



A Spectacular Project in an Urban Space in the Heart of Vienna

Gürtelfrische WEST

8th – 30th August 2020

Press information

A temporary project in the public realm is currently attracting a lot of attention in Vienna: For three weeks, a seven-lane crossing between the 7th and 15th Districts on Vienna's Gürtel ring road has been transformed into a centrally-located, vibrant living and leisure space with a surprisingly urban quality. The oasis in the midst of a jungle of traffic is called Gürtelfrische WEST and offers a consumption-free zone: In addition to cultural and leisure programmes, visitors can also cool off in a pool and stay overnight in a bus-hotel.

The urban living environment has become more important to us – not least against the background of the current corona crisis. Since last weekend, a central location usually dominated by traffic crossing Vienna's Gürtel in front of the city's Westbahnhof railway station has been home to a harmonious ensemble of green space, swimming pool, sunbathing lawn, dance and movement programmes, consumer-free zones, catering, mobile furniture and a range of other leisure options for young and old. Cultural attractions (concerts, DJ evenings, choirs, dance workshops, etc.) are also part of the project, as is a bus-laboratory with workshops and events on urban subjects and a bus-hotel, in which visitors can spend the night. At selected times, cyclists can also take advantage of a free cycle check provided by Fahrrad Wien.

A project for people in an urban space between the 7th and 15th Districts

The project was jointly initiated by **Vienna City Council's Transport Department** and the districts of **Neubau (7th) and Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus (15th)** with the aim of reinforcing the spatial and social links between the two districts, which are amongst the most densely populated in the city, and highlighting the vital urban role of public and green space. **Gürtelfrische WEST is a project that sends a signal by opening up urban space so that people can experience it and get a taste of the alternative possibilities that it can offer.** It also illustrates how cities are permanently evolving and reminds us that the rich history of Vienna's Gürtel (e.g. as a line of defence, urban railway, green space, open air kids' pool, traffic artery) will continue to be added to in the future.

According to Deputy Mayor Birgit Hebein, "in just a few days a seven-lane junction in the heart of Vienna was transformed into a green oasis – a wonderful meeting place for young and old. Gürtelfrische WEST brings people together and shows what can be achieved through the redistribution of urban space. We are delighted that this project in Vienna has enabled us to trigger a discussion about transforming cities."



Markus Reiter, Head of Neubau District, adds, *“even if we are still some way from normality, after the past few months people are more deserving than ever of a little relaxation and leisure this summer. In Gürtelfrische WEST, we and the 15th District have created the necessary space for this. In the heart of a densely built part of the city with particularly high levels of traffic we are giving a little space back to the people, who desperately need it.”*

Gerhard Zatlokal, Head of Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus District, emphasises that the project also creates a new connection between an outer and an inner district of the city that, while temporary, is still groundbreaking. *“The unique project is the result of successful cooperation between Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus and Neubau and helps our districts, which were separated by the Gürtel, to come closer together again. The beneficiaries of this cooperation across political and district boundaries are all the people of Vienna and, in particular, the residents of the 15th and 7th Districts. Both districts have few of the green and open spaces that have been particularly important in the time of corona. This location is ideal, because many people pass the Westbahnhof every day and the project is enabling us to promote recreation, contact and culture.”*

The urban living environment – meeting new challenges with new ideas

Public space and the design of one’s immediate surroundings are decisive for the quality of everyday life. In this respect, a number of current developments – an increasing population, the accompanying densification and climate change, which is turning cities into hotspots –, represent long-term challenges to Vienna. Indeed, climate change is particularly significant in Vienna, which is one of the European cities that are predicted to be most affected by global warming. As a cool oasis in the heart of the urban jungle, Gürtelfrische WEST is inviting people, for three weeks, to take a brief summer break from their everyday routines.

Project initiators

The project was initiated by the Transport Department of Vienna City Council and the 15th (Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus, District Head Gerhard Zatlokal) and 7th (Neubau, District Head Markus Reiter) Districts in cooperation with KÖR – Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Wien and with the support of the Vienna Mobility Agency. The agency art:phalanx, Kultur & Urbanität is responsible for the detailed concept and the general management.

www.guertelfrische-west.at @guertelfrischewest #guertelfrischewest

Press questions:

art:phalanx – Agency for Culture & Urbanity

Susanne Haider, Catharina Cramer

Tel: +43 (0)1 524 98 03 – 11, e-mail: presse@artphalanx.at