



Municipal Housing in Vienna. History, facts & figures

**Stadt
Wien**

Wiener Wohnen



wienerwohnen.at

DID YOU KNOW?

A great achievement

The Karl-Marx-Hof extends over 1,100 metres along Heiligenstädter Straße, making it the longest contiguous residential building in the world. The complex covers an area of more than 150,000 m², of which only just under 20 per cent are built up; the remainder is taken up by green spaces, footpaths and children's playgrounds.

A slight difference

Anyone who has ever been baffled by the inscription on the façade of a municipal housing complex on Obkirchgasse in Döbling can put their mind at rest: "Karl-Mark-Hof" is not a spelling mistake. The complex, built in 1924/25, may be in the same district of Vienna as its considerably larger and better-known brother, the Karl-Marx-Hof, but it is named after the Social Democrat politician Karl Mark (1900–91), Member of Parliament and president of the adult education association Wiener Volksbildungswerk.

A proud record

1900: Vienna has over 2 million inhabitants, 300,000 of whom have no home of their own.

1934: One in ten Viennese citizens lives in municipal housing.

2021: One in four Viennese citizens lives in municipal housing.



Karl-Marx-Hof, 19th district

Dear reader,

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the Karl-Marx-Hof has long since been as much of a Viennese landmark as the Giant Ferris Wheel or St. Stephen's Cathedral – which

is no coincidence, given the building's impressive architecture and its emblematic status in Vienna's long history of municipal housing construction. This special brand of social housing policy has been shaping our city for over a century.

The roots of this extraordinary legacy of urban design lie in the interwar period, when "Red Vienna" built some 65,000 municipal dwellings. The vision was to provide affordable, high-quality housing for a broad sector of the population, yet they achieved even more: the municipal housing complexes of the period were designed to let in light, fresh air and sunshine, as

well as providing public amenities such as day nurseries, schools, libraries and communal laundry facilities.

The century following the ground-breaking ceremony for the Metzleinstaler-Hof, Vienna's first municipal housing complex, in 1919 saw the completion of 220,000 council flats for half a million tenants, plus a further 200,000 subsidised dwelling units. In 2015, after a short break, the Council decided to resume the role of building contractor, carrying its tried-and-tested approach forward into the new millennium with the "SMART" and "Gemeindewohnungen NEU" housing construction initiatives. The City of Vienna's social housing programme remains a successful model that enjoys international recognition and makes a decisive contribution to the city's excellent housing stock and quality of life.

Dr. Michael Ludwig
Mayor

Kathrin Gaál
City Councillor for
Women's Issues and Housing



Karl-Marx-Hof

As well as providing 1,382 flats for some 5,000 tenants, the Karl-Marx-Hof in the 19th district, built in 1927–30, also boasted an array of communal facilities including nurseries, an advice centre for mothers, a youth centre, a lending library, a dental clinic, a health insurance office with an integrated outpatients' clinic, a chemist, a post office, doctors' surgeries, cafés, shops and meeting rooms for political organisations. Although all of the flats had running water from the outset, bathrooms did not yet come as standard in those days, so the complex also incorporated two bath-houses with a total of 20 baths and 30 showers, plus two communal laundries with 62 sink units.



Aiming high

The century of radical change: how Vienna's municipal housing programme transformed people's lives.

A home of one's own, or at least a room ... for many Viennese at the dawn of the 20th century this was a dream that was never likely to be realised. The disastrous housing shortage was to some extent attributable to the huge influx of people flocking to the imperial capital from all corners of the Habsburg Empire. However, it was also partly due to the fact that most housing was owned by private landlords who let their property with an eye to maximising their own profits. At the outbreak

of the First World War in 1914 Vienna already had a population of two million, the poorer sections of which lived in appalling conditions: so-called bed lodgers who couldn't even afford the rent for a room but merely had the use of a bed for a few hours a day. Or subtenants who had a tiny room to call their own – but in an overcrowded tenement flat with no running water, no toilet, no daylight and poor ventilation, where disease was rife and spread quickly.

