Hafencity and IBA: Hamburg’s urban future

Two major urban development projects outline a picture of the city of tomorrow and seek solutions for sustainable urbanity in Hamburg: Hafencity and the International Building Exhibition (IBA Hamburg). While transforming the inner city and Hamburg’s waterfront, they also initiate an international discourse over urban strategies for the future, presenting the travelling exhibition “Building the City Anew”.

Visit to Hamburg is a must these days for anybody interested in urban development: it is home to two of the most significant projects in Europe, with Hafencity, on former port land adjacent to the city, and the International Building Exhibition (IBA Hamburg) in south-Wilhelmsburg. For both of them, 2013 is a special year. The IBA faces its grand finale with the presentation of its projects, its housing models, its large and small interventions in an area populated by 55,000 people, as well as a large number of events. Hafencity, an extensive new development ultimately bringing with it 6,000 homes and 45,000 jobs, is poised to launch its final development phase to the east. New bridges and roads are under construction, paving the way for another 2,800 homes and 18,000 jobs in eastern Hafencity—but also for growing connections to Hamburg’s south. Hamburg is changing in both local and global senses since the reinvention of the urban districts to the north and south of the River Elbe, with their multifaceted innovative elements, is attracting international acclaim. The start of this development can be traced back to Germany’s national departure of 1989. With the ending of Germany’s partition, the City of Hamburg reverted to Germany’s national departure of 1989. With the ending of Germany’s partition, the City of Hamburg reverted to Germany’s national departure of 1989. With the ending of Germany’s partition, the City of Hamburg reverted to

IBA Hamburg is transferring an inner city periphery socially, economically and with a view to climate protection. In 2013, a series of dynamic yet circumspect development steps will underline Hafencity’s qualities even more strongly. The new U4 subway has opened, for the time being as a connection between the Hamburg city centre and western and central Hafencity. Construction for its extension to the eastern neighbourhoods will get under way this year. The U4 is an essential feature of the urban infrastructure for companies, residents and visitors to Hafencity which is now home to more than 450 local, national and large international businesses employing around 9,000 people. The number of residents is around 2000, rising steadily. To the east, development of Hafencity is pushing ahead. In Baakenhafen neighbourhood, options have already been assigned on the first sites, foreseen for hotel and residential uses. Hafencity University and the Kühne Logistics University will open their doors in the autumn in their new locations to more than 2,000 students. The south and north sections of the green centre of Hafencity, the four-hectare Lohsepark, will start to show visible contours in 2013.

In western Hafencity, the continuing upmarket, long-sighted development of Überseequartier is making strides. An exciting blend of uses – hotel, culture, shopping and residential – is taking shape on the last available building site in the northern section. The concept for the southern section is being reworked, without stripping Überseequartier of its open character or its manifold connections to the water. In the summer, the second park in western Hafencity, Grasbrookpark, will be finished. Residential and public uses on Strandkai are being prepared. Construction of new office buildings as well as another 40 apartments will also start this year.

The new projects reinforce the dynamic climate of Hafencity, as well as its high standards for sustainability: invitations to tender for sites in 2013 are commensurate with this trend. We are delighted at the intensive involvement of so many developers, investors and tenants.

Jürgen Bruns-Berentelg
Chief Executive of Hafencity Hamburg GmbH
Further, facilitating multi-faceted urban space with room for many different ideas and living concepts is also the focus, in both cases. Bringing in grassroots participation through discus-
sions, workshops and ideas competitions is an important ele-
ment of both development processes.

Ecological sustainability is the key

In HafenCity, generous public spaces are developing on the waterfront – a total 26 hectares of squares, promenades and parks. Cultural and leisure options are available are already very diverse. The choice of living space ranges from publicly sub-
sidised and affordable apartments, through projects by building cooperatives and building joint ventures, to the luxury segment. “This all goes to ensure that the most di-
verse groups encounter each other in HafenCity and that an urban style of life emerges. The task here is to generate di-
versity,” explains Jürgen Bruns-Berentelg, chief executive of HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. At the same time, in the IBA.
zone, more than 100 nationalities interact with each other. Such a situation can certainly lead to friction, but also makes Wilhelmsburg and Veddel the unique place of diversity and internationality that they are. The IBA aims to maximise this potential by focusing on creativity, education and communi-
cation. The central themes here are urban cohesion and eco-

HafenCity News: The IBA Hamburg is endowing the Elbe islands between HafenCity and Harburg with ever-in-
creasing amounts of new structure – through new building and redevelop-
ment measures, as well as through cultural activities. What do you see
as the biggest challenge?

Uli Hellweg: I think that the biggest task is to keep the process going when our job comes to an end – be-
cause of course all international building exhibitions have a time limit;
the IBA Hamburg runs until 2013. There is certainly a need for an organ-
isation to do that, which will continue to look after the district as a whole in the future, and which will see projects through. This not only applies to con-
tinued construction in the newly de-

 HafenCity News: How will Wilhelmsburg and HafenCity be in 30 years’ time? Uli Hellweg: I believe that they will have come closer together. Hafen-
City no longer be regarded just as a glittering working and residen-
tial district, but as a mature part of the inner city which is good to live in. And Wilhelmsburg will be an attrac-
tive residential neighbourhood close to the inner city into which many key services – not only the Ministry of Urban Development and the Envi-
ronment – have relocated. In any case, I hope that with respect to en-
ergy, both of them will be amongst the most innovative urban dis-

More than 100 nationalities interact with each other in HafenCity and Veddel.