



## VACANCY! PILOT STRIP ON PRODUCTIVITY

### **EUROPAN15 WEIZ**

MINUTES SITE VISIT May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Present (alphabetical order):

Oswin Donnerer (councillor for culture), Erwin Eggenreich (Mayor), Reinhard Gütl (communication officer City of Weiz), Gerd Holzer (Head of the planning department Weiz), Iris Kaltenegger (Briefer / General Secretary European Austria), 7 participants

#### **13:00 – 14:40 site visit**

Iris Kaltenegger welcomes all participants, introduces representatives.  
A guided tour along the europAN site & the surrounding area followed.

The whole group went by bike to Gleisdorfer Straße with several stops discussing important issues regarding the planning area. At the round – about near the big supermarket Interspar the group crossed the street and went back to the inner city along the construction site of the new by-pass.

#### **14:50 – 16:10 discussion in the city council**

#### **Q&A**

- Plans for the ODF\* can be found in the download section.  
\* ODF = Ortsdurchfahrt = Main through-road  
*AT-Weiz-ODF.dxf*
- Flood topic:  
What is generally important to think of in regards to the flood issue in Weiz?  
What is the current situation in regards to lowering the riverbed?

In the 1990s, parts of the Weizbach were lowered to ensure protection of HQ50 (Flood height register based on a 50 years time period). In 2000 a new study recorded



changes in the amount of rainfall, especially at heavy weathers. Since then a new rule has come into place: 50l / m<sup>2</sup> of roof space must be seeped away on its own ground.

Generally speaking, it is important for water that is displaced, to seep on its own ground. This can be achieved by various measures, e.g. a retention area.

The city is going to partially lower the riverbed and build retention pools. This will happen in stretches outside the European15 site. However, it is crucial to think of a strategy on how to meet the problem of flood in general terms. There are no specific requirements for the E15 site.

*Also see plan AT-Weiz-SS-M4 in the download section.*

- Tannery

The building of the former tannery is privately owned but might be sold by 2022. As soon as the building is demolished, no new one may be built, as the property is located in the flood exclusion zone. A renovation or adaptation of the existing building is possible.

- Park

The park area with its century old stock of trees on Gleisdorfer Straße 87 is currently privately owned. The mayor stressed the city's interest to buy it, once it becomes available. The idea is to keep it and make it publicly accessible.

- How to deal with the existing houses adjacent to the streetscape?

The line of the project area was drawn tightly along the street, because the land within the yellow line is owned by the city and access to this zone is granted.

However, it does not mean to stop thinking along this line. The task includes the immediate surrounding in order to propose a reasonable project. A strategy in different stages should explain the development.

Tabula rasa on existing houses is not envisaged but it is welcomed to think openly - especially in terms of functions.

The city expects innovative ideas on how the current street scape can be transformed and into what? How can the street survive, not (just) as traffic space, but what are the new possible functions that can take hold here and transform the current situation. Substantial relief of traffic will come. How can a new identity for this strip look like?



- Are there already talks with the owners and inhabitants of the plots adjacent to the street?

Not yet. The monthly magazine of the city, “Weiz präsent”, will provide initial information on the European competition in the next issue. The results of the competition will be exhibited in Weiz. The intention is to integrate the inhabitants. The actual form and the degree of participation has not yet been decided and might depend on the winning project.

It is recommended to show a possible actors network and scenarios in a diagrammatical way, which could serve as a base for initial discussions with the local people.

- You mentioned many new projects, mainly housing, are in the pipeline. Where are the new development zones? Is there a plan showing these areas and the extent of the projects?

In the north east of the planning area a building complex including flats, office space and a kindergarden are going to be build in the next months.

*For more information see plan AT-Weiz-SS-NewDevelopments.pdf in the download section.*

- Concrete next steps:

The city has already decided on refurbishing works of the Gleisdorfer Straße that will take place in 2022. At the same time the streetscape should be transformed and its width should be reduced.

Another big project is the massive expansion of the bike network, which is also planned in this timeframe. €6.7mio are invested into this project and will include bike lanes, footbridges and underpasses, new bike stations etc.

In total eight regional bike paths are planned, all of them leading through Weiz. The connection to an inter-regional network is important, however, for Weiz the priority is that bike paths are geared towards the needs of its residents.

The Gleisdorfer Straße is part of the new bike strategy.