THE INTERWAR PERIOD: "RED VIENNA"

Following the end of the First World War and the proclamation of the Republic of Austria, the Social Democratic Workers' Party took power at Vienna City Hall. Jakob Reumann became the city's first Social Democrat mayor, heralding in the so-called "Red Vienna" period. The housing situation having been further exacerbated by galloping inflation, a post-War influx of refugees and political instability, the City of Vienna responded by



Reumannhof, 5th district



Hugo-Breitner-Hof, 14th district

launching a large-scale programme of housing construction.

The intention behind the building of municipal housing was not only to provide living space, but also to generally furnish people with a better basis for a “normal” healthy life. The aims were ambitious: the dismal, grimy holes in which many resided were to be replaced

by bright flats flooded with daylight and equipped with a living room, kitchen, hall and even their own toilet and running water; instead of peering into filthy air wells people would look out over gardens and landscaped areas; communal facilities like bath-houses and nurseries were provided to make everyday life easier and help raise living standards.

THE DREAM COMES TRUE

Even today it remains a wonder that they managed to achieve all this, given the dire economic situation at the time. A key factor in the programme’s success was the housing tax initiated specifically for this purpose by city treasurer Hugo Breitner, which – together with other newly introduced levies – allowed the ambitious projects to be realised. As



Per-Albin-Hansson Estate, 10th district



Schmelz Estate, 15th district

a result, in the interwar period over 61,000 flats were built in 348 municipal housing complexes and over 5,000 dwellings erected on 42 estates of terraced houses.

Among them were the City of Vienna's first large-scale housing estate on the area known as the Schmelz (1919–24), comprising 150 houses and allotment gardens

where people could grow their own food; the Metzleinstaler-Hof (1916–25), the first “proper” municipal housing complex, equipped with a bathhouse, lending library, laundry and nursery; the Sandleiten complex (1924–28), the largest of its time with over 1,500 flats; and the Karl-Marx-Hof (1927–30), an outstanding example of the accomplished architecture and urban planning of the period

that still enjoys international renown today. Like many of the city's other large municipal housing complexes it became a battleground in February 1934, when Social Democrat resistance fighters entrenched themselves inside it against the attacking forces of the Corporative State.

Soon after, with the proclamation of the Corporative State, housing con-



Großfeld Estate, 21st district



Barbara-Prammer-Hof, 10th district

struction ceased almost completely, which not surprisingly continued to be the case under the subsequent National Socialist dictatorship and throughout the Second World War.

A NEW START

Once the War was over, the reconstruction effort began, and in 1947 the City of Vienna resumed its housing programme with the building of the Per-Albin-Hansson Estate (the concrete for which was

made from recycled brick rubble). It was swiftly followed by a multitude of smaller complexes, and subsequently in the 1960s by the pre-fabricated highrise developments typical of this period like the Großfeld Estate, the aim being to construct as much affordable housing as possible in as short a time as possible. 1969 witnessed the completion of the 100,000th flat since the end of World War Two.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the immediate housing shortage having been alleviated, the City of Vienna primarily devoted itself to urban renewal and housing refurbishment schemes. Then, in the 1990s, the demand for housing began to rise again, driven by the growth in single-person households, a new wave of immigration and ever-increasing expectations in terms of living standards; in response, a new housing offensive was launched.

In 2004, following the completion of the residential complex at Rößlergasse no. 15 in the 23rd district, Vienna City Council outsourced its subsidised housing construction programme to non-profit housing associations for the following decade. In 2015, however, it decided to resume its role as building contractor and launch a new wave of municipal housing construction. The "Gemeindewohnungen NEU" scheme focuses on the traditional

hallmarks of municipal housing in Vienna, adapted for modern times. Built on land owned by the City of Vienna and financed from a 25 million euro fund specially earmarked for the purpose, these new flats require no capital from tenants and are let for an unlimited period for an affordable rent, continuing the policy once spearheaded by "Red Vienna". The first of these new municipal housing complexes, the Barbara-Prammer-Hof in

Favoriten, was officially opened in November 2019, and by the end of 2020 some 4,000 "Gemeindewohnungen NEU" flats were under construction at Rosenhügel, Montecuccoliplatz and on the premises of the former St. Sophia's Hospital, among other sites.

