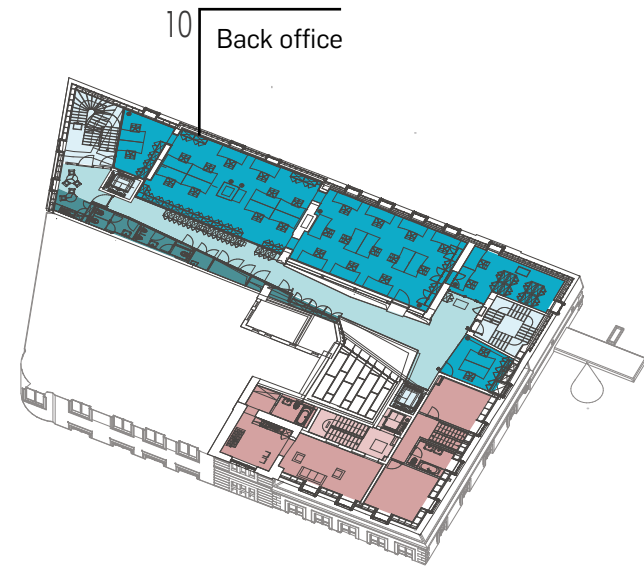
5 residential units:  
2 apartments, 2 split-level  
apartments and 1 studio  
apartment (in the former  
Letellier House).



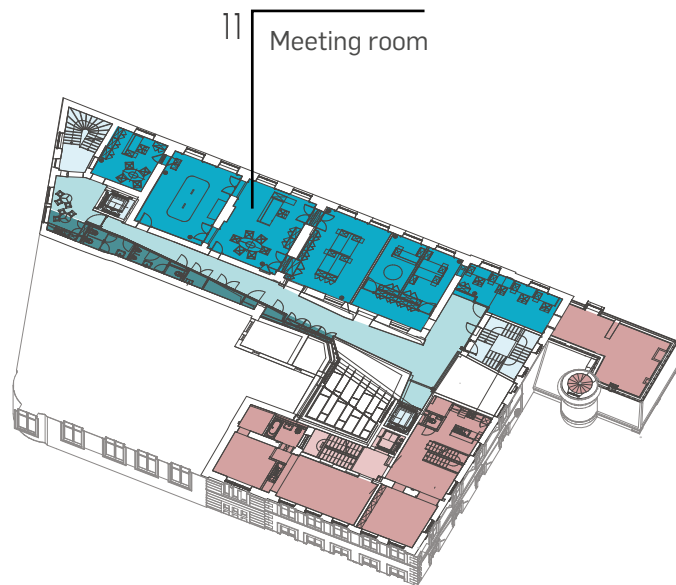
R+1



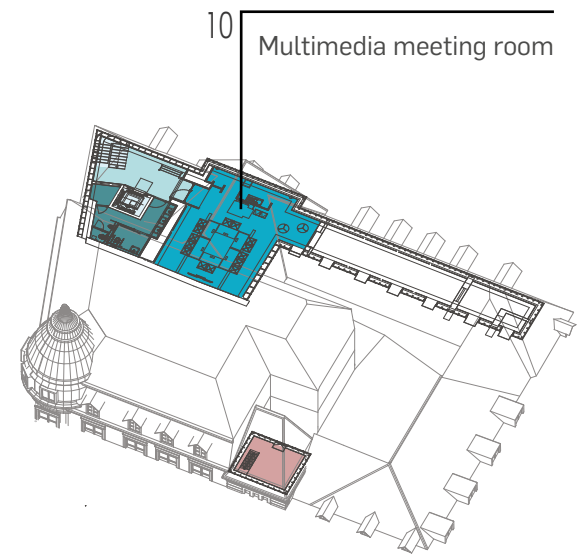
R+3



R+2



R+4





## The walkway: a bridge between the administration and the people <sup>15</sup>

The walkway serves as a bridge, literally between the old buildings of the city hall and the former Veräinshaus, characterised by their right angles and classic stone architecture, and symbolically between the people and the administration. A true work of art, the contemporary walkway is abstract and elegant, cleverly contrasting with the existing surroundings.

It looks very simple but complex technology is hidden behind the edges and joints, ensuring the building's technical performance and seals. It opens onto the new ceremonial hall and reception area and can be accessed by the entrance on Place Guillaume II.

## An in-depth analysis: preserving precious elements

After a study to analyse the state and nature of the premises, the City determined, in consultation with the Service des Sites et Monuments Nationaux (Luxembourg's national conservation service), which historical elements could, and ultimately needed to, be kept and integrated into the new facility.