*See plan AT-Weiz-SS-M5.pdf in the download section.*

- Are the inhabitants of Weiz in favour of the new mobility line?



Yes, in general the new development is seen very positively. However, more noise is caused due to the extension of the trainline leading into the city centre. This is not seen entirely positive, especially of people living next to it.

The frequency of trains has also increased and is now running twenty-two times a day, starting from 4.40 a.m. – 10.10 p.m.

- How is Weiz connected to the villages in its vicinity – in a political sense and mobility-wise?

Politically: Few years ago a wide-ranging reorganisation of the village structure took place in Styria. Many single villages were merged to a greater unit. The village Krottendorf located to the east and west of Weiz got merged with Weiz, the biggest city in the region. The initial frustration of the inhabitants of Krottendorf has been overcome due to the fact that many new services provided by the city of Weiz have been welcomed very much by the new citizens of Weiz.

Soft mobility activities: The above mentioned bike strategy is well accorded with the whole region and all its surrounding villages and will definitely lead to a reduction in car use and thus reducing the amount of traffic.

- How are the commuter flows? Where do people live and how do they get to work? Do most of the inhabitants of Weiz also work in Weiz?

Weiz has a total of approx. 11,400 jobs and 11,700 inhabitants.

2,500 commute to other places outside Weiz

8,000 people commute into Weiz and approx. 6,000 people commute within the city (live in Weiz and work in Weiz).

A large study was made on the commuter structure recently, which found that 80% of commuters coming into the city do so by car.

50% of local commuters within the city walk and bike and 50% use their car.

Every car driver wants to park for free next to his/her workplace.



A general problem of rural areas, and also of Weiz, is the identification of the inhabitants with their car. The car is still a status symbol and many people own two or more cars which worsens the amount of traffic dramatically.

Hilly landscape and long distances seem to make the car an essential asset of daily life.

Wrong spatial planning in Styria led to urban sprawl in the regional area, which also supports car use. Bike lanes are not yet very attractive – but effort is undertaken to change the mobility behaviour. The city of Weiz is taking part in three EU projects at the moment aiming at promoting the use of bikes for short distances.

- Are there intentions to support the use of bikes?

Since ten years the city has been promoting bikes. For example, the municipality of Weiz supports each newly bought E-bike with a subsidy of €100.

City-bike rental stations have been installed throughout Weiz and they are being constantly increased. Currently there are 16 such stations with a total number of 80 city-bikes.

A bike strategy is being planned (see answer above).

- Does heavy traffic still have to pass Gleisdorfer Straße?

Yes. The new mobility axis is partly leading through tunnels, without sufficient height for heavy traffic lorries transporting big generators or transformers. As a result 5 - 6 rides a year for heavy traffic will take place on Gleisdorfer Straße. Even so, heavy traffic is happening super sporadically, the street must be able to cope with this situation.

- How is the economy set up? What works, what does not work so well?

Weiz has three main economic sectors:

Electrical machinery such as e -motors, transformers, generators and overhead power lines.

Accessories for the car industry, f.e. electric driving mirrors

Building and construction industry

Additionally, Weiz is an education center with 3,000 pupils and 500 apprentices.



As a district center it has a hospital and a medical centre.

The building complex W.E.I.Z., the Weiz innovation centre, was originally planned as a start-up centre. Now the place is primarily occupied by the Johanneum Research (University), where its newly founded material headquarter is based. It is a research institute for nano technology. Moreover, an institute for non - invasive technology is also located at the W.E.I.Z.

- Why did the initially planned start-up concept not work at the innovation centre?  
There might be several reasons for that:
  - The critical mass of creatives was missing to make it work.
  - Weiz is not so far away from the capital Graz, where a lot of start-up centres exist.
  - Many students from the higher technical school leave Weiz in order to study at the University in Graz or take up jobs in the local industry – the job prospects for young engineers are excellent in the region
  - There are several entrepreneurs who become self-employed after a long working experience but those do not go to a start-up center.
- How is the housing sector in Weiz? Is there a wide range of housing options?  
The city of Weiz has its own housing company and therefore has direct access to 1,800 flats in total. Different typologies are available. A zoning plan was updated recently with a clear strategy on density and housing areas and an avowal opposing the building of big shopping malls outside the city.

Weiz, 10. 05. 2019, Iris Kaltenegger