



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 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 Obkirchergasse 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.

2018: One in four Viennese citizens lives in municipal housing.



Karl-Marx-Hof, 19th district

Dear reader,



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© PID/BOHMANN

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 almost 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.

Between the ground-breaking ceremony for the Metzleinstaler-Hof, Vienna's first municipal housing complex, in 1919, the launch of the current SMART housing programme and the decision to resume municipal housing construction in 2015, 220,000 council flats for half a million tenants were completed, plus a further 200,000 subsidised dwelling units. Today, 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 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, 5th district



Hugo-Breitner-Hof, 14th 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, 10th district



Schmelz Estate, 15th 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.

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



Hasenleitenhof, 11th district

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 100,000th 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.

The last housing complex for which Vienna City Council acted as building contractor is at Rößlergasse no. 15 in the 23rd district.

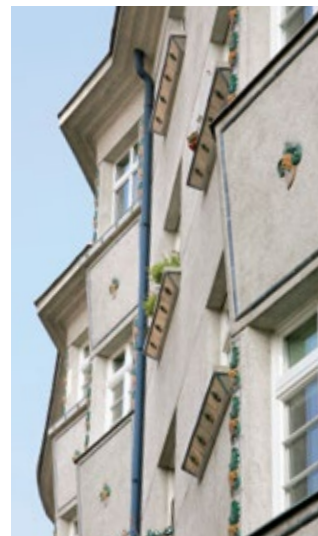
In 2015 the Council decided to resume the role of building contractor and launch a new wave of municipal housing construction. The “Gemeindewohnungen NEU” scheme focuses on the traditional hallmarks of municipal housing in Vienna, adapted for modern times: by 2020, some 4,000 affordable, well-equipped council flats will be built on 28 sites with ample green space and leisure facilities.

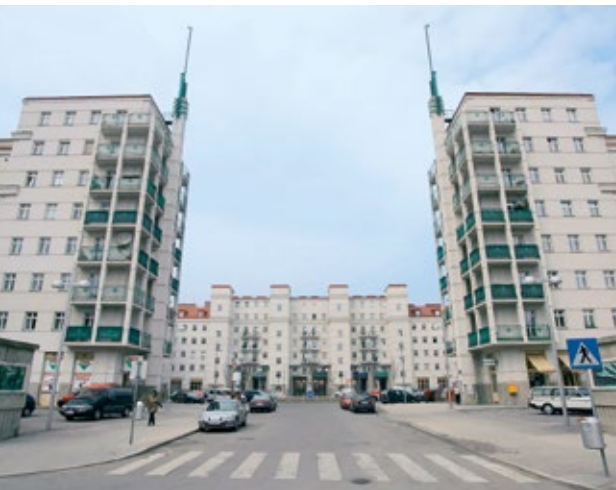
Already today, the picture is a very positive one: one in four Viennese lives in one of the city’s 1,800 or more municipal housing complexes.



【 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.

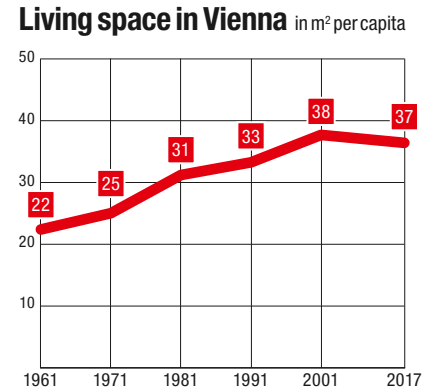


NUMBER ONE IN SOCIAL HOUSING

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 space per capita expanded from 22 m² to 38 m² between 1961 and 2001. Since 2011, average living space per person has remained fairly constant at around

37 m². 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 44 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,



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



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

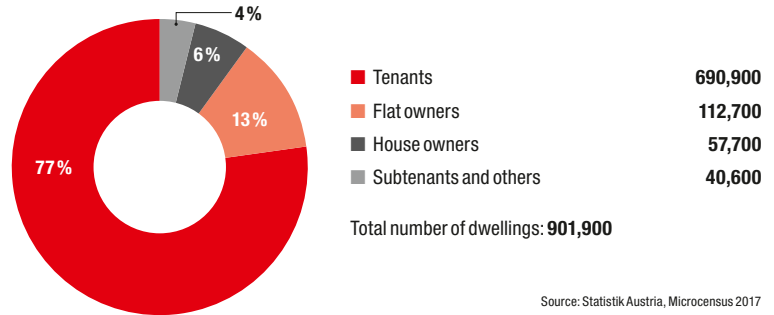
tendency: rents are rising faster than incomes, and the percentage of household income that has to be spent on housing is constantly increasing. Add to that a large number of people looking for flats, which is set to rise still further due to future demographic trends (see graph on p. 13). Vienna's housing 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.

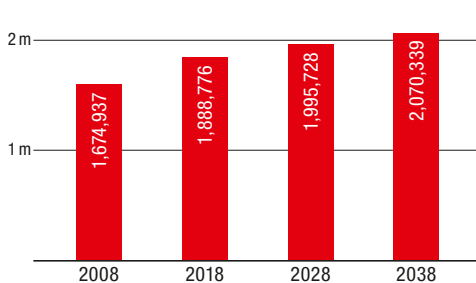
Property ownership in Vienna

As of: 31 December 2017



Vienna is growing

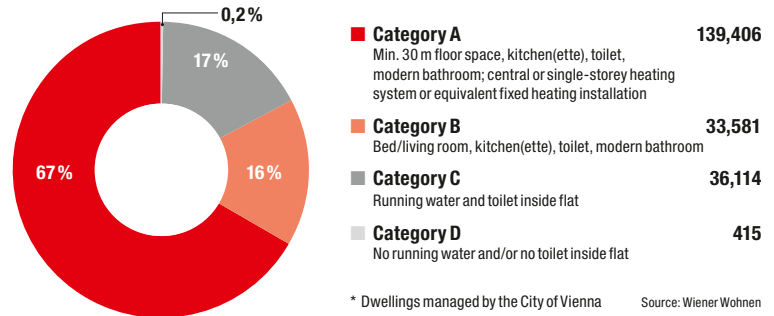
Population



Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA, demographic indicators; Statistical Yearbook 2017

Standard of municipal dwellings*

As of: 31 December 2017



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 almost equivalent to the populations of the Austrian cities of Graz, Innsbruck and Klagenfurt all put together (total inhabitants 518,500). One in four Viennese citizens lives in one of the city's 1,800 or more municipal housing complexes.



5,507
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.



7,807

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.

4,979

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.



67,000

trees

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



12,933,009

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.

1,588

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 Wolfpassing.



▣ Rabenhof ▣

The Rabenhof complex (1925–28) 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.



Rabenhof, 3rd district



Sandeleitenhof, 16th district



Complex at Leystraße no. 23, 20th 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, 20th district



Complex at Wallgasse no. 13, 6th 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, 10th and 12th district



Freiheitssiedlung complex, 17th 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, 22nd 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 Schüttaustraße, but the address “Goethehof” has a special ring to it.

PUBLIC BENEFITS

■ The Viennese model of social housing offers numerous advantages for society, for the communities and for every single citizen.

The 420,000 municipal and limited-profit housing units also generally help to maintain affordable prices.

Environmentally sensitive construction methods in the interests of creating a healthy living environment and contributing towards improved environmental protection.





Reumannhof, 5th 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 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 > Kommunalen Wohnbau (German)

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

Descriptions of all municipal housing complexes belonging to the City of Vienna: wienerwohnen.at/wiener-gemeindebau/gemeindebaubesreibungen.html (German)

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