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Frankfurt am Main, 30 March 2022

Shaping the future together

The Consulate General of Germany in Canada presents the application for Frankfurt RhineMain as *World Design Capital 2026*.

The World Design Organization™, based in Montreal, Canada, launched the application process for the title of *World Design Capital 2026* on 3 November 2022, which Frankfurt RhineMain is now applying for. Since the opening of the application process the project management team has worked extensively to develop the application portfolio on behalf of the City of Frankfurt am Main and the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain. On 30 March 2023, the project company has now submitted the application to the World Design Organization™. For this purpose, the link to the final documents was printed in cooperation with the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz using a historical printing process as hand typesetting with lead letters. In a symbolic gesture, the Consulate General of Germany in Canada, represented by Consul General Susanne Aschi-Glesius, presented the art edition of the application to the World Design Organization™.

The submitted application includes a detailed presentation of the vision behind the claim *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life* which was developed in the summer of 2021 by the head of the application and director of the Museum Angewandte Kunst, Prof. Matthias Wagner K. Additionally it includes an image video about Frankfurt and the RhineMain region, and answers to an extensive list of questions. A digital submission was specified by the World Design Organization™. Therefore, the application documents comprising more than 700 pages were embedded in a digital platform built especially for this purpose.

The application, which was inspired by ideas from the design community, by the initial sponsors of the application, by actors within cultural and scientific institutions, as well as by numerous citizens of the region, has already received considerable support: From the State of Hesse represented by the Hessian Prime Minister, Boris Rhein, from the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain, from the capital of Rhineland-Palatinate, Mainz, from Messe Frankfurt, from Frankfurt Main Finance, from the Deutscher Designer Club, from the Art Directors Club for Germany and from the German Design Council, which as a founding member of the WDO is closely connected to the project.

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In June 2023, the World Design Organization™ will publish the short list with the final cities, which will subsequently be visited by the international jury representing all continents. A final decision will be announced by the WDO at its official Annual General Meeting in Tokyo, Japan, in October. In the past, the international accolade has been awarded to cities such as Helsinki, Cape Town and San Diego-Tijuana.

Composition of the vision

The image video presents the diversity of the Frankfurt RhineMain region and provides a platform for a variety of people from the fields of society, culture, design, business as well as politics who stand behind the vision and support the movement. Thus, an atmospheric insight into the social community of the city and its region is conveyed to the jury. The 59 questions specified by the WDO are subdivided into general questions about the organization of the application, questions about the infrastructure, the program for 2026, and lastly design questions about Frankfurt RhineMain.

In regard to the claim *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life*, special fields of action and challenges were identified during the process of developing the design ideas. These will be core themes of *World Design Capital 2026: Construction, Consumption, Culture, Education, Energy, Health, Housing, Industry, Mobility, Public Space, Sport, and Work*. The detailed vision of the application makes the relevance and execution of the themes clear. Frankfurt RhineMain is a diverse and vibrant region, an ideal place for a real-life laboratory in which experimental and concrete (pilot) projects are afforded space. Within the vision, the selection of projects and events currently presented for 2026 and the following years, generated over the past year, becomes visible. In the interaction and under a cross-sectional examination of the defined twelve fields of action, there are ten outstanding and interdisciplinary highlight projects within the framework of the vision for the year 2026 and beyond. On the one hand, these already have a special significance locally or regionally, and on the other hand, they have the potential to radiate nationally and internationally through to the *World Design Capital* year 2026 and beyond. They have emerged from the extensive discussions, submissions and preparations of recent years by stakeholders in the Frankfurt RhineMain region. These include the idea of design kiosks, the exhibition *A Step Ahead* to mark the 125th anniversary of Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt, a new mobility project in the form of a cable car crossing the

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river Main in Offenbach, the development of the cultural campus in Wiesbaden and the planned House of Democracy in Frankfurt.

Within the vision, it also becomes clear which expanded concept of design the application is based on and to what extent Frankfurt RhineMain can build on its historical foundations for this.

Voices from society, politics, economy and culture on the occasion of the submission of the application

"As *World Design Capital 2026*, the Frankfurt RhineMain region would be in the spotlight of the international creative industries and benefit permanently from the exciting WDC projects. The Hessian creative industry is enormously committed to the application. The motto is an ideal fit for our federal state with its democratic tradition and high quality of life. We firmly believe that the application will be successful," says Hesse's Minister of Economic Affairs Tarek Al-Wazir.

"A look at the past shows the rich tradition of Frankfurt and the region as a center of modern design and social awakening. The application to become *World Design Capital 2026* builds on comprehensive societal transformations through design and applied sciences, which have characterized the living, economic and cultural region of Frankfurt RhineMain for more than 550 years. Cross-industry networks combined with a diverse range of cultural offerings that are unique in their quality ensure an excellent infrastructure, the best prerequisites for the title," said Dr. Ina Hartwig, Head of the Department of Culture and Science, as she welcomes the submission of the application.