The analysis revealed that the central space, which had undergone many developments over the years, could be opened up in order to create an atrium and passageways. The rest of the interior design is very in-keeping with the building's history. The new partitioning, for example, has been designed and built to facilitate the insight into the size of the original rooms. The elaborate ceilings have also been kept and restored.



## The patio: in the heart of the complex <sup>16</sup>

The glass walkway enters the building complex, along the central axis until Rue du Fossé. The main axis (east-west) joins with a secondary, perpendicular axis (north-south) which connects the entrance on Place Guillaume II to the entrance on Rue Notre-Dame. The patio is bathed in natural light, thanks to the glass roof, and brings together all four floors of the building, making it the perfect location for the Bierger-Center's waiting area. This patio is where the building's two axes meet, making it easy to navigate around the building. There are lifts and staircases at the ends of each axis, providing access to the other floors.



The former Letellier House:  
restoring past  
decorative elements <sup>17</sup>

The former Letellier House, located behind the Bierger-Center's reception area on Place Guillaume II, features a painted canvas ceiling mural applied by the Letellier-Neyen family between 1860 and 1883 using the technique of marouflage. The painted canvas has been carefully restored after it was originally found in poor condition and caked in layers of paint and varnish. The most recent layers of wallpaper have also been removed from the walls to highlight the period décor.







The Rue Notre-Dame entrance:  
original floor tiles<sup>18</sup>



BIL decorated the entrance of its head office in a historic and classic 19<sup>th</sup> century style with mouldings, frames and stucco decorations. There are marble-imitation pilasters and local, decorative, porcelain stoneware tiles cover the floor. This entrance space has regained its past splendour while featuring modern technology such as discreet automatic doors.



## Contemporary architecture: subtly integrated walkways

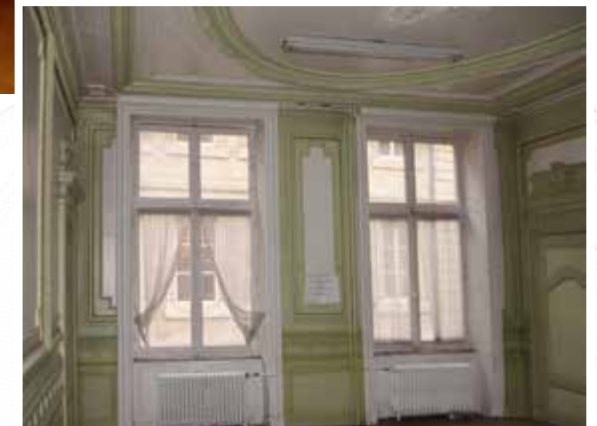
The walkways are deliberately detached from the wall from the first floor upwards, enabling the old façade to open out freely. Meanwhile, the authentic stone preserved in the building's central area contrasts perfectly with the contemporary facilities and furniture, including the lifts, railings, wood panelling, seats and flooring.

The walkways are used as passageways as well as for moving technical equipment. The numerous ducts, which get narrower towards the building's heritage areas, are subtly integrated throughout the building.



The small salon:  
the preserved stucco  
ceiling<sup>19</sup>

The salon, located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, features décor from the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with a stucco ceiling made from prefabricated mouldings.



The stylistic features of the door leaves on the north side date back to an earlier construction phase (18<sup>th</sup> century). The rest of the wall surface is framed by mouldings ending in wooden oak panels, which would have originally been painted, as was the custom in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.



The rooms under the  
rafters: **full of character** <sup>10</sup>



The rooms under the roof are located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors and house the offices of the Bierger-Center and registry office as well as the multimedia meeting room. Their basic structure was kept to ensure they are spacious and full of character.



