

## SARGFABRIK –

Association for Integrated Lifestyles

Austria's largest self-governing  
housing and cultural project

In 1996, on the land of a former coffin manufacturer in West Vienna, the vision of an innovative style of living became a reality. The only reminders today of the one-time largest coffin producers under the Habsburgs are the ground plan of the new building, the chimney – and the name: „Sargfabrik”. In 2000 „Miss Sargfabrik”, a further development of the housing project in the direct vicinity reached completion.

## Association for Integrated Lifestyles -

### Verein für Integrative Lebensgestaltung (VIL)

The luminous orange roof colour immediately and unmistakably signals an alternative creation. The Sargfabrik and its cultural and social projects offer a meeting point for people from different age groups and backgrounds.

In the mid 1980s a committed group of people came together in their discontent over the expensive housing market, exclusively for the traditional family unit. They wanted to set up a housing association, which would accommodate different lifestyles and cultures together. To achieve this goal, they formed the „Association for Integrated Lifestyles“ (Verein für Integrative Lebensgestaltung - VIL).

In 1996, following over 10 years of difficult and careful planning, the project came into being and the vision of an open and self-defining community became a reality. A social experiment had become a vibrant urban alternative with an advanced cultural programme. It is a piece of designed utopia in West Vienna.

The charitable (not-for-profit) society had created a „village in the city“ in Vienna's 14th district, complete with a kindergarten, events hall, seminar room, bathing house, restaurant, playground, communal courtyards, roof garden, library and more.

„Living - culture - integration“, to realise the motto the association is active in the following areas:

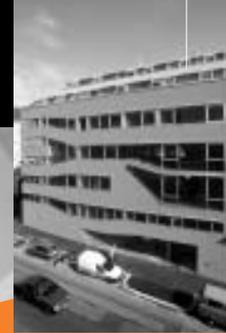
- Jointly planning, building and running the project
- Living together with an open acceptance of individual arrangements for singles, family groups and other groups
- Joint accommodation with no obligation to the group: all can share, but no one has to
- The integration of disabled people and other socially excluded groups in a mixture of age groups and backgrounds
- Awareness of ecological considerations: making optimum use of energy, using eco-friendly electricity, composting, heating water using solar power and many more
- The running of a cultural centre for the neighbourhood, district and town using the cultural centre and seminar rooms, bathing house, children's house and restaurant

## Communal Housing

By using the Austrian legal term „Wohnheim“ for communal housing, special support can be claimed from Vienna City Council. The combination of reinforced concrete, lightweight construction and removable inside walls offers accommodation units for different living arrangements on one to three floors in very flexible and easily adapted rooms.

New architectural innovations render the Sargfabrik ecologically sound. Large glass south-facing panels offer light and transparency to the up to 4.5 metre high living rooms. The building is heated through the district-heating network. One of the roofs is equipped with solar panels for heating water, while the other holds a large and green roof garden. Special design considerations have made the whole complex suitable for disabled people and their needs.

At present, about 150 adults and 60 children and teenagers live in the 112 accommodation units. We also provide space for a social and educational community housing facility run by the City of Vienna's Youth and Family Offices. There are also seven places in single or shared accommodation for disabled people and six accommodation units with limited contracts for tenants in need of short term housing.



## Sargfabrik Cultural Centre

The „Kulturhaus Sargfabrik“, with its diverse and outstanding programme, has long secured a place in Vienna's cultural scene. The house's own events list presents weekly snippets of contemporary music at a universally high standard. The cultural programme of the Sargfabrik spans a great variety of European and non-European music, from Jazz to World music and folk traditions from the most

diverse cultures in the world. The popular cultural programme for children is a particular attraction for our very young audiences.

The events area offers 315 m<sup>2</sup> for parties and all types of meetings. The room seats around 300 people and is available for hire. With its high quality design, programmable lighting and sound equipment and the flexible use of space, the room is suitable for concerts, dance and theatre productions, readings, children's theatre or clubbing.

## Bathing House

In the middle of Vienna's district „Penzing“, you can experience diverse international ways of bathing. We have a Finnish sauna, a cold water pool, a tepidarium, a heated swimming pool with a wave machine, a whirlpool, Kneipp healing pool and 3 bath tubs. These ambitious and fun ideas do not only serve our own water pleasures, but also local and town residents: The bathing house – operated as club – is open for members 24 hours per day.

The relaxing and comfortable atmosphere – where even the whirlpool sometimes foams to classical music – is not only a frequent attraction for our own kindergarten. We also offer support for disabled bathers, and allocate timeslots for babies, small children and for events organised by residents. The bathhouse is also available for hire.

