

The Resource-Saving Enterprise Zone Liesing

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1 ABSTRACT

The third sector is essential for economic activity of cities and therefore needs to be provided with respective resources. Such resources are - among others - space of sufficient quality and the possibility for companies to pursue economic activity uninterrupted. In many urban regions though, economic zones get under rising pressure from other uses and are deprived of the resources they need. They get pushed further and further to the margin of urban areas and onto lower quality sites. This trend is critical, as it aggravates urban sprawl, excessive land use, high transport activity and might even make companies migrate out to competing sites. In fact, it poses a risk to the quality of life and the competitiveness of urban regions and therefore has to be banned.

So, the question is: How can areas that permit economic activities to be pursued in an undisturbed way be provided inside the urban compound in the long run? And how can good co-functioning with other urban uses be guaranteed?

This paper presents an innovative approach to this issue by describing the project “Resource-saving Enterprise Zone Liesing”, which aims at not only preserving an existing industrial zone undergoing structural changes, but also at developing it into an attractive, future-proof and resource-efficient economic area. Structures and tools which foster its economic activity and minimise conflicts with other uses are provided. As a result, an appealing, high-end business quarter inside the urban compound is created and backed-up for the future.

2 THE PROJECT “RESOURCE-SAVING ENTERPRISE ZONE LIESING”

2.1 Project Background

The project area is 240 hectares large and comprises 563 companies of various sizes and branches. It is situated in the south of Vienna at the border to lower Austria.

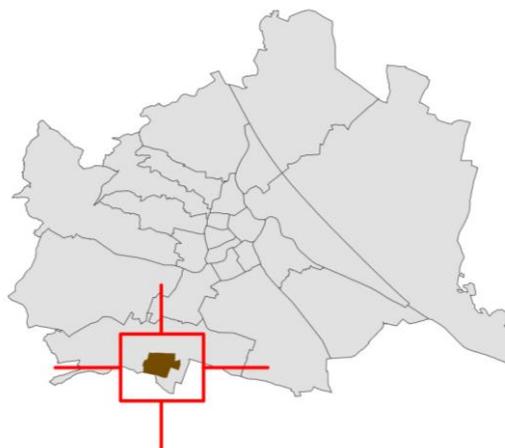


Fig. 1: Location of the Enterprise Zone Liesing

The area is widely known as „Industriegebiet Liesing“ (industrial area Liesing), although just a small number of the enterprises can still be called industrial in the traditional sense. The number of trade firms, offices or transport companies is constantly growing in the zone. Besides that, an official set of development aims for the area or a targeted strategy for attracting businesses has not yet been developed. As a result, the area is very diverse and unstructured.

Concerning the physical appearance of the zone, it has to be stated that there is a lot of untapped potential. At the moment, the area lacks satisfying design of buildings, public space or green areas, especially in areas at greater distance to the main roads. There is also a considerable amount of vacancies and brownfields.

Furthermore, the zone lacks specific identity among the local businesses as well as among the general public. Its identity as traditional industrial zone got lost when big industrial enterprises closed down or relocated. At the moment, the zone has no strong identity that it could use in competition against other zones.

As a consequence, the enterprise zone – despite favourable site conditions - lost importance for politics, administration and businesses. The main focus of their activities has shifted to exploiting free or unused lots without paying attention to the development of the business zone as a whole. As a result, the overall design is weak, the uses are very heterogeneous and some big key areas in the center of the zone are at risk of becoming shopping or housing areas.

To controvert these tendencies, to back up the zone and to develop it into an attractive and future-proof enterprise zone, the project described in this paper was launched. The focus on “resource-efficiency” was chosen because it is generally seen as standard for future-oriented, long-term urban planning. Furthermore, there are some main enterprises in the zone (e.g. bakery “Der Mann”) which have already implemented innovative solutions for efficiency measures and can be used as beacon for the over 500 remaining businesses. Through using these model businesses as leading forces as well as working out spatial strategies for the development of the zone as a whole, a strong identity as resource-efficient enterprise zone shall be achieved and serve as attractor to new businesses.

The project is co-founded by the European Fund for Regional Development and lasts from 10/2010 to 12/2013. It is a clear aim to set up sustainable structures that persist beyond the formal end of the project time frame.

