From Plans to Implementation:

Construction Begins on the House of Children's Culture in Floridsdorf

Former office building to become a sustainable cultural and educational hub for children

In November 2023, the plans for the future House of Children's Culture were presented to the public for the first time, with the participation of Mayor Michael Ludwig. Now, the vision presented at the time is becoming a tangible reality: Deputy Mayor and City Councillor for Finance Barbara Novak, Deputy Mayor and City Councillor for Education Bettina Emmerling, City Councillor for Culture Veronica Kaup-Hasler, representatives of the district, Wien Holding, ARWAG and the future users marked the start of the renovation works with a joint photo opportunity.

In the immediate vicinity of Floridsdorf railway station, a former office building is undergoing comprehensive renovation and will be transformed into a modern cultural and educational hub for children. On approximately 3,500 square metres of usable floor space, the project will accommodate a second location of the ZOOM Children's Museum and a new Centre for Children's Literature. The future address of the House will be Rechte Nordbahngasse 3.

"With the House of Children's Culture, we are building Vienna's future. Because the future of our city begins with our children – with their dreams, their talents and their opportunities. Together, we are creating a place that welcomes every child, sparks curiosity and encourages them to help shape the world themselves. That is precisely our political responsibility: to act together today, in a climate-conscious way, so that future generations in Vienna can also pursue their own paths," says Barbara Novak, Deputy Mayor and City Councillor for Finance, Economic Affairs, Labour, International Affairs and Digitalisation.

An Open Place for Children, Families and Educational Institutions

The House of Children's Culture is intended to give children and young people playful, interactive and age-appropriate access to art, literature, media and science.

Multilingualism, inclusion, diversity and cultural participation form the central foundations of the future programme. The House will thus become a place of empowerment, openness and welcome for children from different social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Schools, kindergartens, extracurricular youth organisations, family centres and associations are also being considered as visitors. Shared spaces will additionally promote exchange and interaction.

"Our goal is a Vienna in which children can help shape their city and have access to high-quality educational and cultural opportunities regardless of their social or linguistic background. This requires innovative and low-threshold formats. Not only in schools and kindergartens, but also in places where art, literature and science can be conveyed and experienced together. That is exactly what the new House of Children's Culture stands for," says Bettina Emmerling, Deputy Mayor and City Councillor for Education, Youth, Integration, Transparency and Markets.

Culture as an Investment in the Future

From the end of 2028, the House of Children's Culture will provide a high-quality cultural offering in one of Vienna's largest, most populous and youngest districts. "Getting children excited about culture and science in a playful way and fostering their enjoyment of reading is one of the best investments we can make in the future. Culture creates spaces where children can experience how they can help shape the world through creativity, curiosity and imagination. With the House of Children's Culture in Floridsdorf, this idea is now becoming a tangible place: the ZOOM Children's Museum and the Centre for Children's Literature will bring together art, multilingual reading, research and discovery under one roof. This will create an open, vibrant space that strengthens cultural participation in every district and sends a strong signal that Vienna is deliberately investing in the next generation and in their opportunities to lead self-determined lives," says Veronica Kaup-Hasler, City Councillor for Culture and Science.

Located directly next to Floridsdorf railway station, the House will be exceptionally well connected by public transport, serving families from Floridsdorf and Donaustadt as well as visitors from across Vienna and beyond.

"Floridsdorf is a young, family-friendly district with numerous educational and childcare facilities. The House of Children's Culture will complement this offering in a very special way. Its location at Floridsdorf railway station and its excellent connection to Donaustadt make it an important catalyst for children's culture throughout the north of Vienna," says Georg Papai, District Head of Floridsdorf.

Resource-Efficient Renovation Instead of New Construction

The House of Children's Culture is not being built as a new development on previously undeveloped land. Instead, ARWAG, in which Wien Holding also holds a stake, is renovating and further developing an existing office building constructed in the late 1990s. The design by Kuehn Malvezzi Architects consistently follows the principle of resource conservation: the concrete structural frame will be retained, allowing a substantial portion of the "embodied energy" already stored in the building to be preserved and reused. The term "embodied energy" refers to the total energy required to manufacture, transport, install and dispose of building materials. Renovating and reusing existing buildings can save this energy.

Thermal refurbishment, new windows, rooftop photovoltaic panels, upgraded building services and a new coloured ceramic façade complement the carefully considered overall concept. In this way, an already sealed site with excellent public transport connections is being developed further in a resource-efficient manner and given a new public use.

"The House of Children's Culture is an excellent example of how Wien Holding's companies combine economic responsibility with tangible added value for the people of Vienna. Here, an existing building is being sustainably redeveloped while at the same time creating important social and cultural infrastructure for future generations. Projects

like this strengthen Vienna in the long term as a liveable and future-ready city," says Oliver Stribl, Managing Director of Wien Holding.

