



# Municipal Housing in Vienna. History, facts & figures

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# 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 m<sup>2</sup>, 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.

**2016:** One in four Viennese citizens lives in municipal housing.



**Dear reader,**



just like the giant Ferris wheel or St. Stephen's Cathedral, the Karl-Marx-Hof has long since become a Viennese landmark. And that

is no coincidence, because not only is it impressive from an architectural point of view; it also symbolises the long history of social housing in Vienna. For almost a century now, this singular housing policy has been helping to shape our city.

The roots of these extraordinarily innovative urban planning activities lie in the interwar "Red Vienna" period, when thousands of municipal dwellings were built. The aim was to provide affordable homes of good quality for broad sectors of the population, but in practice much more was achieved. The housing scheme created complexes which met the criteria of

giving people access to "light, fresh air and sunshine", while also providing them with nurseries, schools, lending libraries and communal facilities such as laundry rooms.

Between the ground-breaking ceremony for Vienna's first municipal housing complex, the Metzleinstaler Hof, in 1919 and the ongoing SMART flats programme, together with its commitment to start constructing new municipal housing from 2015 onwards, the City of Vienna has built 220,000 municipal dwellings for half a million tenants and overseen the building of a further 200,000 subsidised flats. A successful model that is recognised as such both at home and internationally, the City of Vienna's municipal housing programme continues to make a decisive contribution to the excellent housing standards and quality of life in our city.

Dr. Michael Häupl  
Mayor of Vienna

Dr. Michael Ludwig  
Executive City Councillor for  
Housing and Urban Renewal



## 【 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 sub-tenants 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 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



Reumannhof, 5<sup>th</sup> district



Hugo-Breitner-Hof, 14<sup>th</sup> district

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 pro-

gramme’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 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.



Per-Albin-Hansson Estate, 10<sup>th</sup> district



Schmelz Estate, 15<sup>th</sup> district

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 fight-

ers entrenched themselves inside it against the attacking forces of the Corporative State.

Soon after, with the proclamation of the *Ständestaat*, housing construction ceased almost completely, which not surprisingly continued to be the case under the subsequent National Socialist dictatorship and throughout the Second World War.



Hasenleitenhof, 11<sup>th</sup> district

## 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 high-rise 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 100,000<sup>th</sup> 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. The last municipal housing complex for which Vienna City Council acted as building contractor, at Rößlergasse no. 15, was completed in 2004. That year, the city's entire subsidised housing construction programme was outsourced to non-profit housing associations and cooperatives. Today, one in four Viennese citizens lives in one of the city's 1,800 or more municipal housing complexes.





## 【 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.





## 【 The 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.



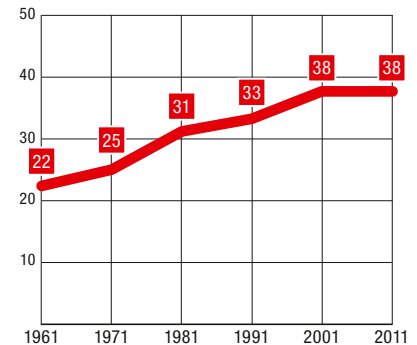
# NUMBER ONE IN SOCIAL HOUSING

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 area per capita expanded from 22 m<sup>2</sup> to 38 m<sup>2</sup> between 1961 and 2001. In 2016, average flat size remains constant at around 36 m<sup>2</sup> per person. At the

same time, the number of single-person households continues to grow: according to figures from Statistik Austria, the percentage has shot up from 22 to 45 per cent since 2000. In other words, we are witnessing decisive changes in the demographic structure which 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,

Living area in Vienna in m<sup>2</sup> per capita



Source: Statistical Yearbook of the City of Vienna



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 m<sup>2</sup> (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