2.2 Project Aims

The operational aims of the project “Resource-saving Enterprise Zone Liesing” are the following:

- To establish a district management („Quartiersmanagement“) on site as a service for companies
- To establish the brand „Resource-Saving Enterprise Zone Liesing“ and to integrate the local companies into brand development
- To improve resource - efficiency on all levels in the zone
- To secure jobs in the zone and to attract new businesses
- To design a comprising masterplan and create an attractive urban environment
- To secure the enterprise zone as location also for companies with high emissions
- To foster cooperation of property owners, businesses, science and research
- To integrate the local companies and site owners into the process of decision making
- To develop suggestions for improving the infrastructure for employees as well as employers
- To develop suggestions for adjusting the legal framework of building and corporate law
- To stimulate the property market and improve the use of free spatial resources
- To raise awareness for the enterprise zone among the inhabitants in the neighbourhood

2.3 Project Structure

To achieve these aims, the following work packages have been designed:

- Establishing and implementing a district management (“Quartiersmanagement”)
- SWOT analysis of the area
- Establishing and implementing a brand and communications concept
- Stimulating resource-efficient economic activity
- Stimulating the real – estate market
- Developing a masterplan with resource-efficiency measures

By now, work package 1, 2, 3 and 5 have been successfully accomplished, 4 and 6 are ongoing. Work package 1, the district management, is the core of the project and lasts for its entire time frame.

In this paper, the focus lies not so much on describing the actual situation of the area or the work packages, but rather on the project's integrative approach of addressing all relevant stakeholders in the process. Furthermore, a comprising picture of the numerous measures taken to turn the industrial zone into a resource-efficient, attractive business quarter will be given.

3 INTEGRATION OF ALL RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS INTO THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

3.1 Cooperation on Political Level

For this project, the most important players for urban economic development of Vienna have joined in cooperation: the steering committee is made up by representatives of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce, the Vienna Business Agency and the City of Vienna (Municipal Planning Department MA 21B). This means that several different political points of view as well as a large number of different stakeholders on municipal and district level are represented in the decision making process. As the three players are represented in the steering committee which decides unanimously, cooperative decision-making is fostered. This collaboration is of particular importance, because it creates the necessary capacity to act and to implement the project results.

3.2 The District Management ("Quartiersmanagement") as a service for companies

The district management ("Quartiersmanagement") is the core of the project. Through installing a district manager ("Quartiersmanagerin"), whose primary task is to serve as a pivotal point and service department for companies in the enterprise zone, a strong signal of support is sent to the companies. As it is a main aspect to integrate the businesses into the development process of the zone as much as possible, their opinions shall be heard and considered. This is the task of the district manager: motivate the business and land owners to participate in the development process and bring in own ideas, as it is them who will be the stakeholders of the zone's development in the long run.

The district management office is located at the center of the zone and interested parties are welcome to drop by with any issue concerning their working and living in the area. It is designed as one-stop-shop providing information about funding, contact points, relevant developments, interesting events or research activities that might be interesting for companies and other stakeholders. It is the first place where business and land owners as well as inhabitants can carry their concerns and ideas to.

The manager herself initiates projects, discussions and networks and encourages relevant stakeholders to cooperate and become active in and for the zone. The main part of her work is to transfer knowledge and to stimulate communication and cooperation of all parties by establishing networks, developing and communicating new ideas and clarifying the way to their implementation.

Her main tools are information and discussion events, the homepage www.ig-liesing.at, periodical newsletters and personal interviews. Furthermore, specific surveys concerning sustainability in the area supply her with in-depth knowledge, and a brand and communications concept enables effective public relations.

This service is unique for business areas in Vienna and centralises the information flow for all the relevant parties, be it companies, land owners, project developers or district and government officials. It offers one main contact person for any issue relevant for the economic area. This shall provide support for the already located businesses as well make it easy and attractive for interested companies to settle in the enterprise zone.

3.3 A Broader Perspective: Integration of Neighbours and Companies outside the Economic Zone

To address the development of the area in a comprehensive way, it is necessary to also take its surroundings into account. This means getting into contact with neighbours as well as companies located in the rest of the district or even further away.

As the enterprise zone is surrounded by housing areas, it is particularly important to get into contact with neighbours in order to prevent conflicts of uses. The neighbours' issues are analysed by personal interviews and by cooperation with local neighbourhood associations. The neighbours are being constantly informed by

press work and newsletters and invited to activities in the zone, especially when it comes to free space issues and temporary use, as the Enterprise Zone Liesing shall be a place for working as much as living.

Besides the neighbours, it is also advisable to have a broader horizon concerning the companies taken into account. It is a definite intent of the project to also cooperate with companies outside the industrial zone if they are willing to. That might be a neighbouring company participating in joint renewable energy use or a spatially more distant company cooperating in a research project.