Already today, the picture is a very positive one: one in four Viennese lives in one of the city's 1,800 or more municipal housing complexes.



Hugo-Breitner-Hof, 14th district



Metzleinstaler-Hof

The Metzleinstaler-Hof on Margaretengürtel was the city's first "proper" municipal housing complex. Planned during the First World War, it was completed in several phases ending in 1925. With its bright, comfortable (though by today's standards tiny) flats it stood for the dawn of a new era and the transition from profiteering private landlords to social housing. Balconies, loggias and bay windows combine with pleated window frontages, towers and irregular rooflines to lend the buildings an almost grandiose flair. Elaborate, colourful majolica decorations in the newer part of the complex, which contains over 250 flats, act as a foil to the building's austere aspect, as does the peaceful inner courtyard accessed via open gateways which belies its location close to one of Vienna's busiest roads.



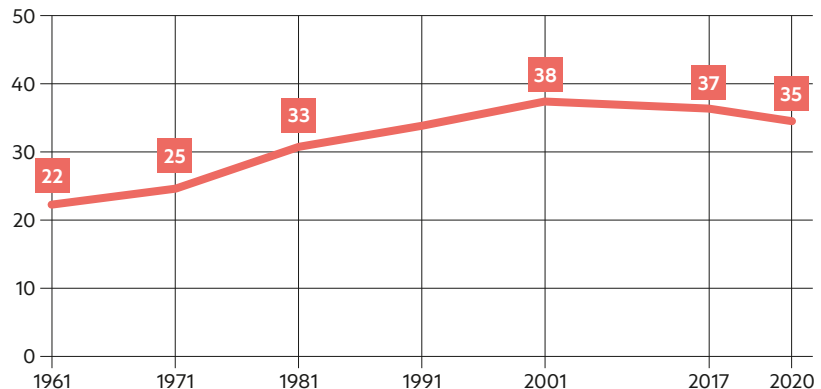
Number one in social housing

Since the launch of Vienna's first ever social housing programme, people's expectations and requirements of their living space have changed a lot.

Vienna's first municipal housing complexes brought a quantum leap in living standards for their tenants. The upward trend continued uninterrupted from then on – though obviously not always in quite such a spectacular fashion. As the graph on the right shows, the average living space per capita expanded from 22 m² to 38 m² between 1961 and 2001. By 2020, the figure was around 35 m². The number of single-person households continues to grow, and we are witnessing decisive changes in the demographic structure which

Living space in Vienna

in m² per capita



Source: Statistical Yearbook of the City of Vienna; STATISTIK AUSTRIA, Microcensus 2017



European complex, 22nd district

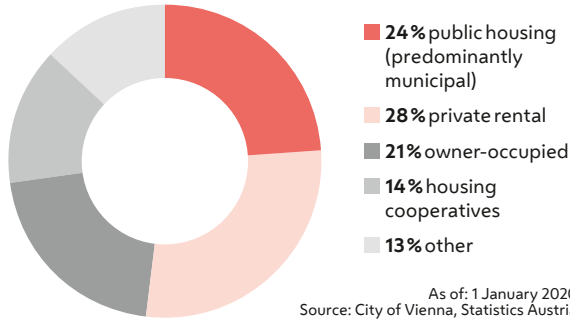
are driving demand for smaller and above all more affordable flats. Here too the City of Vienna has come up with a contemporary solution: SMART flats are compact, low-cost dwelling units with sliding partition walls which allow the layout to be changed according to the tenants'

individual wishes. Ranging in size between 40 and 70 m² (one to three rooms), they are allocated on the basis of one room per person. SMART flats are integrated into subsidised housing projects in order to help achieve a good social mix from the socio-political point of view.

