

PAUL-SCHRAG-HAUS

HOUSE OF HISTORY of the Jews of Baden or HOUSE OF JEWISH CULTURE in Baden

A LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT FOR BRUCHSAL

*"That's a really great idea, a house of the history of Baden Jews in Bruchsal.
The initiative is very good because it aims to ensure that the property
of the former synagogue in Bruchsal is treated with the utmost responsibility."*

Dr. Joachim Hahn, Alemannia Judaica

A proposal of the Förderverein Haus der Geschichte der Juden Badens e.V., Bruchsal

"There has to be an end sometime" or "The stones can go!"

"Memory must not end, it must also remind future generations to be vigilant". This is how former Federal President Roman Herzog commented on the ongoing final discussion.

In his speech in Yad Vashem in 2020, Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier emphasized Germany's responsibility in the fight against anti-Semitism: *„Seventy-five years after the liberation of Auschwitz, I stand before you all as German President, burdened with great historical guilt. Our German responsibility does not pass away, we want to live up to it. You shall measure us by it. There must be no end to remembering.“*

Idea-finding process and competition

Fortunately, Bruchsal doesn't get out of his responsibility with a succinct "there has to be an end sometime". Bruchsal's municipal council has decided to take the population with it on the way to a decision about a responsible handling of the synagogue grounds. This is exemplary throughout Germany. The results of the idea-finding process were transferred into a professional ideas competition, because, according to the Lord Mayor, this property has a very special meaning: *"There is no other place in Bruchsal where it is so important to reconcile the past and the future"*.

It is difficult to find the one and only correct one of the drafts, as they are very different from each other. It was no surprise, however, that almost all the designs pleaded for the preservation of the Synagogue foundations. The majority of the participants in the competition focused on museum facilities such as the Paul Schrag House proposed by the Friends, knowing full well that this can contribute to the future viability and prosperity of our city. The preservation of the synagogue foundations as well as the realisation of cultural facilities such as this history and culture house are wise approaches for further discussions in the city administration and municipal council. The latter is now called upon to make a decision that will contribute to a positive urban development for the coming decades.

The foundation walls of the former synagogue

These are an indispensable part of Bruchsal's culture of remembrance. Therefore, it is essential to preserve and present them, as they bear witness to the unique event in Germany that a fire station was built 15 years later on the foundation walls of a synagogue whose fire was not extinguished by the fire brigade during the Night of Broken Glass in 1938.

In Marburg, a garden of remembrance was established on the site of the former synagogue, because these are *"historically important fragments, especially in view of German history and the current situation"*. On the square of the Old Synagogue in Freiburg, a water level commemorates the people who were persecuted, deported and murdered during the Nazi era and calls on people to *"stand up against anti-Semitism and racism as well as for peace and freedom and to defend these values resolutely."*

The idea: House of the History of the Jews of Baden or House of Jewish Culture in Baden - The Paul-Schrag-House

This place of learning is not a museum of memory of the Shoah (Holocaust).

Before the Shoah, with the murder of six million Jewish people, there were 1,200 years of living Jewish culture in Baden, which must be remembered. The Jews of Baden were a long-established group that had lived here without interruption since the 9th century, despite persecution and expulsion.

Unfortunately, this 1,200-year history is usually only read from the end. In school, the Holocaust is once again being talked about, but hardly about the contributions of the Jewish

men and women who helped to build and shape our home in Baden and thus ensured its prosperity.

The goal of the National Socialists was thus almost achieved: to make this forgotten. Images produced by the Third Reich come spontaneously to our minds when we hear Jewish or Jewish people today. Jews on their way to the concentration camps, in overcrowded cattle wagons, behind barbwire, emaciated, oppressed people, mountains of corpses.