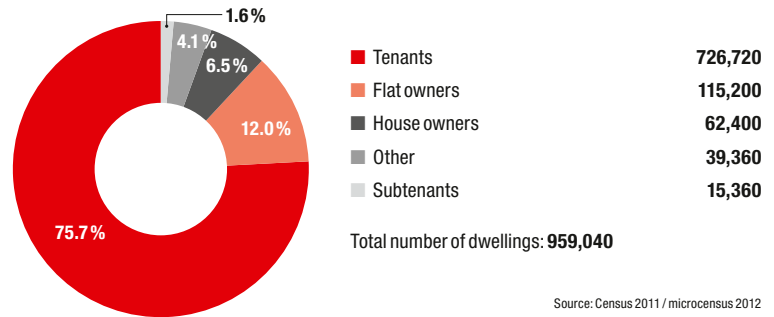
tendency: rents are rising faster than incomes, and the percentage of household income that has to be spent on housing is constantly increasing. Add to that a large number of people looking for flats, which is set to rise still further due to future demographic trends (see graph on p. 13). Vienna's housing 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, who 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 benefit from the advantages 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. A further 4,000 new municipal flats will be built over the next five years.

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.

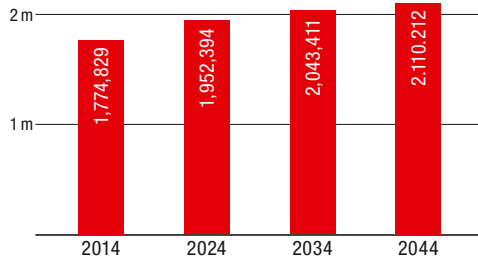
## Property ownership in Vienna

As of: 31 December 2012



## Vienna is growing

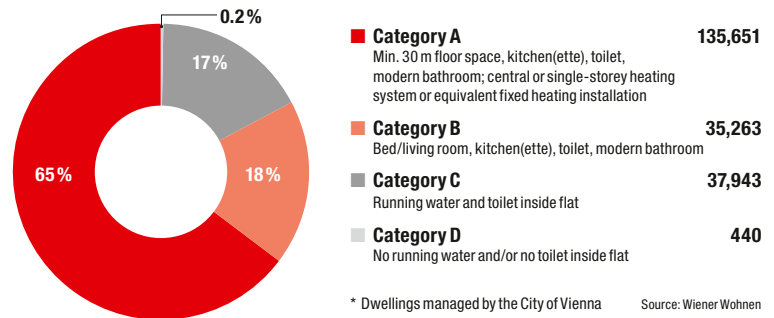
Population



Source: MA 23 (2014 population forecast for Vienna), as cited in „Statistik Journal Wien“ 1/2014

## Standard of municipal dwellings\*

As of: 31 December 2015



# HOUSING IN FIGURES

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



**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.



**500,000  
people**

live in Vienna's municipal housing. That's equivalent to the populations of the Austrian cities of Graz, Innsbruck, Bregenz and Klagenfurt all put together (total inhabitants 509,450; Statistik Austria: 1 Jan. 2012). 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 (approx. 15 cm apart) they would reach all the way around Vienna's Ringstraße.



# 7,600

## 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.

# 5,129

## 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.



# 1,800,000

## shrubs

grow on Wiener Wohnen property. That's equivalent to the number of trees and shrubs that were used to plant Vienna's Danube Island.



# 13,441,914

## square metres of floor 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.



# 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.

# 2,992

## caretakers

mean that the team of people in charge of keeping Vienna's municipal housing complexes clean and tidy is bigger than the population of St. Anton am Arlberg.



## 【 Rabenhof 】

The Rabenhof complex (1925–28) in Vienna's 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

**N**atives 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.



Rabenhof, 3<sup>rd</sup> district



Sandeleitenhof, 16<sup>th</sup> district



Complex at Leystraße no. 23, 20<sup>th</sup> district

## 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, 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



Friedrich-Engels-Platz complex, 20<sup>th</sup> district



Complex at Wallgasse no. 13, 6<sup>th</sup> district

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 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. A masterpiece of another kind is the inscription “Funded by the Housing Tax” which is

triumphantly emblazoned in bright red letters on the façade of many complexes as a tribute to Vienna’s successful financing model.

