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More brewing than beer

Mehr brauen als Bier

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Every year, starting in July, a whole new neighbourhood is watch of the Bavaria statue - a robed woman representing by Ludwig I - on the Theresienwiese grounds just a few blocks construction workers set up massive tents and amusement shops, three medical care centres and a police station corner within a city is home to the world's biggest festival, Oktoberfest opens today and is set to attract more than 6m visitors over Only locals are aware that behind the statue's back another city maps the area is called Schwanthalerhöhe - a reference sculptor of the statue - but residents call it the "Westend".

Founded in the 19th century, it was initially home to people who worked in the nearby factories and breweries. After the second world war, during Germany's economic boom, immigrants from Turkey, Greece and the Balkans arrived and today 40 per cent of the residents are non-German, the highest rate in Munich.

A wander through on a Friday afternoon reveals an atmosphere, multicultural Berlin than chi-chi Munich - or "schickirri". Women in *pardesüs* take their children to Turkish grocery clubs to play cards. Outside corner cafés students bask in Germany's new left-wing protest party, has an office here. remind the passers-by that they are still in Munich; between Strasse sits the last remaining brewery in the neighbourhood.

"I like this mix of cultures," says Susanne Starnes, a 32-year publishing company, who moved to Westend from Schwabing two years ago after a friend recommended it. "In Schwabing to be cool," she adds, sitting in a café in Schwanthalerstrasse at the same time, it feels like home." Residents might have neighbours run into each other on the street, they almost a

The signs of change are easy to see. Most buildings are in every street, there is scaffolding set up to assist in address bars, delicatessens and restaurants have opened in the past are under construction on Ridlerstrasse, Barthstrasse and and art galleries have started moving in, opening next to ke Developer RAS GmbH Rente aus Stein is one of the company Westend's new vibe. Owners Christian Huber and Sven Meier Westendstrasse a few months ago and intend to complete century façade and creating eight modern apartments. New moved out and the developers expect to replace them with investors. A 70 sq metre apartment costs about €350,000 and four have already sold. Touring one of the abandoned flats, Huber and Meier point to walls they want to remove, flooring to replace and the spot where they'd like to build a furniture will be thrown out and the dark carpets pulled up. lived," Meier says. "Hard to imagine, isn't it?" He guesses t month.

This is not the first time that the Westend has been on the 1970s city officials decided to target the area, drying out walls and planting trees, as they had done in Haidhausen, another earlier. But whereas Haidhausen quickly gentrified, the Westend developers. "Maybe it was because the Westend lacks Will architecture," says Rudolf Stürzer, chairman of Munich real estate association Haus und Grund München, which has an office a few blocks away from the neighbourhood.

Now, however, he is convinced that the Westend's time has come. The location - within walking distance of the city centre and well connected by transport excellent," he says. Yet, thanks to one-way streets, it is still such as Bavariapark and Westpark. And "all the big local development area or will construct in the next years." Demos Wohnbau in apartment complex in the Landsberger Strasse and Baywa local companies have also invested.

"It is certainly one of the rare up-and-coming neighbourhoods of Munich," agrees Dietmar Windemuth, marketing and sales manager at Concept Bau - Premier, one of Munich's biggest developers. His company built four condominium buildings at Theresienhöhe, an area in the southern part of Westend, which once housed the Munich Trade Fair Center but is now home to innovative new architecture (including Otto Steidle's yellow, 43-metre-high Park Plaza), a KPMG accounting office, a new branch of the Deutsche Museum and a large pedestrian square. And its latest project is in the heart of the old Westend - a building of 66 mostly split-level apartments, priced from €3,500-€4,700 per sq metre, which compares with €5,500 per sq metre for prime residential property elsewhere in the city. It will open in 2009 and more than half the units have already sold. "If grounds were available, we would immediately build another apartment complex here," Windemuth says. says.

„Ich mag diesen Mix der Kulturen“, sagt Susanne Starnes, eine 32 jährige Verkaufsleiterin eines Buchverlags, die vor 2 Jahren auf die Empfehlung einer Freundin von Schwabing, nahe der Münchner Universität, in das Westend gezogen ist. „Die Menschen in Schwabing mögen es zu posieren und so zu tun als ob sie cool wären“ fügt sie hinzu, als sie in einem Cafe in der Schwanthaler-straße sitzt. „Das Westend ist auch cool, aber gleichzeitig fühlt man sich Zuhause“.

Der Entwickler, RAS GmbH Rente aus Stein, ist eines der Unternehmen die planen in die neue Atmosphäre des Westends zu investieren. Die Geschäftsführer Christian Huber und Sven Meier haben vor einigen Monaten eine Denkmalimmobilie in der Westendstraße gekauft und planen diese komplett zu renovieren, die Fassade des 19. Jahrhunderts wieder herzustellen und acht moderne Apartments entstehen zu lassen. Fast alle der ehemaligen Bewohner sind ausgezogen und die Entwickler möchten diese mit Fachleuten und Investoren ersetzen. Ein 70 m² Apartment kostet ca. € 350.000,- und vier sind bereits verkauft.

Beim Durchgehen einer der leeren Wohnungen, zeigen Huber und Meier auf Wände die noch entfernt werden, Böden die ausgetauscht werden und die Stelle wo sie gerne einen neuen Balkon bauen möchten. Die alten, maroden Möbel werden rausgeschmissen und die dunklen Teppiche rausgerissen. „So haben die ehemaligen Bewohner hier gelebt“, sagt Hr. Meier, „schwer vorstellbar, nicht wahr?“. Er schätzt, dass keiner mehr als €300,- monatlich bezahlt hat.

Das ist nicht das Erste mal, dass das Westend an der Schwelle einer Verwandlung steht. Ende der 70er hat die Stadtverwaltung die Gegend anvisiert um feuchte Wände trocken zu legen, die Bäder zu erneuern und Bäume zu pflanzen, so wie sie es ein paar Jahre zuvor in Haidhausen, einer weiteren veralteten Nachbarschaft, getan hatten.

Die Neuankömmlinge sind aber nicht nur willkommen. „Für mich heißt das nur, dass die Preise steigen“ sagt eine 60 Jahre alte Besitzerin eines Suppen- und Sandwich-Imbisses in der Heimeranstraße, die seit mehr als 40 Jahren im Westend lebt.

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