

# Eigenheimqualitäten in der Stadt

## Qualities of one's own home in town

- English Abstract -

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## Qualities of one's own home in town

### **Family homes in town: More renunciation than advantages? Or just a rare thing?**

Living combined with characteristics of detached family houses must be increasingly made possible at central locations in town. The supply of sites and the costs for opening up must be kept very low, that more central locations will be within one's means. Family homes in town should offer the same or equal (of the same value) living qualities. Beside the advantage of the location their urban integration and the urban space should fulfill the needs of families. The development of such offers has gotten going. This publication shows the latest developments and discusses new possibilities and necessities.

The results could create know-how and acceptance for the challenges to realise qualities of one's own home in condensed apartment houses with more floors. It's shown by careful enquiry, description and discussion that a lot of important aims could be reached.

It is a work book, which would like to contribute to more quality with its detailed and critical analysis of exemplary solutions also from the point of view of purchasers, tenants, clients and architects.

Extended surveys had been carried out to get to know more precisely the situations and reasons for the decision of the people, who are looking for a home. Young families, who will look for a home in the next few years, were asked as a comparative group to the interviewed occupants. They are the actual target group both upon the question – what matters? – and for advertising homes in town suitable for families as soon as they have been built.

The main objective of the work is to find out how to establish more freedom of choice in favour of urban districts and buildings.

There is an eclipsing of two batteries of questions:

First it is about qualities, which are able to be reached when building in towns and in a higher density, and second it is about the costs.

### **Problems of the urban and regional development**

Reason for the concentration and pushing of the urban development of areas in town is the public, social interest on stemming the use of land. The construction of new homes in central locations will also be subject for improvements of ecological, urban, local- and regional-economic structures.

But there is also the fact that a lot of people have aspirations towards a home of their own and they have the legitimate interest to realise this request at a good and central location, for good cost prices and with low ongoing costs. Of course, there is also the request of many tenant households to find appropriate and affordable offers in town.

A profound problem is the big difference of the prices for site and construction between in- and outside the towns. Urban planning can only react restrictedly on that by raising the density of the buildings in desired locations. The full competitiveness of living offers in town for families with children will be able to be reached, if there is a coaction of different approaches. All kinds of cost- and price-cutting strategies and strategies for quality assurance have to interlock.

### **One's own home in urban development**

To offer small-sized, individually constructible parcels of land for promoting the individual construction of buildings in towns – this is more and more an important part of the planning philosophy and the instruments for the development of new urban districts.

It is objective to allow for a great variety of structures both in matters of uses and concerning the users and clients themselves. Adequate plans are geared to the formation process of districts during the turn of the century. Elsewhere it is about the recovery of the historic town plan within the model of the so-called "critical reconstruction".

New client structures play a decisive role beside the integration of different builders into the development of an area. Especially when you talk about client communities, which often make individual constructions primary possible for middle income bracket through a high cost effectiveness. Together with changing construction / planning principals and changing client / investor structures, planning methods are changing increasingly for example so-called cooperative methods.

### Three basic building types

25 houses are presented and discussed in the report. Houses, which have been built the last few years and which could be considered as examples for individual living in town – at least in partial aspects. They are classified into three basic building types: town house for one family, house in house and block of flats.

The qualification of these apartment and building types for locations in town is therein, that they are realised with relative high density, that they fit into the urban structure and that they create a good townscape in mixed-use and already condensed areas.

The survey of the occupants has shown, that you can determine general qualities and valuations, which are related to location and district and to the home itself. Beyond there are niches for special target groups, that constitute a potential for living in town.

### Location and district

The location of the home in town is often decisive. It is a big desire to live in a central location and to find the suitable home there. Qualities of location are credit for homes with high quality. The advantage of location is determined by proximity to town, centralism and at the same time proximity to public green spaces. Creating and enhancing such outstanding locations doubtless contribute to make the living in towns more attractive – for example locations on the waterfront or close to a park, forest, green area or even to vineyards.

People are looking for mixed-used, lively and socially intact districts with good infrastructure and green. Children need adequate space for agitation as compensation for the limited private uncovered space.

The character of the buildings gives information about address and qualities of living together. Smaller and more manageable units are less anonymous and there are less conflicts in the neighbourhood. The breakdown in smaller sections opens up a bigger variety in the appearance of the buildings and gives the impression of more individualism – characteristics, which are expected and appreciated.

A high density is often idealised as ecological and urban. But too much density is problematic, because in the opinion of many people density is the price for living in a central location. They accept it, but they would prefer more space on the site. Many occupants criticize the tightness in the housing area and the restricted privacy with it. Enough distance to the neighbours is necessary. Urban stamped, condensed designs make one's own home in central locations primary affordable for many people.

