

Projects from the Neighbourhood development pillar



Cool Zones



Figure 85: Cool Zone © City of Vienna/Martin Votava

Cool Zones are free, publicly accessible, cool interior spaces where the temperature does not exceed 25°C. The provision of these cool environments in the hot summer months is one of the measures foreseen in the Vienna Heat Action Plan. WieNeu+ set up the city's first two Cool Zones as part of a pilot project in 2023.

The pilot project involved opening the Greiseneckergasse Senior Citizens' Club in the 20th district as a Cool Zone for use by people of all ages over the summer months. The Verein Piramidops women's education initiative was also commissioned to provide a further Cool Zone at the Volkert Market, this time for use by women and children.

The success of the first pilot year speaks for itself: the Cool Zones were heavily used. A total of over 2,000 visits were recorded, with 94% of the visitors in the evaluation survey saying that they had enjoyed their stay in the Cool Zone.

"The Piramidops Cool Zone shows how the social and climate-related measures implemented under WieNeu+ mutually reinforce one another: it's easy to access, fosters social interaction and makes life in the neighbourhood much pleasanter for families. It clearly highlights the need for places where people feel safe, welcome and able to relax." (Mag. Alisa Cela-Goldgruber, project manager, Women's Cool Zone)



Figure 86: The Cool Zone is a meeting place for women © Verein Piramidops

Key messages from the supervisor feedback surveys

With a total of 2,057 guests, the Cool Zones were very well received. Keeping to a maximum temperature of 26°C generally produced and maintained a pleasant, refreshing room climate. Besides providing a cool environment, the focus was also on creating an atmosphere conducive to social interaction. The respective local partner organisations organised language courses, celebrations (e.g. birthday parties) and other group activities, as well as offering a range of snacks (muesli bars, fruit, ice-cream, etc.) and refreshing drinks.

Ergebnisse der Feedbackbögen der Gäste Durchwegs positives Feedback



Figure 87: Results of the guest feedback surveys. © UIV 2023

Project upscaling

The project was scaled up in the subsequent years: twelve Cool Zones were opened in Vienna in 2023, and by 2025 the number had already risen to 22. Responsibility for coordination of the Cool Zones now lies with City of Vienna's Directorate for Climate Matters.

Takeaways & challenges

- Cool Zones are well received by the public.
- Familiar locations with an existing programme of activities and regular guests work better than completely new spaces. The main target group and their demographic characteristics therefore varies from location to location.
- Nevertheless, the Cool Zones also attracted new visitors to the locations alongside the existing regular guests.
- Regardless of the target group, people's primary focus is on social interaction and the opportunity to cool down. Actively engaged staff members in the respective locations are highly important.
- Staff are also instrumental in attracting new guests. Most people surveyed heard about the Cool Zones from friends and acquaintances or through recommendations from other organisations and/or initiatives.

Project partners

- Urban Innovation Vienna (UIV) (City of Vienna climate and innovation agency)
- Greiseneckergasse Senior Citizens' Club
- Verein Pyramidops (women's education initiative)

This project was supported with funding from the "Grätzlförderung" scheme.

Volkert macht Blau – pilot project for climate adaptation measures



Figure 88: GrünStattGru's MUGLI is a public info container that provides details of the various options for greening of roofs and facades. Seen here on Volkertplatz as part of the "Volkert macht Blau" project. © City of Vienna/Bojan Schnabl

"Volkert macht blau" was an interdisciplinary research project in the public space that was carried out on Volkertplatz in the Grätzl 20+2 programme area as part of WieNeu+.

The objective was to find a solution for an integrated water management system, consider climate change adaptation and climate protection options, and develop various co-creation formats in a real-life setting.

A key focus of the project was to develop a concept for installation of a so-called BARTLETT ("blue-green photovoltaic shading module"). The BARTLETT was designed to incorporate a shading element, photovoltaic panels and a "sponge city" water management system in a single unit. It highlights the technical challenges associated with urban heat islands and proposes concrete solutions.



