

The Novartis Campus

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The physical expression of the Novartis transformation is the Novartis Campus in the St. Johann quarter of Basel, on the site where Sandoz had produced dyes and chemicals since the nineteenth century. In 2001, under its chairman and chief executive Daniel Vasella, Novartis decided to transform the industrial site into a campus of research and office buildings. The masterplan was drawn up by the Italian architect and urban planner Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, who designed a grid of streets lined with arcades and trees, inspired by the classical European city.¹

Within this grid, Novartis commissioned buildings from internationally known architects. The Visitor Center was designed by Diener & Diener, while further buildings were designed by SANAA, Peter Märkli, David Chipperfield, Tadao Ando, Rafael Moneo, Fumihiko Maki, Yoshio Taniguchi and Herzog & de Meuron, among others. The building by Frank Gehry, completed in 2009, became the most photographed structure on the campus because of its irregular glass façade.² The campus was closed to the public for most of its history and accessible only to employees and invited visitors, a fact that critics in the city regarded as the privatisation of a part of the urban space. In recent years Novartis has opened parts of the site to the public, following agreements negotiated with the canton on the use of the Rhine bank and on public access.³

The Novartis Campus is also a financial statement. It was built at a cost of several billion Swiss francs over two decades, a sum that reflects the conviction of the company's management that the attraction of talent depends on the quality of the working environment. Its realisation required the cooperation of the canton, which agreed to the relocation of a public road, the Hünigerstrasse, and to the inclusion of the road area in the campus, an exchange that was approved by a cantonal vote.⁴ The campus thus shows the close relationship between the canton and its largest taxpayers. The urban planning of the city follows the needs of the

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pharmaceutical groups to an extent that would be unusual in other Swiss cities.

1 Notes

1. On the Novartis Campus masterplan by Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani (2001) and its realisation, see Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani (ed.), *Novartis Campus – A Contemporary Work Environment*, and the documentation published by Novartis. Title and dates to be verified. ↩
2. On the architects of the Novartis Campus buildings, including the Frank Gehry building (completed 2009), see the architecture guides to Basel and the Novartis campus documentation. List and dates to be verified. ↩
3. On the partial opening of the Novartis Campus to the public and the related agreements with the canton of Basel-Stadt, see the press releases of Novartis and of the Basel-Stadt government. Status to be verified. ↩
4. On the exchange of land and the transfer of the Hünigerstrasse to Novartis, and on the related decisions of the Grosser Rat and the cantonal electorate of Basel-Stadt, see the official records of the canton. To be verified. ↩

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