



Greening the Urban Fabric: A Case Study in Vienna

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Sustainable urban development requires more open and green areas, sufficient local supply, social infrastructure and convenient traffic solutions. All these characteristics interact with the ground floor zone, street spaces and common areas within the urban fabric of the city. The ground floor zone and surrounding open spaces establish the quality of life and are key to the image of the cities. The city of Vienna, like a number of other cities, has a growing problem with vacant ground floors and deactivated desolate street (common spaces). The negative influence of private traffic and the disappearance of retail outlets are the main reasons for the current situation. The symbiotic relationship between the many user groups, local residents, small retail outlets and small-scale local economy are obvious. This coherence impacts on the quality of life in the neighborhood. Today, there is a growing necessity for comprehensive and interdisciplinary planning methods in participative and cooperative processes with the co-operation of stake-holders, urban renewal authorities, investors and tenants. The research project develops strategies for the improvement and recycling of ground floor zones in the urban fabric with all regulative, legislative and financial components in cooperation with the planning authorities operating in different fields of urban planning. Interviews, hearings and case studies in other cities (Berlin, Leipzig and Basel) and cultural activities are some of the methods to define the way forward in planning. The block renewal program - as urban renewal program - is a convenient model instigated by the housing renewal authorities in Vienna because it also targets the improvement of the ground floor zone with the following aims:

- Opening the block courtyards of historical urban fabric to create accessible green spaces
- Creating common spaces between the building blocks, green parks and street spaces for different social groups of a urban renewal area
- Implementation of a block renewal management, coordinating stake holders, tenants, retail outlets and service facilities
- Redefinition of the density of urban fabric on the basis of the new master plans for the urban renewal area.

Although the urban renewal program is geared towards a comprehensive urban revitalization of the whole neighborhood, its implementation has fallen short of target particularly with regard to ground floor zones and open spaces. In the context of the research project, the urban block renewal program was analyzed as well as the barriers and obstacles in planning processes to develop new methods and strategies, to help the program achieve its aims. A recent block renewal zone (Stuwerviertel in Vienna) has been analyzed in a simulation and implementation model to test the feasibility of the planning solutions and methods of the research project, as well as to confirm the transferability of these, on the basis of: Interviews with the planning, building and controlling authorities for urban renewal, urban development, building legislation, urban traffic and local organizations, residents, tenants, investors and stake-holders Case studies of European practice in urban renewal programs Evaluation of the urban block renewal program in Vienna and the building legislation, planning policy and local financial support programs Thematically related studies and events on block renewal programs, renovation, participation, local district management a participatory project for Max-Winter-Place in Stuwerviertel in Vienna. The results of the project are implementable measures for an enduring and sustainable restructuring of the ground level zone with new strategies for organization, regulation, planning guidelines and planning. In addition, a number of sustainable proposals for redesign and planting of the ground floor zones and open spaces require more detailed analysis. The findings addressed not only to the urban renewal department, but to all relevant City departments (urban planning, housing subsidy, traffic planning, environmental protection, architectural/urban design, green planning and business development), delivering transferable and typological planning procedures and methods.

KEY WORDS: Transformation and greening of urban fabric, urban regeneration, transformation of street spaces, re-improvement of local economy and local supply.