

Press Information

No Compromises

Construction at Marthashof in Prenzlauer Berg encites opposition from the local residents.

There's a new block of condominiums under way in Prenzlauer Berg. Stofanel Investment Corporation is building it between the energetic promenade Kastanienallee and Mauer Park. "Don't compromise" is the catch-phrase for this new "urban village", with promises of life in a green, tree-filled environment in the heart of the metropolis, right on the creative pulse of Berlin. The project, which is the largest of its kind in the area, carries the name "Marthashof". This historical name goes back to the mid-nineteenth century, and belonged to a home for wayward girls from the countryside, directed by the Kaiserswerther Deaconesses. Later the same name was given to a school on the premises, which was bombed in 1943. Currently, this 12,000 square meter site is being developed into exclusive townhouses, garden houses and "vertical villas". The selling price for some is to be considerably more than 3,200 euros per square meter.

Many local residents from Oderberger Straße, Kastanienallee, and Schwedter Straße are in disagreement with the construction plans. Their stipulation is also "no compromises", and they have founded an association through which they can voice their concerns, under the name "AnliegerInitiative Marthashof" (Abutter Initiative Marthashof), or in short, "AIM". Their goal is to reduce the planned number of floors for the new buildings at Marthashof, as well as to increase the space between the property lines and to minimize disturbances during the construction. Apart from these issues, they fear the kind of social restructuring which has become an increasing threat to those living in the area.

The construction plans are as follows: the „urban village“ is u-shaped, and opens up to Schwedter Straße. In the middle is a green area which is open to the public during the day. The other end of the complex, parallel to Oderberger Straße, is closed. This segment is six storeys high, the furthest point from the property lines being about 20 meters, the closest point being only about five meters. This "urban village" is to house 500 people.

If the current plans are followed through, the quality of life for the surrounding residents is going to be reduced significantly. The planned six-storey building would not only block the view for all, but would also leave many apartments and the small gardens behind Oderberger Straße in its shadow. This plan was the result of an open competitive bid, which was won by the architectural firm Grüntuch Ernst. Not only the city council, but also the restoration company S.T.E.R.N. and related agencies were in agreement with the design, which at that time presented a much smaller construction at the back of the property. Those most affected, the local residents adjacent to the property, were neither asked about nor informed of the plans.

For the last few weeks, several representatives of AIM have held meetings with the business manager and the project manager from Stofanel's appointed project management company "Citybauten" with the hopes of coming to an agreeable solution. Except for some very slight concessions, no noteworthy achievements have been made through these convivial gatherings.

In the event that no acceptable compromises are agreed to, AIM will launch a campaign against the construction beginning May 31, in conjunction with Stofanel's grand opening, at which time the condominiums will be offered for sale to the public.

The Stofanel Project Development Company emerged from a collaboration between the entrepreneurs Ludwig Stoffel and Giovanna Stefanel. The building developer from Munich and the Italian fashion designer, who worked for years as creative director in her father's company, have other building projects and condominiums in addition to Marthashof, located on the island of Santa Maria delle Grazie near Venice, and most recently on Clayallee in Berlin, where they acquired some 49,800 square meters for 20.15 million euros.

AIM

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