

Lichtenfels 30 July 2019 Business

Lichtenfels is headed towards the future: Kirschbaummühle mill becomes research center

A center for digital next-generation technologies will be established in Lichtenfels. Politics, science, and industry are working closely together to achieve this.

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There is still little to point towards the future from the outside. Photo: Niklas Schmitt
+4 photos

What shall come to fruition in the old Kirschbaummühle mill in [Lichtenfels](#) is nothing less than the future. The city and the district of Lichtenfels, entrepreneur Frank Herzog, and the [Coburg University of Applied Sciences](#) have joined forces to shape this future together.

The press conference on Tuesday morning presented the current status and, above all, the objective of the Lichtenfels Center of Next Generation Digital Technologies (*Forschungs- und Anwendungszentrum für digitale Zukunftstechnologien, FADZ*).

"Digitisation is a key challenge for the city and the region," said Frank Herzog. After all, the region is leading the way in terms of FADZ's central topic: "Lichtenfels is internationally considered a hotspot of **3D printing**."

Stimulus for the region

Nevertheless, the work in the center will not be limited to this. It will rather be composed of three pillars: Applied **research** for regional companies, application consulting and knowledge transfer, as well as education and training. This means that the work shall also include other materials, and generally usable data from work processes shall be obtained.

This is a joint effort intended in particular to strengthen the regional economy. Because, according to Christiane Fritze, President of the Coburg University of Applied Sciences, "close cooperation is the most important component".

Not only new scientists will teach in the Additive Manufacturing and Lightweight Engineering (*Additive Fertigung und Leichtbau*) master's programme which is yet to be established. It will also attract students to the region and sensitise pupils who may well enjoy the future, says Christiane Fritze.

At the Meranier-Gymnasium secondary school, students are already working with 3D printers in a project seminar. Christiane Fritze emphasizes the interaction of teaching, research, further education also for **skilled workers**, and knowledge transfer.

Frank Herzog believes that, above all, small and medium-sized enterprises and craft businesses that have little or no research opportunities, would benefit. FADZ would like to take them along and support them.

FADZ will be located in the Kirschbaumühle mill in Coburger Straße. This would make the mill an eye-catcher in the city, says Mayor **Andreas Hügerich (SPD)**. Due to its location, the EUR 4.9 million acquisition and conversion measures can be financially supported by the promotion of urban development with up to 80 percent.

Additional EUR 3.5 million will be required for initial equipment. The city and the district of Lichtenfels are the sponsors.

Events and training

Running costs can be covered in part by a sponsoring society that has yet to be established. According to Frank Herzog, there is also the possibility that, due to the complete processing facility in the building, it may be possible to accept project work and orders from companies, which could also cover running costs. In addition, events and **training** courses could be held at the premises comprising 2,300 square metres of floor space. But it will be a while until this is the case. Municipal architect Gerhard Pülz says that the conversion would certainly take one to two years; he hence does not expect the old mill to be completed before 2022. At least everything is already being planned to modernise the mill, which was built in 1880, rebuilt in 1950 and ceased operation in 1954, and make it fit for the future.