## Seminar Room

The naturally lit 104 m<sup>2</sup> seminar room, complete with parquet flooring, is available for workshops, meetings and movement and therapy programmes for up to 80 participants. To adapt to its various uses, the seminar room can be rearranged, equipped and divided at short notice. The room is at ground level and easily accessible to wheelchair users.

Guests in our seminar house have complimented the Sargfabrik on the personal support and relaxed atmosphere, easily accessible equipment and good service. Our contented regular customers include many national and Vienna based organisations, societies and initiatives.

## Children's house

Children need to blossom and the Sargfabrik's children's house offers space to do this. The varied, exciting and vibrant opportunities on offer are geared towards creative learning processes.

Around 60 children, ages 3-10, are divided into three family groups and supervised by trained kindergarten teachers who have German, Turkish and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian as their mother tongues. The pedagogic principles are based on the teachings of Maria Montessori. In the afternoons we also offer after-school educational support. The children have access to the art and craft rooms. Each week they are accompanied on excursions to the local woodland and to the bathing house. They regularly visit our theatre productions and the seminar room is used for gymnastics and activities. Highly nutritional children's meals are produced in the Sargfabrik Café-Restaurant.

The private children's house is subsidized through funds allocated by the Vienna City Council.



# SfabrikG

## Data

|                        |                     |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Plot of land           | 4711 m <sup>2</sup> | 850 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Property area          | 2747 m <sup>2</sup> | 608 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Usable floor space     | 7922 m <sup>2</sup> | 4372 m <sup>2</sup> |
| Start of building work | April 1994          | April 1999          |
| Completion             | July 1996           | September 2000      |
| Total building costs   | 13,6 million Euro   | 5,4 million Euro    |



## Café-Restaurant Sargfabrik



The typical pub-restaurant is not only a well-loved meeting point for residents. Visitors to events, seminars and special lunches love to spend time here. In warm weather they can make use of the pub garden. We place great importance on the quality of food. The menu includes international and Viennese cuisine, vegetarian food and snacks of a universally high standard and low price.

## Administration

The „VIL“ acts as the owner, builder, caretaker and rental agency of the housing complex. The association members live in the flats and their rights and obligations are detailed in an internal contract, like in a cooperative. The members pay basic and individual contribution to costs, towards the repayment of the building loan, and to the resident administration costs. On moving out, members return the flat to the association.

Important decisions, such as statutes, standing orders, the business plan, annual planning, budget, flat allocation, rules of use etc. are made twice yearly by the association at general meetings. The general assembly elects all voluntary board representatives. This board appoints a professional executive director for implementing the yearly work plans

and managing all departments. An office-style administration looks after the necessary organisation and communication needs of the housing administration and management. Momentarily fifteen people are employed.



## Communal living and voluntary work

VIL members are actively engaged in all areas of communal life. Communal life is greatly influenced by these important unpaid initiatives and work groups, whether in planning the already legendary „Sargfabrik Ball“ or other original in house productions, or looking after the garden or library. As well as organising diverse birthday celebrations and normal parties, the VIL runs a cooking group that prepares weekly meals in the communal kitchen.

## Chronology

**1987** / Founding of the „Association for Integrated Lifestyles“ with the aim of developing a housing and cultural project.

**1989** / May: Purchase of the „Maschner & Söhne“ building in Vienna’s 14th district, formerly the largest coffin manufacturers under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The factory was built at the end of the 19th Century and coffins were produced until 1970 when the building fell into ruin.

**1992** / Planning proposals made by architects from the Baukünstlerkollektiv BKK-2 (now BKK-3) are rejected by neighbouring residents; alterations and new plans are made.

**1994** / Start of building work; the building at No. 8 Matznergasse is renovated and included into the complex.

**1996** / autumn: Opening of the „redeveloped“ Sargfabrik: 73 accommodation units for around 110 adults and 45 children and teenagers.

**1998** / Encouraged by positive results the association purchases the neighbouring No. 10 Missindorfstraße.

**2000** / Opening of the equally orange and no less „sloping“ - little sister building „Miss Sargfabrik“ on the street corner, with 39 accommodation units, a library with PCs and internet connection, a communal kitchen, club room and BKK-3 office.

## Prizes

The 1996 Adolf Loos Architecture Prize for Residential Buildings (Sargfabrik)

The 1996 Bauherren Prize (Sargfabrik)

The 2001 Austrian Cement Industry Prize for Architecture (Miss Sargfabrik)

The 2002 Berlin Academy of Arts Support Prize for Building Design (Miss Sargfabrik)