Figure 89: Volkertplatz square © City of Vienna/GB*

Takeaways & challenges

- WieNeu+ proved its worth as a platform for applied research projects.
- WieNeu+ provided the framework for development of the BARTLETT concept, which is now being adapted for further use by GrünStattGrau and the architectural practice Tillner & Willinger.
- Precipitation falling on the photovoltaic roof structure can be channelled uncontaminated into an absorbent "sponge" element for storage and then used to irrigate nearby trees and plants.
- The module cannot be installed in all locations for technical and/or economic reasons.
- The municipal district, as the body funding construction of such a module for public spaces, cannot use solar power directly.

Find out more here: https://www.tw-arch.at/index.php?inc=projectSelection&id=166:3636&lang_id=en (German)

Project partners

- Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT)
- Grimm landscape architects
- GrünStattGrau (research and innovation lab)
- Tillner & Willinger architects
- Local Urban Renewal Office (GB*), Neighbourhood Management team for the Nordbahnhof and Nordwestbahnhof development zones

Grätzinitiative 20+2 programme



Figure 90: Grätzinitiative event at Wittmann bookshop, (l. to r.): ECC Peter Hanke, CMDC 20 Christine Dubravac-Widholm, Andrea Wittmann, DH MA 25 Stephan Hartmann, Deputy Mayor & ECC Kathrin Gaál © City of Vienna/Martin Votava

"Grätzinitiative 20+2" is a special funding programme developed by the Vienna Business Agency in cooperation with WieNeu+. It provides support and advice for small businesses, associations and social initiatives in the WieNeu+ programme area.

Grätzinitiative 20+2 – Funding



Figure 91: Grätzinitiative 20+2 event, (l. to r.): ECC Peter Hanke, Andrea Wittmann, CMDC 20 Christine Dubravac-Widholm, Deputy Mayor & ECC Kathrin Gaál © City of Vienna/Martin Votava

The "Grätzinitiative 20+2 Funding" programme ran until the end of 2025, providing entrepreneurs and community activists in the WieNeu+ programme area with support for the sustainable development of their business or initiative. This included investments in business premises – e.g. renovation works – or utilisation of services (e.g. marketing).

41 of the 53 submitted projects were approved for support.

Grätzinitiative 20+2 disbursed around €385,000 in funding to the selected projects.

<https://www.wien.gv.at/video/4261/Graetzinitiative-20plus2> (German)

ECC Peter Hanke, Grätzinitiative 20+2, 1.10.2024 © City of Vienna

Grätzinitiative 20+2 – Call for Projects

The "Grätzinitiative 20+2 Call for Projects" in 2024 invited submission of innovative use concepts to revitalise vacant ground-floor premises. 63 projects were submitted, which far exceeded expectations. The ten best submissions were selected and provided with comprehensive support in locating suitable premises. They were also given the opportunity to launch a crowdfunding initiative with assistance from project partner imGrätzl.at and take part in information workshops and 1:1 consultations.

The projects that succeeded in renting vacant ground-floor premises in the WieNeu+ programme area within the five-month deadline will receive a subsidy from the Vienna Business Agency to cover 50% of the rental costs for the next three years.



Figure 92: The winning applicants of the Grätzlinitiative 20+2 Call for Projects. © City of Vienna/Martin Votava

Three projects were successful, each of which are now revitalising ground-floor premises in the WieNeu+ Grätzl 20+2 programme area:

- the **HoLi Social Health Hub** (Taborstraße 61/1/R11, 2nd district),
- the "**Ouvertura + GeLa Ochsenherz**" **community food co-ops** (Heinestraße 30, 2nd district) and
- the **Gebärdenverse initiative** (Klosterneuburger Straße 89, 20th district), which provides support and activities for deaf people.

More about the winning projects

The **HOLi Social Health Club** will be the first health centre to work with the so-called "weight-neutral" value system, which places the focus on reducing excess body weight through behavioural changes and ending weight stigma. The holistic health centre will incorporate consultation and therapy rooms and a fitness suite.