We do not see the people who lived in our midst, who in Germany, in Baden, but also here in Bruchsal, have done much for our country. For example the *Brusler* Otto Oppenheimer, Eugen Bruchsaler from Sulzburg, Prof. Dr. Fritz Hirsch, who extensively renovated Bruchsal's castle and St. Peter's Church, banker Julius Bär from Heidelberg, the scholar Ludwig Basnizki, politicians such as Dr. Ludwig Marum, the painters Gustav Wolf and Leo Kahn, the writer Anna Ettlinger or the Nobel Prize winner Richard Willstätter from Karlsruhe. These are only a few from a long list of people of the Jewish religion who have contributed much to our Baden identity and prosperity through their contributions to culture, politics, science and business.



Department store Knopf in Karlsruhe

There are similar projects like the Paul-Schrag-Haus, which was suggested here, with exemplary character: *The Jewish Museum of the City of Frankfurt* collects, preserves and communicates the city's nine hundred years of Jewish history and culture. *The Warsaw Museum of the History of Polish Jews, POLIN*, has rooms for temporary exhibitions and a permanent exhibition on the history of Polish Jews from the Middle Ages to the present day. The educational centre also offers meeting and conference rooms.

Why in Bruchsal?

No place in Baden could be more suitable. More and more often the children and grandchildren of Baden Jews visit the home of their ancestors. For them, the House of Jewish History or Jewish Culture is the first address to gain insight into the lives of their ancestors. Due to its excellent transport connections, its location between the two most important Baden cities with a large Jewish population, Karlsruhe and Mannheim, the historically significant property and the firstclass innercity location, Bruchsal is an ideal location. Express trains stop at Bruchsal station, and regional trains are linked deep into the Baden region as well as into the Palatinate. Bruchsal has its own motorway connection. Two main roads lead directly into the town centre. Baden-Airpark and Frankfurt Airport are not far from Bruchsal.

Ludwig Marum - more than just a citizen of Bruchsal

One of the most important German politicians of the pre-war period came from our city.



Ludwig, Brigitte, Johanna, Hans und Elisabeth Marum.

The anti-Semitism commissioner (Antisemitismusbeauftragter) of the state of Baden-Württemberg, Dr. Michael Blume, demands that the Baden democrat Ludwig Marum, who comes from a Jewish family and grew up in Bruchsal, and his wife Johanna be strengthened and honoured as identification figures in the history of the state: *"It is now high time to give these Baden-Jewish democrats and Nazi victims a place in the history of the state that they deserve ... as co-founders and defenders of democracy in our country ..."*. In the Paul-Schrag-House one can think of Ludwig and Johanna Marum in a dignified and unique way.

The future of Bruchsal as a middle centre

In an interview with the Newspaper *Badische Neueste Nachrichten*, KIT (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology / University) Professor Markus Neppi described the forthcoming difficult times for our cities, in particular the problems for trade and gastronomy that are becoming even more massive. He fears massive shrinkage and calls for making our inner cities interesting in other ways: *"This includes culture and public coexistence. People are beginning to understand that the living environment and the communal use of space are of enormous value even in smaller cities"*.

In the future, the inner districts or pedestrian zones of smaller mediumsized towns will find it difficult to offer visitors an attractive retail assortment. Online trading will continue to be a difficult task for stationary retailers.

Bruchsal as a middle centre will be strengthened

Therefore, Bruchsal's inner city must be strengthened. New ideas and concepts are now in demand, as Professor Neppi also suggested, especially since with the end of the reconstruction work in Karlsruhe, a loss of purchasing power is to be expected for Bruchsal.

Bruchsal can do more than baroque castle and asparagus

With the Paul-Schrag-Haus, a lighthouse project that has never been implemented in the same or a similar way anywhere else in Baden-Württemberg, Bruchsal is able to create a unique tourist pillar in addition to the castle and music automaton museum. These Bruchsal attractions are connected to each other via the castle axis.

All this and much more?

Beyond the idea of a history or culture house, additional possibilities are being discussed in Bruchsal to further enhance our town: Relocation of the *Municipal Museum* to the synagogue area, in addition a *Baden Prison Museum* and a *Baden Learning Centre Democracy*, which informs about the often stony path to freedom and our liberal democracy. These ideas are good and right, as they contribute positively to the development of our city. They increase the attraction of Bruchsal and the attractiveness of the city centre.

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