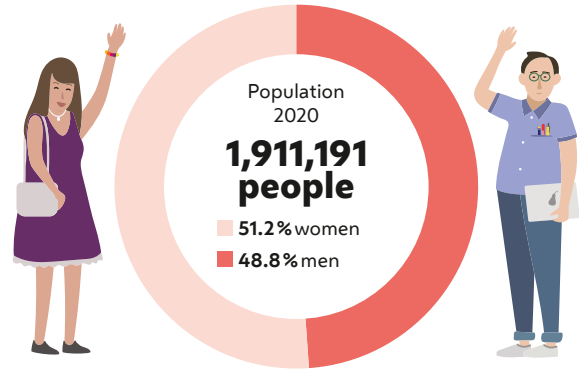
EFFECTIVE SUBSIDY

A look at the trends on the housing market shows that Vienna needs to counteract the general tendency: rents are rising faster than incomes, and the percentage of household income that has to be spent on housing is constantly increasing.

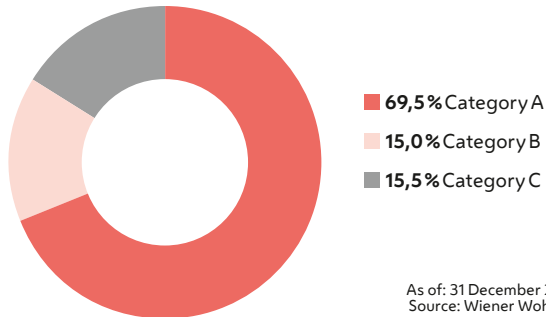
Housing tenure



Vienna is growing



Standard of municipal dwellings



Vienna's population increased by
221,196 people in the period 2010 to 2020

As of: 1 January 2020
Source: City of Vienna, Statistics Austria



TODAY & TOMORROW



Karl-Seitz-Hof, 21st district

Add to that a large number of people looking for flats, which is set to rise still further due to future demographic trends. Vienna's housing subsidy scheme will continue to play an essential role in ensuring an adequate supply of affordable housing in the future, just as it has done to date. Because unlike the majority of major European cities, which only provide direct personal subsidies to tenants, the City of Vienna maintains a mixed system of demand-side and supply-side subsidy. People on low incomes in Vienna receive direct assistance, just as they do elsewhere. In addition, however, Vienna also invests in new housing and the refurbishment of existing older stock, so Viennese citizens reap the benefits of both systems.

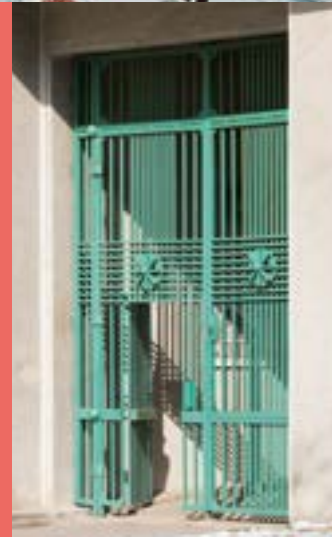
Leading by example, Vienna is the clear international number one in social housing, with some 10,000 dwelling units per annum built with public funding. In 2015, the City of Vienna approved the launch of a new municipal housing construction programme. A total of 4,000 new flats were under construction by the end of 2020, the first 120 of which were officially handed over to their tenants back in November 2019.

Vienna also leads the international field with the multitude of climate and environmental protection measures the city implements as part of its municipal housing refurbishment programme. And it manages all this while never losing sight of its goal of providing affordable, good quality housing for as many people as possible.