The "**Ouvertura & GeLa Ochsenherz**" **community food co-ops** aim to provide a space for fair, sustainably produced food. Their "Solidar:Raum" premises not only supply the neighbourhood with affordable produce from organic, community-supported growers; the space is also used as a hub for meetings, themed public events and courses, with a community kitchen to follow in the near future.

The "**Deaf Spaces**" run by the **Gebärdenverse** initiative will be a cultural hub for deaf people and the first "third space" for Vienna's Deaf community (apart from home and workplace) where Austrian Sign Language is the standard language. The premises will be open to members of the community free of charge and host a varied programme of courses and events.

"At our "Solidar:Raum" premises, our community food co-ops supply local residents and people from all over Vienna with organic produce, regardless of their individual financial situation. Co-op members can also use the space for their own activities and we host a wide-ranging programme of events, soon to include a community kitchen project. The whole initiative is based on the principles of the solidarity economy, which we are translating into everyday grassroots action. We wouldn't have dared to take this step without the unbureaucratic, hands-on support we received from WieNeu+."

(Julia Ochsenknecht, Solidarraum Ouvertura)

Grätzinitiative 20+2 – Funding



Figure 91: Grätzinitiative 20+2 event, (l. to r.): ECC Peter Hanke, Andrea Wittmann, CMDC 20 Christine Dubravac-Widholm, Deputy Mayor & ECC Kathrin Gaál © City of Vienna/Martin Votava

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<https://www.wien.gv.at/video/4261/Graetzinitiative-20plus2> (German)

ECC Peter Hanke, Grätzinitiative 20+2, 1.10.2024 © City of Vienna

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Figure 93: The team from the Solidar:Raum Ouvertura and GeLa Ochsenherz community food co-ops — from utopia to reality. (c) Ouvertura community food co-op

crowd2raum

The "Grätzlinitiative 20+2 Call for Projects" was implemented as part of the research project "crowd2raum" by the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG), which explored different approaches for activation of vacant premises in Vienna and Graz. A special focus was on piloting the so-called "matchfunding" approach: this combines crowdfunding with an additional financial incentive from specially created funding pools, which in Vienna's case were provided by the Vienna Business Agency. imGrätzl.at acted as project lead, with Stadtlabor Graz and WieNeu+ as the other members of the research consortium. The findings of the one-year project were published in a report for knowledge transfer purposes.

Takeaways & challenges

- Demand for affordable ground-floor premises is very high.
- There is a discrepancy between apparently vacant premises and those that are actually available. Only a fraction of the vacant premises are actually offered for rent on the market.
- Contacting the owners of vacant ground-floor units is difficult and challenging, and attempts to do so usually remain unsuccessful.
- Finding premises is especially difficult for associations: many property owners will not rent to associations as the latter are not usually entitled to deduct input VAT.



Figure 94: Kathrin Gaál, ECC for Housing & Urban Renewal, officially opens the Grätzinitiative project "Deaf Spaces" on Klosterneuburger Straße. (l. to r.) Stephan Hartmann (WieNeu+), Franz Steinbrecher (Chairman Gebärdense initiative), Kathrin Gaál (Deputy Mayor & ECC), Dominic Weiss (Vienna Business Agency) © City of Vienna / Martin Votava

Project partners

- Vienna Business Agency
- imGrätzl.at (local community crowdfunding platform)
- Stadtlabor Graz (urban development consultancy)
- City of Vienna – Wiener Wohnen (municipal housing agency)

Links to further information:

<https://wieneuplus.wien.gv.at/graetzlinitiative-20plus2> (German)

<https://wieneuplus.wien.gv.at/graetzlinitiative-20plus2-call> (German)

<https://projekte.ffg.at/projekt/5124532>

<https://presse.wien.gv.at/presse/2025/11/06/gaal-novak-frische-ideen-gegen-leere-geschaefte-graetzlinitiative-der-stadt-wien-foerdert-erfolgreiche-neugruendungen> (German)

Stadtkern_PLUS spatial project



Figure 95: WieNeu+ team members Julia Haberkellner (l.) and Ruth Fartacek (r.) present the project at the Kreative Räume Wien symposium, April 2025. © City of Vienna/Bojan Schnabl

The Stadtkern_PLUS project established spatial commons in existing city neighbourhoods with a view to producing a positive social, inclusive and sustainable impact. Within the context of the project, spatial commons were understood to mean spatial resources that are shared and collectively managed for the benefit of the community.