Good parking concepts shouldn't be underestimated when living in town, that housing areas are at-

tractive and functional. A convenient parking lot – as possible on the own site – is a very important criteria for many people when buying a home.

### House and apartment itself

Atmospheric aspects of the home motivate purchasers, tenants and interested people for homes most: well-proportionate and well-furnished rooms, light rooms, the reference outwards and the equipment. The last one is often demonstrated in high-quality materials and good design.

A well-proportionate apartment with useable rooms on a par allows scopes to use it. Flexible apartments are able to react on different household and family forms and they leave freedom for multiple different lifestyles and biographies. Spaciousness is a special characteristic: high rooms, split level or living on several levels create an impression of spaciousness.

Closely associated with this atmosphere of spaciousness and lightness is the reference outwards – with nice views and the possibility to go out and to include the outside when living. The private uncovered space, sheltered of views and as possible intimate, is like a "green room" in summer.

Enough well-usable storage space is very important especially for families with children. They often miss one room or an additional room for multi-functional use for example as study, guest room, laundry room etc. The offers for that are reduced in condensed house buildings. Noise insulation remains a critical topic when building in high density. The requirements for as possible undisturbed privacy are high – at least in the house you want to notice less noises of the neighbours.

To yield to personal needs added possibilities for participation and choice are created – up to the encouragement of individual building especially in

groups. Extensive possibilities for own designs are also offered in serially-planned objects of builders. This openness for the realisation of user desires goes down well with the interested persons.

### *Location and type of house suitable to lifestyle and living situation*

Living in town often suits better to the living situation independent of local bindings, habits and dreams. If there is professional life of both mates – a circumstance, that often appears among the respondents –, more proximity between home and job is convenient and the gain of time is needed for the compatibility of family and job.

### Costs

The costs for construction and the total costs spread a lot in all house types dependent on the importance of the price within the overall conception compared to the standard of extension – thereby underground parking and elevator as well. In each group of the house types you can find very reasonable offers.

If you talk about higher prices of sites in town, a lot of occupants argue, that you have to accept higher prices when living in town. But these prices are balanced by savings (e.g. costs for mobility) and by profits of living quality (e.g. savings of time).

The future development of the economic factors will be very important for the competitiveness of living in towns. Thereby the costs for mobility will contribute most, if they are not widely balanced by the distance flat rate as it is today.

### *Additional costs when living in town?*

When living in town is it really more expensive compared to living in the surrounding countryside? Or do the additional costs for the site compensate for the savings of the costs for mobility? An exemplary calculation shows, that the respondents are right in principle with their positive estimation of the overall costs, but the advantage is balanced by the distance flat rate of the tax or rather it doesn't show to advantage.

### **Family homes in town: More renunciation than advantages? Or just a rare thing?**

It is sure, that good homes and residential areas for families in town are a rare thing. The presented examples and a lot of similar projects contribute to reduce this shortage.

Compromises in terms of the qualities are consciously made by building and living in town. We considered them under the headword "alike one's own home". Compromises in one-on-one aspects can be part of the optimum - consequently they aren't a disadvantage. Anyhow you can't euphemistically count on the anyway given attractiveness of the European town with its density and variety. The desire remains: to have to be less considerate of other occupants, to spread out more oneself, to be able to endure and design more, absolutely willingly with much contact to the environment as well. Critical and wider debates about expectations and trends in terms of living are necessary not just in the house building but also in the policy of urban development that the development inside the towns doesn't still fall behind by too much renunciation. The list of expected qualities is impressive in particular if you compare them with the circumstances of the existing buildings and the average solutions of new buildings: spaciousness, an open and light atmosphere of living, visibility sheltered

and private uncovered spaces with qualities of use, a green and safe environment especially for children, less loading of traffic, enough distance to neighbours and socially intact milieus – together with market-driven costs and prices.

How to quote:

Weeber+Partner: "Qualities of one's own home in town", abridged version of the research, Stuttgart 2004

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The research "Qualities of one's own home in town" is supported by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing. The writers are responsible for the content by themselves.

The report spans about 180 pages.

#### **Content:**

- One's own home in urban development: Approaches when building complete housing areas or districts, which importantly contribute to the development of interesting house building with qualities similar to those of one's own home.
- Documentation and discussion of 25 good examples classified in three basic building types: town house for one family, house in house and block of flats.
- What are qualities, which are similar to one's own home? Criteria and valuations to certain aspects: Location and environment, building structures, parking, fields and details of the apartment/home itself, participation and costs.
- What are the effects?

## **WEEBER+PARTNER**

**Institute for urban planning and social research**

The institute is located in Stuttgart since 1969, also in Berlin since 1991. It connects the disciplines of architecture, urban planning and social sciences in practice and research.