

MEDIA RELEASE

DECISIVE STAGE FOR LES ARTS GSTAAD

Following the positive outcome of both the preliminary examination by the canton and the overall assessment by the local authorities, the population is now invited to take a closer look: the building ordinance for the *Les Arts Gstaad* project will be available from today for public assessment. The Foundation Board of *Les Arts Gstaad* is looking forward to the debate on a project that represents a unique opportunity for the region.

With the issuing of the project for public review, *Les Arts Gstaad* has reached its first milestone. Countless people have been working hard on the *Les Arts Gstaad* project for many years. Generous donors - financially involved with “non-repayable” amounts - have made it possible to gain one of the world’s most renowned architects initially through a project competition and then develop a holistic project and concept and bring it to maturity. With the project’s publication, a crucial stage has now been achieved in the implementation of this major project.

Today, the Foundation Board also recognizes developments that influenced and, to some extent, affected project work: the international financial crisis and national discussions about the future of construction in the country have each had an effect. Such retarding factors show that a visionary project of this nature and on this scale can neither be implemented quickly nor with short-term commitment. *Les Arts Gstaad* is a project for the future that needs to be anchored and embedded. The Board is appealing to the population to be ready for an intensive process and a comprehensive discussion.

The Board is looking forward to this dialogue. Foundation Board Chairman J. Markus Kappeler stated: “We are convinced that the inhabitants of the Saanen region believe in the future of this region as we do.” It is a project of the century, which had to be carefully developed step by step. “The project can only be implemented if it is well established. It is this support from the population, which gives all those involved the energy and the support they need,” as Kappeler was keen to emphasize.

The aim of the *Les Arts Gstaad* cultural centre is to enrich the future of the Saanen region both in cultural and touristic terms and bring economic progress. The project offers a unique concept for Switzerland – being used for concerts, art exhibitions and other public events. The building is to be privately funded and located in the village centre near the railway station. The Foundation Board and the team led by architect Rudy Ricciotti have now developed the project to the stage where it can finally be discussed and assessed by the municipal and cantonal authorities.

The dossier entitled ‘Development plan no. 79: “Les Arts/Ried”’, which is to be publicly judged now at the invitation of the local authorities contains the necessary amendment to the zoning plan as well as a change to the “KLUMF” development plan (small bypass, Gstaad). Planning applications, road and rail project, new transformer station and the general planning application for the underground bus station.

No significant, tangible objections from the authorities

The decision by the authorities was very positive within the overall assessment: development plan no. 79 “Les Arts/Ried” can be approved - subject to the completion of a few simple approval requirements - and the building permit can be considered possible. The municipality in Saanen has a positive attitude towards the project and has already expressed this several times.

Further information can be found here: <http://www.saanen.ch/de/bauwesen/projekte/>

Publication and 30-day appeal period

The building ordinance, building permit applications and any associated plans and documents, together with the preliminary report by the authorities, will be available from 29 January to 28 February 2014 at the local administration offices in Saanen, where they can be studied and reviewed. Any objections to the project must be submitted in writing, giving reasons, within the same period.

Before the population decides at a public meeting, negotiations will be conducted with any objectors - as required by law. The municipality will schedule sufficient time for this in consultation with the applicants. On completion of these negotiations, the municipality will issue an invitation (public meeting) 30 days prior to taking any decision on the project. Following this decision by the population, the matter will be submitted to the Office for Local and Regional Planning (AGR) for approval.

Les Arts Gstaad will upgrade the infrastructure

With their vote on the *Les Arts Gstaad* project, the population will not only be evaluating a pioneering social and cultural building. Access (tunnel Schützen roundabout - *Les Arts Gstaad* site), the bus station, car parking spaces and improvements to the Montreux–Oberland Bernois (MOB) railway track route, the extension of the platforms and a second passageway are all part of the building ordinance to be decided on. *Les Arts Gstaad* will simultaneously provide infrastructure improvements for both Saanen and Gstaad. The project will mean that improvements needed in the public transport sector can also be accomplished.

The land on which *Les Arts Gstaad* is to be built is currently partly owned by the municipality and partly by the MOB and was secured by two purchase rights agreements registered in the land registry in favour of *Les Arts Gstaad* Foundation. The car park and the bus station would be taken over by the municipality. The authorities would also ensure public transport connections. The contractual cornerstones for these obligations are likewise stipulated in the overall project. In addition, the project managers of *Les Arts Gstaad* have also taken precautions to exclude unnecessary risks in construction costs: the estimated construction costs for the centre as well as the tunnel can be insured against overruns and preliminary agreements have already been concluded. Construction has been estimated at 100 million Swiss francs. Currently, sufficient resources for the further development of the project are available to take it through to readiness for approval. Discussions with potential donors are taking place. The cost effectiveness of the concept and the associated business plan are being continuously optimised.