"The title *World Design Capital 2026* would be a powerful impulse for the international perception and development of the creative hub Frankfurt RhineMain. The city and its region have excellent chances to impress not only with its significant economic and urban quality, but also as a dynamic, resilient business location with outstanding potential for the future. Frankfurt RhineMain is a diverse and vibrant region, an ideal place for a real-life laboratory in which we can provide space for projects to be discussed, developed and realized," says Stephanie Wüst, Head of the Department for Economics, Law and Reform in Frankfurt.

"The Rhine-Main region has a strong competency in design and is also the cradle of German democracy. It would be an unforgivable mistake not to further develop this potential. The motto of the application is highly

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suitable for promoting the democratic and cultural unity of the region and its positive dynamic development," says the Managing Director of the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain, Karin Wolff.

"Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life, is not only the title of this application, but also a movement that we launched at the beginning of 2022. It is dedicated to the most pressing issues of our time and develops concrete projects and comprehensive visions for the year 2026, and beyond, arising from lively discourse and diverse ideas. By Design for Democracy, we mean responsible design to facilitate, expand, sustain, and intensify life – designing good, participatory solutions to good problems arising from changes in our environment, technology, economy, and society. At the same time, we understand *Design for Democracy* as a movement consisting of very different participants who focus on the potential ability to design a future worth living in and who are prepared to convincingly develop new possibilities for the shaping of processes, structures and atmospheres that make it possible to approach one another and to live together in the present," explains Professor Matthias Wagner K.

One year for activation, participation and the creation of a common vision

The one-year period between the start of the movement in spring 2022 and today's submission of the application in March 2023 was used intensively by the project company together with the design community to find participants, initiatives and supporters with various cooperation partners and participatory formats and to encourage other (co-)designers to play a decisive role in shaping the path to the vision.

An outstanding example from recent months is the WDC Tour 2022, which took place in the Frankfurt RhineMain region in the fall and ended with a grand finale at the Frankfurt Book Fair. The *Design for Democracy* workshop van stopped at more than 20 locations. On site, young designers offered creative workshops for students as well as open participatory activities. In addition, numerous actors and initiatives participated at the individual tour stops, such as in Geisenheim, Hanau, and Oberursel. In total, more than 1,000 students reflected on how they would like to shape their region in order to be able to live there in a better way. Just as many citizens joined and became supporters of *Design for Democracy*.

Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life was the central theme of numerous conferences, such as the *DDC Convention for Democratic*

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Design 2022 in Frankfurt (25.-26.3.2022), the *see conference 15* in Wiesbaden (9.4.-10.4.2022) or the *With Democracy in Mind* events by Hessen Design. Last but not least, there were numerous keynote speeches and discussion rounds with representatives from society, politics, business, culture and creative industries.

At the end of the participatory process as part of the application phase, the project association invited submissions of design ideas with an open call. During the ten-week period, more than 60 exciting and diverse design concepts were submitted. The inspiration gained from these design proposals. The inspiration gained from these design proposals further enriched the project ideas that emerged from the previous events and discussions. Together, these ideas form the framework for the development of the 2026 vision. This has already resulted in a widespread, regional network, a new community upon which the movement can be built and which counters a wait-and-see mentality with a constructive "let's do things differently together" approach.

A platform for all

With *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life*, a participatory and dynamic platform for all designers will be created for the implementation of the *World Design Capital Year 2026*. It will enable collaborative and co-creative processes through which projects and design ideas – both on a large and small scale – can be discussed and tested, developed further and implemented. Moreover, the platform makes all of this visible to a wider public from the very beginning, ranging from local to international audiences. In this way, the projects selected for 2026 and the addressed key topics can radiate not only into the Frankfurt RhineMain region but also into the entire world in the future and connect the international design communities.

The title **World Design Capital®** is awarded every two years by the Canadian NGO World Design Organization™ and is an internationally recognized program initiated from within the design industry as a tribute to cities for their effective use of design to promote economic, social, cultural and environmental development. The WDO has special consultative status with the United Nations.

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The sponsors who launched the application *Frankfurt RhineMain. World Design Capital 2026* are the City of Frankfurt under the leadership of the Department of Culture and Science and the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain – which includes, among others, the cities of Wiesbaden, Darmstadt, Offenbach and Hanau, the districts of Offenbach, Hochtaunus, Main-Taunus, Rheingau-Taunus and municipalities in the region – as well as the State of Hesse, represented by the Hessian Prime Minister Boris Rhein.

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