Friedrich-Engels-Platz complex

Containing 1,400 flats, this municipal housing project (1930–33) at the western end of Floridsdorf Bridge was the second largest of the “Red Vienna” period after the Sandeleitenhof in Ottakring. From outside it resembles a mighty fortress, with tower-like projections topped with high flagpoles flanking the imposing entrance. In the tradition of Otto Wagner, the facades around the inner courtyard are also strongly geometric in style; variegated balcony railings and entrance gates soften the austere impression and create eye-catching splashes of colour. On the easternmost edge the imposing chimney of the on-site communal laundry pierces the sky – celebrated as a “new Viennese landmark” at the opening ceremony in 1933, it remains an impressive sight today with its monumental clock visible from far and wide.



Housing in figures

Vienna's municipal housing complexes are full of surprises. A look at the statistics reveals some amazing facts and figures (rounded figures):

500,000

people

live in Vienna's municipal housing. That's more than the populations of Linz, Innsbruck and Klagenfurt put together. One in four Viennese citizens lives in one of the city's 1,800 or more municipal housing complexes.



5,500

tumble-dryers

can be found in Vienna's municipal housing complexes. Lined up side by side they would reach all the way around Vienna's Ringstraße.

610

hectares of green space

are maintained by Wiener Wohnen. That's an area equivalent to 854 (FIFA standard) football pitches or the Viennese districts of Mariahilf, Josefstadt, Neubau and Margareten all put together.





5,000

retail units

are administered by Wiener Wohnen – some 15 times as many as in Vienna's major shopping malls Shopping City Süd and Shopping Center Nord.

68,000

trees

can be found on Wiener Wohnen properties, which means an average of 37 trees per municipal housing complex.

1,300

playgrounds

can be found in Vienna's municipal housing complexes, which is three times as many as all the playgrounds in the

Austrian cities of Graz, Salzburg, Linz, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Eisenstadt and Bregenz put together. 52 percent of Vienna's playgrounds are managed by Wiener Wohnen.



13,000,000

square metres of net living space

are let and managed by Wiener Wohnen. That's equivalent to the surface area of a four-metre-wide road from Madrid to Stockholm.



7,900

lifts

can be found in Vienna's municipal housing complexes. Placed one on top of the other, they would make a tower twice as high as the Himalayas.

1,800

caretakers

keep Vienna's municipal housing complexes clean and tidy – their total number is almost exactly equivalent to the average population of a municipality in the Austrian province of Burgenland.





Rabenhof

The Rabenhof complex (1925–1928) in Vienna's 3rd district contains over 1,000 flats. Due to the irregular topography of the site, the complex is a colourful potpourri of buildings with non-uniform facades, interspersed with gardens and courtyards of different shapes, sizes and levels. Romantic landscaped areas with an organic, natural look, playful façade details and little flights of steps linking the different levels create a feeling of restrained dynamism. The complex also has a turbulent history. Originally named "Austerlitz-Hof" after Friedrich Austerlitz, the late editor-in-chief of the Socialist newspaper "Arbeiter-Zeitung", in the civil war of February 1934 it was the scene of a fierce gun battle during which it was occupied by the federal army. In the wake of these bloody events the complex was unceremoniously renamed Rabenhof after the nearby street Rabengasse.



„That typical look“

The outward appearance of Vienna's municipal housing complexes has evolved over the decades, yet the basic underlying concept still endures.

Natives of Vienna can recognise a municipal housing complex at a glance. All of them have a “certain something” in common – although it is often difficult to say exactly what. Perhaps it's the fact that they create a small enclosed world in the middle of the city with almost village-like structures: trees, grass and places where people can meet and interact, be it the children's playground or the communal laundry room. Or perhaps it's the architecture, which has managed to evolve and keep pace with the

trends of the various eras and people's changing needs whilst still proudly retaining a special character of its own.

CLASSIC AND DISTINCTIVE

As unmistakable landmarks of the “Red Vienna” era, it is above all the “classic” municipal housing complexes of the interwar period that still dominate the cityscape in many parts of Vienna today. The housing blocks are grouped around a central communal courtyard, entered via one or more imposing gateways,



Rabenhof, 3rd district



Sandleitenhof, 16th district



Complex at Leystraße no. 23, 20th district

which provides access to the individual sections of the building, the so-called “staircases”. Reviled by critics of the time as “fortifications” because of their self-contained character, or derided as “proletarian Baroque” for the opulent design of their gateways, today they form quiet green oases in the middle of the bustling city.

