

# **„Property Developer Competitions“ as an instrument of social housing subsidies in Vienna – procedural and substantive evaluation**

## ***(Summary)***

In the summer of 2008 the Civil Engineering Office DI Herbert Liske was authorized by the Municipality of the City of Vienna, Municipal Department 50, with the procedural and substantive evaluation of the instrument “Property Developer Competition”.

The instrument “Property Developer Competition”, introduced in Vienna in 1995 represents a publicly tendered procedure to identify project teams offering optimized realization concepts (architecture-, economy- and ecology concept) for advertised building sites as well as realizing such projects by the way of property acquisition and use of housing subsidies.

Preliminary examination of contributions entered is carried out by external civil engineering offices, assessment and evaluation thereof by an interdisciplinary jury in line with the main criteria “architecture“, “economy“ and “ecology“, focusing on the balance of these three “quality pillars” as well as the overall quality.

The present evaluation was conducted on the basis of qualitative (20 expert interviews) and quantitative (analysis of documents, selected winning projects) methods, accounting for changing frame conditions within the period examined.

Process-related target goals of the evaluation of the instrument “Property Developer Competition” included the “additional benefits” resulting from procedure, the efficiency and effectiveness of the process and the topics dealing with “organization and –handling of procedure“.

Content-related target goals of the evaluation of the instrument “Property Developer Competition” in particular covered the urbanistic/architectural, economical, ecological and sociological qualities. Based on these general target goals, target indicators were established subject to further close investigation.

Extremely positive ratings were generally scored for the “additional benefits” resulting from the procedure, all experts enumerating “additional benefits“ in a variety of areas. The “additional benefits” specified are either procedure-related (“culture of cooperation“, knowledge expansion, a greater variety of approaches concerning topics, etc.), or in the quality of the submitted projects (quality intensification in the pillars “architecture“, “economy“ and “ecology“) or generally regarding housing in Vienna (standards, broadening of top tier, signal effect, etc.).

Regarding the instrument’s efficiency and effectiveness impacts in the fields of „architecture“, „economy“, „ecology“ und „sociology“ were studied. According to the experts - as far as architecture is concerned - the establishment of a good architectural average together with several “highlights“ was noted. The strongest developments and most positive aspects hence concern the ecological qualities registered, which meanwhile can be regarded as well-established “standards“. In the field of economy – so the basic message - the initial savings regarding total building costs have meanwhile leveled off in favor of increased quality levels. Secured

conclusions concerning impacts on sociological aspects, can only be made following a specific “ex-post“-evaluation of the projects completed, a significant social blending, however, has apparently been accomplished.

In addition to the impacts specified for the fields above, favorable developments concerning possibilities for innovation and advancing development and the establishment of standards for Viennese housing construction in general as well as for tenders of “Theme Competitions“ have resulted. Contributions as to affordability of housing presently tend to be approached rather critically.

The topics “Process, Organization and Management“ were also examined in these respects. Exceedingly positive developments were attributed to the early interrelation of the project participants involved, participation of also commercial property developers, the effectiveness of the “3-Pillar-Model“ and the interdisciplinary composition of the jury. For future purposes, the focus should be placed on the compliance with the tendered project qualities and any loss in operational business and economic expenditure, amongst others.

A (quantitative) examination of urbanistic and architectural qualities since the introduction of competitions in 1995 showed among other things a steady increase of average flat sizes. Basically, the Property Developer Competition has also initiated a broad mix of different flat types on the market and moreover, flexibility regarding layout has been encouraged throughout the past years. The average amount of community rooms and their average size naturally varies considerably. Parking facilities for stationary (car) traffic was mainly offered via garages.

The (quantitative) analysis of economic qualities showed, that the development of “total building costs per square meter of floor space“ has slightly increased in the past years. The same applies to user’s costs (own capital resources and ongoing monthly charges, resp.).

The (quantitative) investigation into ecological qualities showed that the introduction of Property Developer Competitions led to an increased supply of innovative energy concepts and housing-ecological measures. Due to the variability of project-specific requirements a great variation regarding configuration and design features of open space and their planned costs has been specified.

Regarding the (quantitative) examination of sociological qualities it is to be noted, that for example models for tenants’ participation, neighborhood management and/or settlement management tend to be offered only sporadically.

A concluding and summarizing evaluation of strengths and weaknesses as well as of future challenges particularly issued the following:

- fundamental strengths in ahead of new topics and innovations, encouraging discourse / consensus of the jury and producing high qualities in the three pillars “architecture“, “economy“ and “ecology“,
- fundamental weaknesses in a certain “freeze“ of the system, the decision-making process (which however is also seen as a strength) and concerning input of project participants

- fundamental future challenges will deal with the reaction towards basic social frame conditions, the affordability of housing and with optimizing the discourse of all participants involved in the process.