

### **New Home for Nuremberg's Digital Startup Scene**

**Nuremberg, Germany, October 16, 2020. Consulting, coaching, making new contacts, and a strong network of partners from economics and science: with these ingredients, combined with the availability of affordable office space, the ZOLLHOF Tech Incubator aims to support in particular tech startups and digital innovators based in the German city of Nuremberg and surrounding areas on their way to success. Set up three years ago, the startup center can now move into the newly designed Zollhof premises, which a wealth of extras. The landmarked building is set to become nothing less than the new home for tech startups and digital innovators in Germany. Drees & Sommer, an expert in construction and real estate, advised the client during the conversion.**

Benjamin Bauer, CEO of Zollhof Betreiber GmbH explained: 'Even at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Zollhof was considered a place with a spirit of change and was a symbol of industrialization. More than 100 years later, it is now the right address for the best ideas and most creative minds to keep up with the competition in the age of digital transformation, in a national and international context. We are not just talking about renting an office. Our young entrepreneurs have access to a broad network of knowledge, startup experts and business partners who can provide advice and assistance during the startup process. We have created an ecosystem in the form of the ZOLLHOF Tech Incubator to turn innovative ideas into success stories.'

### **High-Caliber Promoters and Highly Reputed Companies Provide Support for the Startups**

Overall, the digital transformation is expected to create around 360,000 new jobs throughout Germany – and Nuremberg wants to scoop up as many of these as possible. As a result, German federal state of Bavaria, the regional government of the Bavarian region of Central Franconia, the city of Nuremberg and the Bavarian State Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments (BLfD) provided appropriate funding and subsidies. The shareholders include strong brands from science and business, including the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg, the Nürnberger Insurance Group, Siemens, Schaeffler and HUK Coburg. Also on board is Professor Dieter Kempf, the acting President of the Federation of German Industries (BDI).

### **Much More than Just a Home for Desks**

In line with its motto, the ZOLLHOF Tech Incubator wants to be nothing less than the new home for tech startups and digital innovators in Germany.

And this spirit is put into practice in the new startup center: ‘Anyone coming into the ZOLLHOF immediately notices an incredible buzz of activity and creativity,’ said Benjamin Bauer. ‘Everyone has an enormous amount of drive and is motivated to create something new.’ The unique charm of the repurposed old factory building is also intended to be a factor in this atmosphere of enthusiasm.

### **Distinctive Face, Striking Address**

‘The refurbishment of the historic Zollhof 7 building gives the digital business incubator a new distinctive face and a striking address. With around 2,800 square meters of office and laboratory space, the startup center is located southwest of Nuremberg's historical center. It scores highly due to its relaxed, matter-of-course atmosphere. In combination with the new layout of the outdoor area, it creates a high quality of user experience,’ said Drees & Sommer project leader Christian Matschke. His Nuremberg-based team provided project steering and other services during the Zollhof conversion project.

2,800 square meters of space on three above-ground and a basement floor are now available for offices, communication, meetings, events, and food and beverage outlets. The workspaces consist of a mix of zones with open-plan workstation areas, combination and individual offices, which can be used by employees of the various startup companies around the clock. Tech startups can rent a room in the ZOLLHOF Tech Incubator for a minimum of three months and a maximum of two years.

### **The All-Inclusive Startup Package**

In addition to very low-cost office space and excellent public transport connections, due to the immediate vicinity of Nuremberg Steinbühl suburban railroad station, the startups benefit from office services such as a central reception, free wireless local area network (WLAN), printers, tea and coffee making equipment, meeting rooms and accommodation facilities. A kind of tech workshop provides space for smaller machines and electronics workstations. For prototyping, there is also a network of companies whose tools can be accessed by the startups, covering 3D printing, wood, metal, laser cutting and finishing. Access to investors, business angels, digital promotion programs, demo days and preferential access to conferences complete the range of services.

### **Preserve the Past, Look to the Future**

The ambiance of the startup center and the materials used are strongly influenced by the immediate surroundings and the location: ‘Simple building materials used in industrial settings, such as exposed concrete, steel, metal mesh and glass take up the spirit of the neighborhood and create the right connections,’ explained Christian Matschke.

Essential intrusions into the building structure were worked out in close cooperation with the heritage protection authorities. These include an external escape staircase, a new internal staircase and an elevator. All additional facilities such as sanitary rooms, coatrooms, cleaners' rooms, storage and catering areas were designed along the lines of a *house within a house*. Christian Matschke pointed out that this concept, together with the preservation of the old load-bearing structure, the vaulted ceilings and the cast-iron supports, means that the original layout of the building remains visible, with the result that it retains its typical character and pleasant rough charm.

### **Zollhof as a Witness to History**

'The building is a witness to history – it tells us something about the lives and thinking of its builders and also the history of the city,' stated Christian Matschke. Originally built in 1896, Nuremberg's state customs building benefits from good public transport links due of its location in the immediate vicinity of the railroad. In past times it was used especially for storage and inspection of goods. It was designed by Emil Hecht, one of the most successful Nuremberg architects of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nuremberg's tradition as a city of culture and trade was also reflected in the façade design, with echoes of medieval Renaissance architecture. The era of industrialization saw a new flourishing of cultural and economic life, in contrast to the past glory days of bourgeois high culture. The use of historicized designs expresses this analogy.

During the Second World War, an unexploded bomb hit the landmarked supporting structure of the second floor. The deformation caused by the impact is still visible in a curvature of the steel girders.

### **Recognized as a Digital Hub Back in 2017**

Even though the space in the old Zollhof has only just been completed, the ZOLLHOF Tech Incubator had already been designated as one of twelve German *digital hubs* by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy in early 2017. Until now, the startups have shared interim offices in Nuremberg's Kohlenhof location, with a total area of around 1,200 square meters. The rush for this space was so great that the 50 workstations were snapped up after only a short time. Now the business founders have about three times the space available, providing them with more potential for an even more comprehensive ecosystem. 'In the final analysis, today's startups are tomorrow's medium sized enterprises. This makes it essential to provide support especially for highly innovative young companies, and to make it easier for them to realize their ideas,' said ZOLLHOF CEO Benjamin Bauer.

## Media Release

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