Some of the more extensive complexes with their characteristic inner courtyards do indeed resemble medieval castles, notably the Karl-Marx-Hof (1927–30) with its mighty walls, huge arched portals, imposing gateways and flagpoles; but also the Rabenhof (1925–28), which comprises a series of courtyards and gardens enclosed by housing

blocks with highly varied facades. Similar yet distinctive in its own way is the Metzleinstaler-Hof (1916–25), planned at an early stage before the end of the First World War and featuring a large, rectangular central courtyard whose shape is reminiscent of courtyards of the Baroque and Regency periods. Balconies, loggias, bay windows or little turrets are



Friedrich-Engels-Platz complex, 20th district



Complex at Wallgasse no. 3, 6th district

often used to lend structure to the facades, and the different sections of a complex or the various elements of individual buildings are often accentuated through the use of colour. Various works of art can also be found on and inside a great many municipal housing developments: ceramic reliefs, bronze statues, mosaics, fountains and stone

sculptures not only grace the more famous complexes, but are dotted around the facades and courtyards of less spectacular ones as well.

All in all, a dignified and attractive way of fulfilling the basic human need for housing. But life has many facets, and to reflect this fact an array of communal facilities

was integrated into the municipal housing complexes right from the planning stage. After all, everyday life is so much easier when everything from the parent advice centre to the nursery, the bathhouse to the communal laundry, the outpatients' clinic to the dental surgery is just a few minutes' walk away. Cafés, shops and lending



Pestalozzi-Hof, 19th district



Viktor-Adler-Hof, 10th district

libraries rounded off the list of amenities, and this wide-ranging local infrastructure gives the larger complexes the feel of small villages.

LIVING SPACE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Right from the very beginning, Vienna's municipal housing was designed to ensure that people would feel good in their living

environment. But it is not only humans who feel at home here: over the years, the city's housing complexes and their gardens have been colonised by an array of other creatures of the furry, winged and feathered varieties, not to mention an array of different plant species. Today, Vienna's municipal housing stock is both Europe's largest protected social

wienerwohnen.at/wiener-gemeindebau/stadtwanderweg.html (German)





Ernest-Bevin-Hof, 17th district



Complex Am Laaer Berg, 10th district

housing habitat and a wildlife habitat with an amazingly diverse flora and fauna. Like the municipal housing programme itself, this support for wildlife has a long tradition, having started back in 1919 with the Social Democrat mayor Jakob Reumann.

To raise people's awareness of these treasures, a special municipal hous-

ing walking trail has been installed between Bruno-Kreisky-Park and the Amalienbad public swimming baths, with information boards explaining different facets of this biologically unique environment.

GREAT NAMES, PROUDLY BORNE

Besides highlighting animals and plants, the trail provides lots of other fascinating insights as it

wends its way from the Haydnhof to the Leopoldine-Glöckl-Hof, the Reumannhof and on to the Metzleinstalerhof.... Just as in rural areas every farmstead has its own appellation, many municipal housing complexes also have names, though poetic-sounding ones like Rabenhof ("Raven Court") or Lindenhof ("Linden Court") tend to be the exception; field names

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES



Goethehof, 22nd district

such as Hasenleitenhof or Am Laaer Berg are more frequent. Mostly, however, the names are bestowed in remembrance of people who achieved great things, including artists like August Strindberg, Oskar Werner and Friedensreich Hundertwasser or scientists like Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein. A few housing complexes – perhaps unsurprisingly, given the Austrian fondness for honorifics – even bear the title of professor or doctor, e.g. Professor-Jodl-Hof, Dr.-Ellenbogen-Hof. There are also a small but significant number of women among those honoured, including architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky and actress Rosa Albach-Retty. Famous Socialists like Karl Marx, Victor Adler and Jean Jaurès are, of course, also represented. And proof that

one does not necessarily have to have Social Democrat leanings in order to be immortalised in the name of a housing complex is provided by the Maria-Restituta-Hof, named in tribute to Sister Maria Restituta, born Helene Kafka, who rebelled against the Nazi regime and gave her life for her Catholic faith.