The meeting room:  
**neobaroque  
decorations** <sup>11</sup>

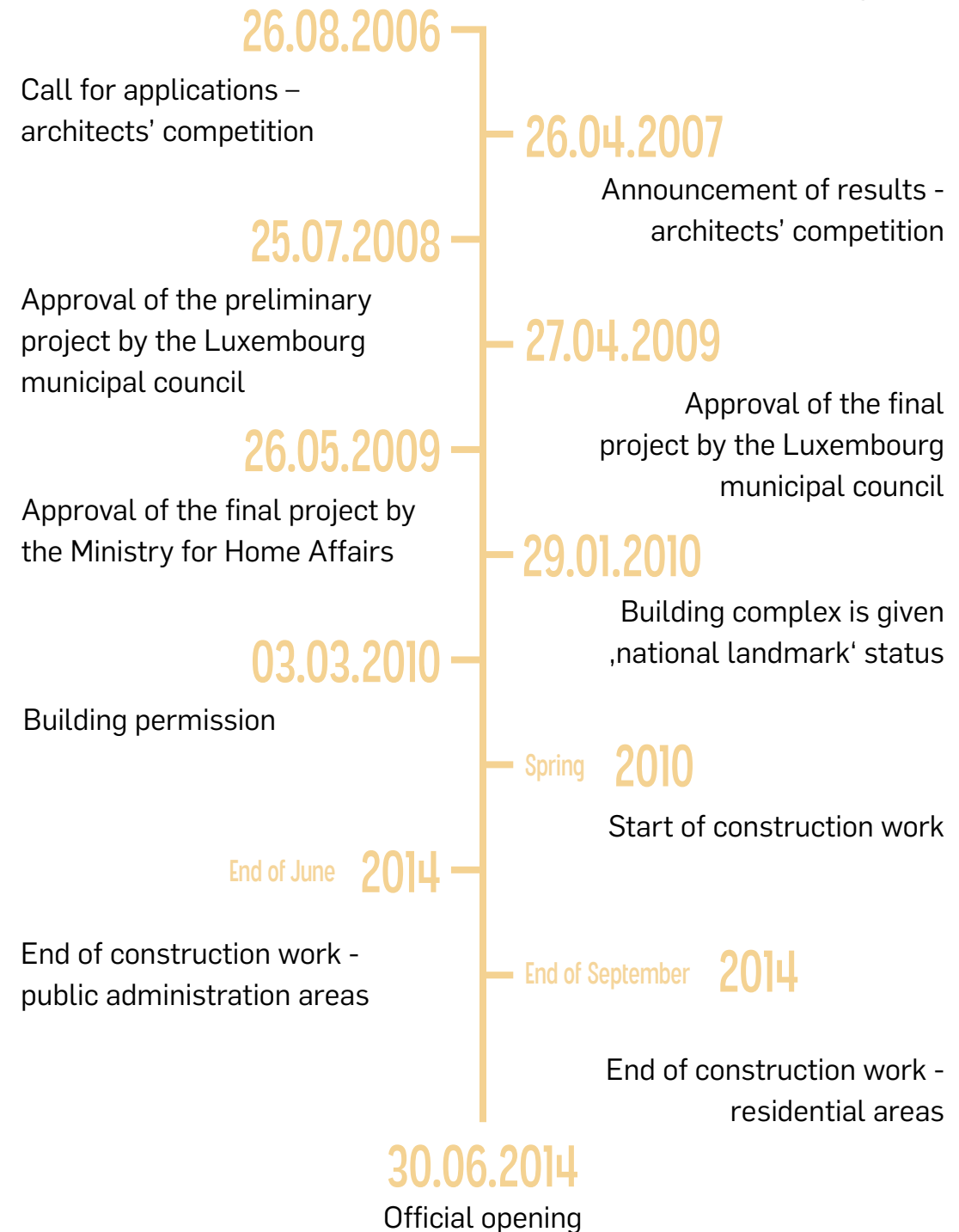


Located on the 2nd floor, this space features neobaroque-style wood panelling. The solid stucco plaster ceiling is divided into several parts by two beams. This wooden decorative detail dates back to the late 19th century. The walls have now been restored to their former glory after taking away the paper tapestry.

## A concern for sustainable development: cutting-edge technologies

The building's energy consumption has been minimised in line with sustainable development requirements. Energy loss has been reduced by improving the outer shell of the building for the cooling installation and hybrid cooling towers. The artificial lighting is also controlled by motion sensors and light intensity sensors.

## Chronology





# BIERGER-CENTER in figures

## Gross surface areas

2'996,00 m<sup>2</sup>

### Public administration areas

including kitchens, toilets,  
maintenance rooms, corridors,  
staircases, lifts; excluding  
underground technical rooms, etc.

716,00 m<sup>2</sup>

### Residential areas

including corridors,  
staircases, etc.

109,00 m<sup>2</sup>

### Underground storage and archives

750,00 m<sup>2</sup>

### Underground technical rooms and equipment rooms

(including passageways)

4'571,00 m<sup>2</sup>

### Total gross surface area

1'256,00 m<sup>2</sup>

### Building footprint

(excluding gardens  
and walkway)

## Costs

22'697'337€

### Quote

including all fees and costs

## Project stakeholders

### Client

Ville de Luxembourg  
Administration de l'Architecte

### Client representative

Walter De Toffol

### Architect

STEINMETZDEMEYER Architectes Urbanistes

### Engineers

T6-Ney & Partners  
Jean Schmit Engineering

### Project management

InCA Ingénieurs Conseils associés







# Impressum

**Publisher:** Ville de Luxembourg 42, place Guillaume II, L-2090 Luxembourg

**Concept and texts:** ART\_is(t) Services | Séverine Zimmer

**Proofreading:** Ville de Luxembourg

**Translation:** Traducta

**Layout:** Julie Conrad Design Studio

**Printing company:** Imprimerie Schlimé

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