### **More than just a place to live**

Having a roof over one’s head, somewhere to call home, is certainly a good start. But life has many facets, and to reflect this fact an array of communal facilities was integrated into the municipal hous-



George-Washington-Hof, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> district



Freiheitssiedlung complex, 17<sup>th</sup> district

ing complexes right from the planning stage. After all, everyday life is so much easier when everything from the mothers' advice centre to the nursery, the bath-house to the communal laundry, the outpatients' clinic to the dental surgery is just a few minutes' walk away. Cafés, shops and lending libraries rounded off the list of amenities, and this wide-ranging local infrastructure gives the larger complexes the feel of small villages.

### Great names, proudly borne

Likewise, 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 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. Famous Socialists like Karl Marx, Victor Adler and Jean Jaurès are of course represented, as are scientists such as 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. the Professor-Jodl-Hof, Dr.-Ellenbogen-Hof. There are also a small but significant number



Goethehof, 22<sup>nd</sup> district



of women among those honoured, including architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky and actress Rosa Albach-Retty. 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.

### What's in a name?

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 Schüttlastraße, but the address “Goethehof” has a special ring to it.

# AHEAD OF THE GLOBAL FIELD

 According to the international Mercer survey, Vienna is the world city with the highest quality of life. The principle of affordable housing for all is a key factor in this achievement.

**T**wo-thirds of Viennese citizens live in municipal or publicly subsidised housing, and eight out of ten flats built in the city today are financed by Vienna's housing subsidy scheme. For many years now, Vienna has been recognised as an international pioneer in publicly subsidised housing construction, the policy of providing supply-side building subsidies allowing more new flats to be built than in other major cities. The city is even further ahead of the field when it comes to housing refurbishment: the City of Vienna subsidises the modernisation of some 10,000 flats per annum, while in Munich the figure is only about 1,000.

|  | VIENNA 2010 | BERLIN 2010 | BRUSSELS 2011 | HAMBURG 2009 | MUNICH 2010 |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| Resident population  | 1,698,800   | 3,429,500   | 1,071,900     | 1,772,100    | 1,634,200   |
| Single-person households   | 396,000     | 1,051,500   | 255,800       | 488,200      | 398,000     |
| Multi-person households  | 442,400     | 919,300     | 267,400       | 482,300      | 343,200     |
| Number of people per household (ø)                                   | 2.0         | 1.7         | 2.0           | 1.8          | 1.8         |
| Dwelling units per 1,000 people                                      | 490         | 550         | 470           | 500          | 550         |
| Owner-occupied   | 20%         | 13%         | 41%           | 20%          | 23%         |
| Tenancy and sub-tenancy  | 78%         | 76%         | 59%           | 80%          | 77%         |
| Other legal relationship   | 2%          | 11%         | 1%            | –            | –           |
| Number of newly built dwelling units (average over five-year period) | 6,340       | 3,370       | 2,840         | 3,670        | 6,790       |
| Annual average of newly built dwelling units per 1,000 people        | 3.8         | 1.0         | 2.7           | 2.1          | 5.0         |
| Annual average of new build as percentage of existing housing stock  | 0.8%        | 0.2%        | 0.6%          | 0.4%         | 0.9%        |
| Social housing has a strong public image                             | yes         | no          | no            | yes          | no          |
| Appreciable volume of municipal supply-side subsidy                  | yes         | yes         | yes           | yes          | yes         |



Reumannhof, 5<sup>th</sup> district

# DID YOU KNOW?

## Short work

Friedrich Engels, friend of Karl Marx and co-author of the “Communist Manifesto”, is, like Marx, a popular namesake 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 in front 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:

[www.wienerwohnen.at/wiener-gemeindebau/geschichte.html](http://www.wienerwohnen.at/wiener-gemeindebau/geschichte.html)

(German) [www.dasrotewien.at/kommunaler-wohnbau.html](http://www.dasrotewien.at/kommunaler-wohnbau.html) (German)

<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gemeindebau> (German and English)

### Descriptions of all municipal housing complexes belonging to the City of Vienna:

[www.wienerwohnen.at/wiener-gemeindebau/gemeindebaubesreibungen.html](http://www.wienerwohnen.at/wiener-gemeindebau/gemeindebaubesreibungen.html) (German)

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