

## CASE STUDY

### Pariser Platz, Berlin, Germany: an historic square revived (1992 to the present)

After the reunification of Berlin in 1989, and the dismantling of the wall that ran through it dividing East and West Berlin, Pariser Platz became available for reconstruction. It had been lying empty since being destroyed in World War II. During this period it lay in the East Berlin, or Russian sector, of the city that served as the capital of the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (GDR). The square is bounded on one side by the Brandenburg Gate which terminates the vista down Unten den Linden the ceremonial axis of Berlin. Before World War II the then great powers of the world, the United States, Great Britain, France and Austria had established their embassies on the square or in its vicinity. In addition, the Adlon Hotel and several prestigious apartment and commercial buildings enclosed it (see Figure 8.40).

The Square had originally been constructed in 1734 to the plans of the chief royal architect, Philip Gerlach. The construction of the present Brandenburg Gate (1789, designed by Carl Gotthard Langhans and inspired by the Propylæa in Athens) established the importance of Pariser Platz. The gate lies on the western side of the square and was part of the customs wall that surrounded the city in the eighteenth century. In 1880 Herman Mächtigt, the city garden director added two ornamental parterres with fountains dividing the square into symmetrical halves. After the reunification of Berlin there was a universal desire to re-establish the importance of the square to that of its glory days of the period between 1871 and 1933. The question was, 'How?' There was no consensus.

Planning responsibilities for the site were divided. The [Berlin] Senate Department of Urban Development is responsible for overall urban design, zoning controls and landscape design concerns in Berlin but the individual city districts are responsible for local zoning, local development and landscape plans. The latter controls the development and building application process. The form that the restoration of Pariser Platz should take was very much a subject of debate amongst politicians, design professionals and the general public. Some people wanted the square resurrected as it once was; others wanted a *laissez-faire* collage of 'up-to-date' buildings. In addition, the site consists of 11 parcels of land and thus 11 individual owners whose possession dated to the time before the GDR had expropriated the land (see Figure 8.41). They had to be placated.

The outline of the square had been totally obliterated during the war. Archaeological research undertaken in 1992 revealed the square's outline and the locations of the fountains. The open area of the plaza was restored later in the same year. The redesigned plaza thus retains the square's historical outline and includes the foundations of the old water basins and remnants of the fountains. Hans Stimmann who believed that the buildings facing the square should 'combine conservative and modern elements' established the design goal.

A number of regulations and controls guarded the design of the buildings enclosing the square. One of the regulations of the Berlin Municipal Government is that