



LEUTKIRCHER BÜRGER BAHNHOF

Location

Bahnhof 1,
88299 Leutkirch im Allgäu, DE

Building Type

former railway station building (*built ~1898*)

Reuse

gastronomy with in-house brewery, office spaces & multifunctional event hall

Usable Area

~ 1,650 m²

Investment Costs

initial ~ 3.4 Mio. €, currently ~ 4 Mio. €

Governance Model

(citizens') cooperative

Time until Opening

~ 1.5 years - Opening in 2012



Initial Situation

- **Withdrawal of railway operations** led to functional loss of the historic station building
- The building was in a **severely deteriorated condition requiring major renovation**
- **The city owned the building**, but lacked sufficient resources for renovation
- Risk of **long-term vacancy & loss of an important landmark building**
- **Citizens initiated efforts** to develop a community-based reuse concept

Reuse Strategy

Strategy: Combination of economic viability, public benefits & heritage preservation

Spatial Programme:

- **Ground Floor + Outdoor Area:** Gastronomy with in-house brewery ("anchor tenant")
- **Upper Floor:** Long-term rented office spaces with shared kitchen & facilities (*for informal exchange & conversations*)
- **Attic Floor:** Multifunctional hall for temporary uses (*events, concerts, etc.*)

Key Decisions:

- Securing an **anchor tenant** as an economic foundation
- Deliberate decision **not to include residential use**
- Establishment of a **citizens' cooperative** as an ownership & governance model

Objectives

- **Preservation of an identity-defining historic building**
- Development of an **economically viable, publicly accessible multifunctional space**
- Enabling **citizen participation** through cooperative ownership shares

Financing & Costs

- **Total renovation** ~ 3.4 - 4 Mio. €
- A high level of **self-construction** (*reduced construction costs*)
- Ongoing costs include **maintenance & hereditary building rights lease payments** to the city ~ 12,000 €/year

Financial Components:

- Cooperative shares
- Bridge financing through bank loans (*repaid quickly*)
- Public funding:
 - Heritage authorities
 - Municipality & regional government
 - Foundations (e.g. "*Lebendige Stadt*")

Income Sources: Rental income, event space rentals, cooperative shares, additional revenues (e.g. *PV system*)



Operating Concept

- **Operator:** Cooperative structure, largely supported by voluntary engagement
- **Use Concept:** Mixed-use concept combining long-term rental with event & cultural uses
- Functions as a **hybrid everyday place**, including workplace, meeting point, cultural & event venue, directly connected to railway infrastructure (*strengthening accessibility & integration*)
- **Goal:** Long-term, economically stable & socially embedded operation

Challenges & Solutions

- **Challenges: Severely deteriorated building condition**
 - *Solution: Broad professional network, pragmatic construction approach & cooperation with local craftspeople*
- **Challenge: Public resistance**
 - *Solution: Transparent communication & ambassador system to build trust & support*
- **Challenge: High financial risk**
 - *Solution: Anchor tenant & cooperative financing model*
- **Challenge: Complex permit** (heritage & fire safety regulations)
 - *Solution: Close cooperation with authorities, strong relationships & long-term commitment*

Key Actors

- **Main Operators:** Citizens' cooperative
- **Ownership Partner:** City of Leutkirch (*hereditary building rights, political & administrative support*)
- **Operational Contributors:** Crafts businesses & public authorities

Transferability

What makes this example particularly instructive?

- Demonstrates **how large, complex vacant landmark buildings can be reactivated** through professionally organised citizen-led models
- Shows **the effectiveness of cooperative ownership structures**
- Illustrates how **heritage preservation & economic viability** can be **successfully combined**
- Highlights the importance of **storytelling, community ambassadors & trust-building** (*for overcoming resistance & mobilising resources*)

For whom is this model suitable?

- Cities with large landmark buildings facing vacancy
- Projects with strong local identity & community relevance
- Initiatives with strong professional expertise & long-term commitment (*organisational & financial responsibility*)

Tips

- ✓ Conduct a **self-assessment before starting the project**
- ✓ Use **team members' competencies** strategically
- ✓ Build a **stable core team** with clear roles & responsibilities
- ✓ Establish clear **decision-making structures**
- ✓ Maintain **open, transparent & proactive communication**
- ✓ Foster **motivation & personal commitment** within the team
- ✗ Underestimate **project goals & resource requirements**
- ✗ Start complex projects **without a reliable core team**
- ✗ Underestimate **conflicts & external resistance**
- ✗ Treat the project purely as an **economic venture** without social & community objectives



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