Project activities

- Information-gathering, assessment of local needs and establishment of a stakeholder network
 - Neighbourhood morphology and socio-spatial analysis
 - Analysis of the legal framework
 - Survey on space requirements in Vienna
- Knowledge- and capacity-building for the set-up of spatial commons
 - Use of various formats to build networks of local stakeholders on the demand side
 - Building of capacities for local spatial commons networks
 - Development of a range of models for spatial commons
- Organisation and set-up of initial pilot projects
 - **Grätzlzentrum+:** The Grätzlzentrum+ community space is located in a former kindergarten in the Johann-Kaps-Hof municipal housing complex. Since early

2025 the premises have been under the management of the charity organisation Volkshilfe Wien, which makes them available free of charge as a low-threshold, flexible-use space for local people and initiatives.

- **RaumCoop pilot:** The non-profit association RaumCoop organises shared-space projects, activates underused premises in the ground-floor zone for non-residential use and makes these available for temporary use at affordable rates. RaumCoop road-tested the concept in a pilot phase from autumn 2024 to spring 2025. However, the RaumCoop project could not be continued after the pilot phase for lack of a financial backer.
- **RaumBooster by imGrätzl.at:** Using a combination of crowdfunding and funding from other sources, Raumbooster helps local stakeholders to activate (vacant) premises or keep spaces already in use.

Takeaways & challenges

- Community-based sharing of spatial resources (spatial commons) is a beacon of hope for sustainable development of existing urban areas. Multiple-use cooperatives in underused spaces not only make environmental sense, but are also desirable from the social perspective. Urban renewal programmes thus have great potential for making affordable space available to local grassroots activists – aside from classical projects to activate vacant properties for interim use.
- The implementation of the three initial pilot projects confirmed that spatial commons embedded in the local neighbourhood generate socially robust, continuously renewed practical expertise and build supportive networks.
- Sharing of spaces requires extensive knowledge in many different fields (regarding legal, structural, financial and organisational aspects, etc.) and substantial investments of time and resources by the involved stakeholders. To this end, the City of Vienna can create and/or develop support structures to relieve the burden on those sharing the space.

The project received funding from the Austrian Climate and Energy Fund and was implemented as part of the programme "*Beacon Projects for Resilient Cities 2040 – 2021 call for proposals*". The project ran for 38 months in total (03/2022 – 04/2025).

The publication "*Sharing: Possible! – Praktiken des Teilens in der städtischen Erdgeschoßzone*" (Mara Haas/Christian Peer/Dominik Wagner/Paul Hahnenkamp) ("*Sharing: Possible! – Sharing Practices in Urban Ground-Floor Zones*"), produced as part of the Stadtkern_PLUS project, is free to download.

Link

Download the publication "Sharing: Possible! – Praktiken des Teilens in der städtischen Erdgeschoßzone" (German)

Project partners

- future.lab Research Center, TU Wien (project lead)
- Law Research Unit, TU Wien
- morgenjungs GmbH (digital platforms consultancy)
- Volkshilfe Wien (charity organisation)
- City of Vienna – Municipal Department for Technical Urban Renewal (MA 25)
- RaumCoop e.V (non-profit association)
- City of Vienna – Wiener Wohnen (municipal housing agency)

"Wiener Wäldchen" mini-woodlands project



Figure 96: Tree planting for the first "Wiener Wäldchen" mini-woodland in Brigittenau (20th district) with CMDC Christine Dubravac-Widholm and ECC Jürgen Czernohorsky © City of Vienna/Elia Stefan

"Wiener Wäldchen" are very dense, highly biodiverse and fast-growing mini-woodlands covering an area approximately the size of a tennis court. The idea of planting small, fenced-off patches of wilderness ("Tiny Forests") in the middle of cities originated in Japan. As well as fostering biodiversity, after several years of growth the mini-woodlands should also have a noticeable cooling effect on their immediate environment.

