

solarCity Linz-Pichling – Sustainable City Development

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Urban District Management

Installation of an urban district management office

In the urban district solarCity Pichling, which according to population statistics has just under 3,000 new residents, with another 4,000 residents in Pichling, urban district management is carried out both at an intermediate level, where it assumes a mediatory or interface function and deals, for example, with project coordination, and at the urban district level in the form of community work.

This means that the intermediate level – the level of "urban district moderators" – functions as a "bridge" between the life-world of the community and the political and administrative authorities, public institutions and private enterprises. This requires multi-dimensional networking and resource work at the aforementioned levels from the professionals involved. In order to achieve an efficient development of the region and the urban district, an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental approach is required.

At the urban district level, the central mission consists in the non-project related empowerment of the local residents and in finding and linking resources and potentials in the district. In other words, the point of departure for community work is the needs and issues of the people living in the community. Their interests determine which issues are to be addressed. The professionals involved in community work help the residents to become active in order to raise awareness of the issues that concern them and to work toward the implementation of appropriate measures.

In addition, community work supports the establishment of horizontal networks between residents, social and infrastructural institutions, and the various cultures in a particular urban district. The improvement of infrastructural conditions in the social environment, i.e. the urban district, is an important aspect of this. It involves creating adequate dwelling spaces, public spaces and workplaces, reducing traffic, building playgrounds, etc. and thus contributes to urban (district) development.

Community work must take all target groups into consideration, since often many different groups of people in one urban district can find themselves at a disadvantage. Prerequisites for community work are local presence and the establishment of an urban district office.

The idea of installing an urban district office in the solarCity Pichling arose as a result of a study carried out by the Austrian branch of the research, planning and consultancy network Wohnbund. The city councilor for social affairs in Linz, Deputy Mayor Dr. Ingrid Holzhammer, decided that community work / urban district work should be applied not only to project coordination but also preventatively, and initiated the establishment of an urban district office in Linz-Pichling.

The office's project coordinator and social worker are both integrated into the municipal administrative hierarchy of the City of Linz and its respective departments (the urban development department and the department of social affairs, youth and the family). This means that they are familiar with the organizational structures of internal administration and politics.

The twelve housing developers are involved in a co-financing concept and thus both support and benefit from the work of the solarCity's urban district office, with which they closely cooperate.

Concept

The objective of urban district management is to determine the various – and sometimes contradictory – needs and interests of residents, local businesses, associations, administration and political authorities, to coordinate and organize them, and often to mediate between conflicting parties, always with a mind to developing and improving the conditions of life in the district.

The interdisciplinary team has the professional and political task of ensuring the smooth running of construction-related and transport-related processes, as well as of helping the residents settle into their new living environment in the urban district of Pichling. This requires a life-world oriented approach; in other words, what is of primary importance here is to help achieve more fairness and co-determination in housing developments, and to do so with the active participation of the residents themselves. Establishing social networks in a new urban district and initiating self-organization and vitalization of the social, cultural and commercial infrastructure requires dialogue, coordination, cooperation, guidance and mediation.

Scope of functions

The urban district office team has developed a pillar model, the pillars being networking, empowerment of the residents, public relations, advisory services on technical matters related to transport, traffic and construction, and project coordination.

The team's wide-ranging tasks include achieving integration of the old and the new parts of Pichling, reflecting on and mediating between the various needs of the resident groups, conducting surveys to determine what activities are important in the community, and establishing networks, not only between the various institutions and organizations in the urban district, but also support networks for the residents.

With respect to housing, dwelling environment and ecology, the focus is on maintaining the dwelling quality, establishing mixed structures among the residents, cooperating closely with the housing developers and supporting active neighborhoods and local associations.

The integrated concept of the functions of urban district management also includes the strengthening of local business enterprises, that is to say local suppliers, as well as the development of centers that will function as focal points of communication.

Events in the urban district

Information meetings on specific themes (expansion of infrastructure, planning and design of recreational spaces, transport and traffic, etc.) serve to support the residents in developing a beneficial social climate (under the motto: "making neighborhoods livable"). Of primary importance is the dissemination of information in order to facilitate the discussion of specific themes with network partners and residents, gather helpful suggestions and avoid potential conflicts that could arise as a result of information deficits relating to construction or social development in the urban district. In this respect, urban district management functions as an information platform or hub, in that it provides information and makes it transparent.

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