4 RESOURCE-EFFICIENCY ON ALL LEVELS

4.1 Resource-efficient Design of the Area

As sustainability goes beyond the entity of a single company, a broad set of surrounding factors has to be considered when developing an enterprise zone in a resource-efficient way. These factors are, e.g., referring to transport, open and green space, architecture, the real estate market, social systems, structures of land use, local supply, contamination and brownfields, technical infrastructure or the image of the zone. To deal with these these factors in the project area, four studies have been contracted out:

- A detailed SWOT analysis
- A transport expertise
- An open and green space expertise
- A masterplan

In these studies, the aspects described above are dealt with in depth. At first, a detailed analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the zone is pursued and based on that, ideas and measures for the area are suggested and rated. These ideas will be comprised in a masterplan, which is expected for the second half of 2013 and will provide recommendations and sustainability guidelines for stakeholders in planning.

In the course of the studies, business and land owners as well as neighbours are addressed by interviews, workshops and other events. This is to constantly integrate the various players in and around the area into the analysis and the implementation process. The district manager has a catalyst function for the zone and the studies provide her with the necessary knowledge, but they also serve as tools for addressing the relevant players.

4.2 Resource-efficient Economic Activity

Besides the spatial approach, it is of course crucial to promote sustainability on the business level. To achieve this, businesses in the area are constantly informed about technological developments, funding opportunities, advice programs etc. by newsletters, events and personal consultation of the district manager. They shall be motivated to implement innovative ideas, draw from existing advice resources and think beyond their own business unit.

It is a priority of the project to promote existing (often underused) expert consultation programs rather than to set up new programs. One of these existing programs is the ÖkobusinessPlan (ÖBP) Vienna, a service by the City of Vienna. It offers general advice as well as specific consultation concerning resource-efficient economic activities to companies. Results of ÖBP – related projects in the zone are, for example: halving the cutting loss of circuit boards or bringing down the water use in their production by 40%.

Before our project started, only 16 of the 563 companies in the industrial zone participated in the (subsidised) ÖBP. The aim is to raise that number to at least 100 consultations as well as promote the other existing consultation offers, e.g. state expert advice programs about mobility management. The part of the district manager here is to provide basic information about expert advice offers, to get the relevant players into contact and to support the business owners in implementing their projects.

Besides the single-business level, there is enormous resource-saving potential in the enterprise zone that could be addressed on the meso-level, that is by cooperation of businesses. Fields of cooperation are e.g. renewable energies, waste disposal or water and process energy use. Attractive for cooperation might be, for example, the solar energy field: forming a group of businesses that build a joint solar panel of considerable size and work out an energy contracting scheme to provide energy for parts of or the whole industrial zone.

To stimulate initiatives like this, ideas have to be substantiated, stakeholders have to be motivated and the path to realisation has to be made clear. This is the task of another study contracted out in March: it will identify specific projects, calculate costs and benefits of their realisation and show the necessary technical, financial, legal and organisational steps to implementation. The district manager again is the one to communicate the results of the study, get the necessary players together and provide support with implementation.

5 OUTLOOK

In 2011, the district management was installed and right now, it is at full service. The first public events have taken place, the website and newsletters have been worked out and the district manager is in permanent contact with the relevant players. In spring 2012, the SWOT analysis and the brand and communications concept have been completed.

During the months to come, the focus will be on intensifying the expert advice events concerning resource-efficiency for the companies and on getting company and land owners motivated to implement projects. The study about the resource-efficiency potentials in the area will serve as a basis for this task and be completed in autumn. Furthermore, joint work with research institutions will be intensified. Cooperation programs with the University of Technology and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna have been set up and will be executed in autumn. Besides that, the public relations work will be increased, as the brand and communications concept is ready for implementation.

6 CONCLUSION

The project “Resource-saving Enterprise Zone Liesing” offers an innovative approach to the problem of fragmentation and out-migration of enterprise zones. Through the comprising measures of the project – with the district management at its core - high-quality space for economic activity is assured inside the urban compound, which offers security of investment and a long-term perspective for development.

The various actions towards augmenting resource-efficiency shall enable a development leap of the former industrial zone towards a future-oriented business area with a strong and attractive reputation. Furthermore, the explicit project aim of integrating business owners and other relevant parties into the development process shall guarantee the pursuing of the suggested path after the project deadline. Through this, conflicts with other urban uses are minimised and the companies are enabled to contribute their essential share to the functioning of a city in the long run. The result of the project will be a modernised, resource-efficient and stable business area that is attractive to innovative companies of various sectors.