

Stadt Pforzheim
Bürgermeisterin

Sibylle Schüssler



Stadt Pforzheim, Marktplatz 1, 75175 Pforzheim

Mr Emmanuel Moulin
Head of Secretariat
5, Rue Pleyel
93283 Saint Denis
FRANKREICH

Datum

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Dear Sir,

The city of Pforzheim is applying to your URBACT call with a unique project of sustainable urban development.

The project was very popular with the population in the district and the city as a whole and has contributed to the image change of a disadvantaged neighbourhood.

We hope that our application will be very well received.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Sibylle Schüssler'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sibylle Schüssler

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“URBAN NATURE” - Good Practice Summary

The project URBAN NATURE – a quarter evolves, shows how art and citizens’ participation can reinvigorate a disadvantaged quarter into one worth living in.

Problems were building up in the district of Kaiser-Friedrich-Street (KF), e.g. demographic change, unemployment, urban poverty or integration.

As of 2007, a process of upgrading the city was implemented. However, significant movement only happened when the inhabitants of the district were brought on board in 2011 and were intensively involved in the design of their surroundings. In the district council, the desire for more greenery and the appreciation of the public spaces through the medium of art was very strong, resulting in the project "URBAN NATURE" being born. A local artist agreed to create works of art, free of charge and to loan them to the city. At the same time, more than 100 new trees were planted in the district neighbourhood.

The planting of trees led to an improvement in the living environment as well as contributing towards climate protection. Through the concerted care, networks and friendships arose. The joint planning of the sculpture mile also brought together the inhabitants and business people of the district.

The project URBAN NATURE has become an enormous catalyst in the upgrading of the neighbourhood on various levels.

Timeframe, dates, important milestones

2011	Foundation of the district council and origin of the idea
2013	Decision to implement the project
2014	Idea is discussed with the art commission, presentation in the town council
2014/2015	Installation of foundations and planting of trees
22.10.2015	Inauguration of the sculpture mile "URBAN NATURE"

Initially, various hurdles had to be overcome: the enthusing of the administration and securing financing. The majority of costs were borne by the city of Pforzheim. Yet, in the field of public relations, the creation of the illustrated books and the exhibition, businesses from the district and indeed the entire city were extremely involved.

A further challenge was the process within the administration from the art commission to the town council. Not all were won over by the idea, many feared vandalism or were not artistically convinced. By working together, the community and companies succeeded in convincing the press to be in favour of the project. The common commitment to their idea, strengthened the inhabitants and led to a sustainably functioning neighbourhood.

A further milestone and an important step in the sense of sustainability will be the change of the current sculptures with the works of a new artist in 2018.

Link to the specific strategy

“URBAN NATURE” fits the Europe 2020 strategy. It follows the key principles of integrated sustainable development by connecting social, economic and environmental actions. The integrated development approach covers themes such as housing and residential environment; public space / transport; social and cultural infrastructure; local supply / local economy; identification, coexistence, active citizens; climate and the environment (att. 4)

Main outputs were the involvement of citizens in all stages of the project and the fruitful cooperation between citizens, local enterprises and the municipality.

Results achieved, monitoring

“URBAN NATURE” is embedded in a group of other measures (att. 4). Nevertheless, the impact of the project is clearly visible.

Effectiveness: The practice has been proven to work well by enabling the turnaround of a deprived quarter into one worth living in. The importance and the significance can be measured by the local newspaper’s “hit parade”, where the project was voted No.1 in 2015. An evaluation of the “district management” is in the pipeline.

Efficiency: Limited by a scarcity of financial resources, the practice managed to create sustainable citizens’ involvement and room for creativity. Together, this led to the “URBAN NATURE” project.

By addressing several challenges, European cities are facing, and creating transferable solutions, “URBAN NATURE” is a highly relevant project. Therefore, we would like to share our experiences with other cities instead of reinventing the wheel.

Concerning the Potential for re-use and improvement there are some crucial factors:

- Only real and serious citizens’ participation creates ownership.
- All relevant stakeholders should be involved from the very beginning.
- It is helpful to look for further supporters (press, political approval) with the specific project idea and to choose the time to present the project to the public.
- Potential sponsors should be addressed at an early stage regarding funding, as many companies like to support art.
- The works of art should be relevant to the neighborhood, so that real anchorage is created.

"URBAN NATURE" brings art to the citizens. Thus, the district experienced a new quality and revitalization, creating a lively, active neighborhood. And for many issues nowadays exactly this working neighborhood offers a solution: be it in matters of assumption of responsibility, image of the quarter or security.

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