A BADGE OF IDENTITY

The buildings thus stand as a monument and memorial to the men and women whose names they bear. At the same time, though, the familiar monikers ensure that the Viennese identify incredibly strongly with “their” housing complexes: after all, anybody and everybody can live in Schüttaustrasse, but the address “Goethehof” has a special ring to it.



A sign of the times

It's not only the names that give the housing complexes an individual touch, but also the lettering used: a specific representative typography was selected to match the respective architectural styles. The letters on one building may be rigidly geometrical, for instance, while on others they perhaps have a playful, imposing or elegant look. Even on those without names, the striking lettering lends a distinctive signature: "Built with funds raised through the Housing Tax" in flaming red underlines the programme's successful funding model.



Social responsibility

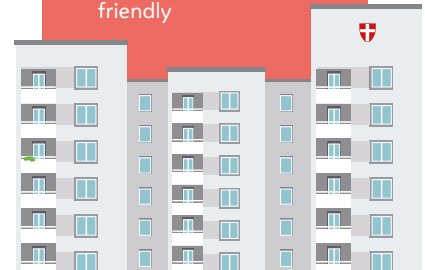
Safe, affordable housing is a key prerequisite for good quality of life and for social cohesion.

Vienna's 420,000 municipal and housing cooperative flats help ensure that rents remain affordable across the city's entire housing market. The result is a good social mix in all districts of the city, forming the basis for a high quality of life. There are also considerable benefits from the economic point of view: the Vienna Model serves as a model for the whole of Europe when it comes to affordable housing. Vienna's social housing programme creates 23,300 jobs in the city in the short term and safeguards 30,100 in the long term – i.e. around 3.5% of jobs in Vienna. Social

housing tenants in Vienna save approx. 670 to 770m euro in rent compared to what they would pay in the private rented sector, which boosts purchasing power and helps prevent poverty. Over a ten-year period, new social housing construction and investments in refurbishment of the existing stock contribute around 2.3 billion euro to gross value creation in Austria. As these figures demonstrate, Vienna's municipal housing programme creates immense added value – and not just for the tenants, but for all citizens of Vienna, for local businesses and the local economy.

Social Housing

- Helps keep prices down
- Aids financial planning
- High quality of life
- Tenant protection
- Good social mix
- Job creation
- Lower energy consumption
- Environment-friendly



DID YOU KNOW?

Short work

Friedrich Engels, friend of Karl Marx and co-author of the "Communist Manifesto", is, like Marx, a popular name-sake in Social Democrat circles. A total of four housing complexes were built between 1930 and 1970 around the square that bears his name in Vienna's 20th district, and the Friedrich-Engels-Hof in the 11th district dates back to 1925/26. Under the Austrofascist regime from 1934 onwards the name of a founding father of Communism on the façade of a building was naturally an ideological thorn in the eye of the Ständestaat, and a pragmatic solution was found – just remove the "Friedrich" and a letter "s" and you are left with the inoffensive "Engel-Hof" ("Angel Court"). The square suffered a similar fate; from 1934 onwards it was known as Pater-Abel-Platz after an anti-Semitic Viennese priest. Both the square and the housing complex reverted to their original names in 1946.

Vienna's municipal housing on the Web

The history of municipal housing in Vienna:

wienerwohnen.at/wiener-gemeindebau/geschichte.html
(German)

dasrotewien.at > Kommunaler Wohnbau (German)

de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gemeindebau (German/English)

Descriptions of all municipal housing complexes

belonging to the City of Vienna: wienerwohnen.at/wiener-gemeindebau/gemeindebaubesreibungen.html (German)



Reumannhof, 5th district



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