According to the calculations presented when the project was unveiled in 2023, adapting the existing building will reduce its carbon footprint by around 50 percent compared with a new-build project. This is expected to save approximately 600 tonnes of CO_2.

"This exceptional cultural building demonstrates the potential of intelligently developing existing structures. By retaining the load-bearing structure, we save materials, make use of the existing embodied energy and avoid around 50 percent of the emissions associated with a new building. At the same time, a building with a major social impact is being created – a place where children can actively experience culture," say Thomas Drozda and Christian Raab, Members of the Executive Board of ARWAG Holding-Aktiengesellschaft.

Children's Museum and Children's Literature Under One Roof

The second location of the ZOOM Children's Museum will offer children and families interactive encounters with art, culture, media, science and research. Creative spaces, studios and laboratories will encourage visitors to discover, experiment and create together. A particular focus will be placed on strengthening children's sense of agency and connecting the programme to their diverse lived experiences.

"The central mission of the ZOOM Children's Museum is to be there for children and their adult companions, regardless of where they come from, what their first language is or where they live. Accessibility and openness in our programmes are key priorities in making our visitors feel welcome. Together with the Children's Literature Centre, the second location will create a contemporary, vibrant place of encounter that invites children to actively participate, ask questions, experiment freely and play," says Andrea Zsutty, Director of the ZOOM Children's Museum.

The new Centre for Children's Literature is aimed both at children who already enjoy reading and at those who have so far had little access to books and stories. In event and creative spaces as well as spacious exhibition areas, the focus will be on the enjoyment of reading, being read to, writing, discussing and creative self-expression. Books and stories in different languages will foster imagination, language acquisition, empathy and independent thinking.

"Literature will not be conveyed from a distance here; it will be experienced together. We want to show children how much joy can be found in books, texts and images, and create an open place where reading, writing and individual creativity come together," says Stefanie Schlögl, Managing Director of kidlit medien GmbH.

A Shared Home for Children's Culture

Kultur Raum Wien GmbH serves as the operating company and organisational umbrella for the future House. It is responsible for the cultural positioning of the project and is supporting the renovation and conversion.

"With the start of the renovation, the shared House is now also visibly taking shape. As its organisational umbrella, we are creating the conditions for new forms of cooperation to develop around children's culture. This will create an open and vibrant place of encounter and a social meeting point where children and families feel welcome, can experience culture in all its diversity and engage with one another," says Martina Taig, Managing Director of Kultur Raum Wien GmbH.

The House of Children's Culture will become an important centre for children, education and cultural participation whose significance extends well beyond Vienna's 21st district. The project combines social impact with sustainable urban development, transforming a former office building into a house for the future of children.

ARWAG is responsible as developer for the comprehensive renovation and further development of the building, as well as for construction management and utilisation.

The general contractor services are being carried out by Swietelsky AG, which was selected as general contractor in the procurement process in accordance with the Austrian Federal Procurement Act (BVergG).

About ARWAG

ARWAG Holding-Aktiengesellschaft, in which Wien Holding also holds a stake, has stood for the development of affordable and sustainable housing in Vienna and beyond since 1990: socially responsible, environmentally conscious and innovative. As a full-service real estate provider, ARWAG accompanies the entire life cycle of a property – from project development and planning through implementation to marketing, property management, building services and energy services.

Sustainability and economic viability are central principles guiding the company's activities. To date, ARWAG has completed more than 185 projects with a total usable floor area of more than 1.7 million square metres and has created around 17,500 housing units. The company's sustainable success is based on a deep understanding of the changing needs of tenants and owners, combined with a consistent commitment to quality at every stage of a project.

Enquiries & Contact

Kultur Raum Wien GmbH
Elke Weilharter | SKYunlimited
+43 699 16448000
elke.weilharter@skyunlimited.at

Natalie Chrstos
Kommunikation ARWAG
Telefon: +43 1 797 00 – 547
E-Mail: natalie.chrstos@arwag.at
www.arwag.at

Alexander Hirschmann

Wien Holding – Corporate Communications

Tel.: 01 408 25 69 - 13

E-Mail: a.hirschmann@wienholding.at

www.wienholding.at

Photocredits:

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Picture 2 City Councillor of Culture Veronica Kaup-Hasler, Deputy Mayor Bettina Emmerling, Managing Director kidlit medien GmbH Stefanie Schlögl, Director ZOOM Childrens Museum Andrea Zsutty, Managing Director KWG Kultur Raum Wien Gmbh Martina Taig, Deputy Mayor Barbara Novak, District Representative Georg Papai © Alissar Najjar


arwag.at
1210 Wien, Rechte Nordbahngasse 3
>> Haus für Kinderkultur <<
ARWAG
1210 Wien, Rechte Nordbahngasse 3
>> Haus für Kinderkultur <<
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