Broad-based support for *Les Arts Gstaad*

At www.lesartsgstaad.ch artists, museum professionals and politicians comment on *Les Arts Gstaad*. They describe the project as a unique opportunity for the region. Curator Bice Curiger and Saanen native Samuel Würsten, artistic director of the Holland Dance Festival, as well as architect Rudy Ricciotti and National Councillor Erich von Siebenthal not only emphasize the importance of this building for the fields of music, art, dance and ballet, and for the Gstaad region, but also the fact that the region needs forward-looking and visionary projects like this to attract tourists.

A step towards the future

In recent months and past years, the Saanen region has endeavoured to point out development opportunities and new directions for the future. The tourism region needs new approaches and development opportunities, since increased competition and future generations have different requirements. The “Gstaad 2020+” association is therefore in favour of this project: “Les Arts Gstaad can be a beacon for designing our future.” As a result, they wished to campaign “demonstrably in favour of implementing the project and a constructive decision-making process”. Choreographer and dance teacher Samuel Würsten said he feels it is key that *Les Arts Gstaad* also wishes to be a centre for dance performances since Switzerland has developed into a veritable “dance country”.

Even national politicians are thinking ahead: “If we do not seize the opportunity, others will,” explains Erich von Siebenthal, National Councillor from Saanen. As the politician emphasized, the location near the railway station is appropriate because it will boost public transport frequencies. Von Siebenthal is now calling for “an objective discussion” with this appeal: the people of the Saanen region have always believed in progress and also have a track record of achieving visionary projects. *Les Arts Gstaad* is a first step. Gstaad and Saanen would need holistic approaches that they can accomplish together.

Rudy Ricciotti: international reputation, highest renown

Rudy Ricciotti also attracted worldwide attention in 2013: the new Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations in Marseilles (MuCEM for short), with its fine latticework façade – a “Mashrabiya” which opens towards North Africa - that enhances the Marseilles coastline with its striking silhouette. Ricciotti has enriched the attractiveness of the South of France with his latest creation: only months after it opened, the MuCEM is already considered to be a major cultural and touristic magnet.

On the subject of *Les Arts Gstaad*, Ricciotti emphasizes the importance of embedding it in the landscape and in its village setting: “It is a project that integrates with respect and humility, but without striving for cultural domination over its environment. Nor does it strain its rural und alpine surroundings.” Urban forms are not suitable for Gstaad. The municipality has made “a brilliant decision” with the choice of location. “Building a visionary cultural and community centre in the heart of the village next to the railway station is a contribution to sustainable development.”

Previous media releases: www.lesartsgstaad.ch

Foundation Board

J. Markus Kappeler-Steffen (Chairman), Marco Strahm (Vice-Chairman), Stephan Jaggi, Hans Ulrich Märki, Dmitriy Rybolovlev, Andrea von Siebenthal, Helga Dobbs, Jobst Wagner.

Kurt Aellen heads up the construction committee. Hans-Ueli Tschanz is responsible for the management of fundraising.

Les Arts Gstaad

The *Les Arts Gstaad* cultural centre will provide the Saanen vacation region with new capacity utilisation and greater independence from seasonal tourism. The cultural centre is to host art exhibitions, concerts (the concert hall with seating for a maximum of 1,200 people is to replace the existing Menuhin Festival concert tent) and other events for the general public.

In February 2010, the Foundation Board and an international jury presented the winning project of the architectural competition by Rudy Ricciotti, award-winner of the French 'Grand Prix National de l'Architecture'. From autumn/winter 2011 on, the project was upgraded and further developed by re-dimensioning, particularly the number of seats in the concert hall.

Rudy Ricciotti

The architect embeds the structure in the topography and its village setting. By cladding its shape in tree trunks, he creates a markedly visual point of reference. Ricciotti is the architect of the *Pavillon Noir* in Aix-en-Provence (FR). He designed the restructuring of the Nikolai Concert Hall in Potsdam (DE), the Jean Cocteau Museum in Menton (FR) and the Department of Islamic Arts at the Louvre in Paris. Ricciotti designed the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations in Marseilles.

www.rudyricciotti.com

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