WieNeu+ took up this innovative idea and planted a "Wiener Wäldchen" at Pappenheimgasse 31 in the 20th district. The mini-woodland is thriving and has already become an invaluable patch of wilderness in the heart of the city.

The first "Wiener Wäldchen" was created in the Stefan-Weber-Park in the 5th district in 2022. At present there are fourteen of them all over the city. The medium-term objective is to find suitable sites for more of these mini-woodlands in all 23 municipal districts of Vienna.



Figure 97: Major planting efforts underway for the Pappenheimgasse "Wiener Wäldchen" in November 2023. © City of Vienna/Elia Stefan

Takeaways & challenges

- The "Wiener Wäldchen" are growing well on all sites where they have been planted, despite the varying soil qualities and maintenance schedules.
- Universities, organisations and local authorities in Austria and abroad, as well as various departments within the Vienna municipal administration, have all shown great interest in the project.
- The opportunity to participate in the planting is very popular among (primary) school classes and is an aspect of the project that creates real added value in terms of environmental education.
- In the districts inside the Gürtel ringroad it is currently difficult to find suitable sites, as "residual spaces" have usually already been planted with trees and/or infilled with buildings, or do not appear suitable from the traffic safety perspective (e.g. trees obstructing lines of sight or overhanging the road).



Figure 98: Now in its second year, the Pappenheimgasse "Wiener Wäldchen" is flourishing. © City of Vienna/Bojan Schnabl

Project partners

- City of Vienna – Municipal Department for Environmental Protection (MA 22)
- City of Vienna – Municipal Department for Parks and Gardens (MA 42)
- City of Vienna – Forestry Office and Urban Agriculture (MA 49)
- City of Vienna Chief Executive Office – Executive Group for Construction and Technology (coordinator)
- Municipal District Office for the 20th District

Find out more here: <https://www.wien.gv.at/umwelt/wiener-waeldchen> (German)

Städte.Gärten.Vielfalt (Cities.Gardens.Diversity)



Figure 99: A roadside flowerbed for everyone with the "Städte.Gärten.Vielfalt." project. © City of Vienna/Julia Haberfellner

"Städte.Gärten.Vielfalt" is an Interreg project in cooperation with Bratislava, with Global 2000 as the project lead. The project will see the two cities implementing urban gardening projects over a three-year period to enhance biodiversity.

The pilot area in Vienna is Jägerstraße in the 20th district, between Wallensteinplatz and Gaußplatz. Flowerbeds were installed on the two grass verges and planted with a specially selected biodiverse seed mixture to create a habitat for insects, particularly butterflies and bees.

The residents of Jägerstraße now have the opportunity to take on the care of one of the flowerbeds. As part of a community planting workshop in the spring, local residents who had signed a care & maintenance agreement were able to help with the planting of their own personal flowerbed.

To date, approx. 50% of the available flowerbeds have been allocated, with a further 25% to follow in autumn 2025 and the final 25% in spring 2026. The development of the plants is regularly monitored by Global 2000. WieNeu+ has commissioned the Local Urban Renewal Office to manage the community participation aspects.



Figure 100: First day of planting on Wallensteinstraße. © Global 2000/Eva Gänsorfer

Takeaways & challenges

- High demand from the local community to take on the care of a flowerbed in the public space.
- After the intense interest at the start, the task now is to keep the urban gardeners engaged over the long term.
- The increasingly hot summers in Vienna are a major challenge, especially with regard to care and maintenance of green spaces.
- Long-term acceptance of the project needs to be fostered within the local neighbourhood to help prevent vandalism and littering as far as possible.

Project partners

- Global 2000 (environmental protection NGO)
- Local Area Renewal Office (GB*Mitte)