

REPAIR & CARE

A Strategic Response to Renewal in Gösting.

Key Findings

After interrogating the brief provided and undertaking an in depth investigation and mapping of Gösting's existing natural assets, resources, history, industry, infrastructure and community activity, we have identified the following as key findings that our proposal aims to address.

1. **Climate and flood risks.**

The natural environments of Gösting are the areas greatest assets and similarly pose the most significant future risks. A rapidly changing climate necessitates that mitigating such risks be crucial, particularly as almost half the district is located in a 1-30 year flood zone. Immediate efforts are needed to reduce impervious surfaces, widen waterways and increase planting, particularly along waterways, to enable greater rates of natural evapotranspiration and reduce overall risk of flood. Likewise caring for important areas of biodiversity from along the Mur through to the surrounding mountains will assist in cooling and providing fresh, unpolluted air to the greater Graz region.

2. **Connecting a Fragmented Urban Form.**

Currently as the fourth largest district in Graz, Gösting offers its residents almost everything required to operate as a successful 20 minute neighbourhood. The area contains a considerable range of health, education and childcare services as well as a diverse range of industry and employment opportunities. However, it experiences a very fragmented urban form that remains extremely reliant on cars. Better connections are required across the suburb to promote increased use of active and public transport, to deprioritise car usage, connect the community and enhance the experience of the public realm.

3. **Celebrate What's Great.**

Gösting's Genius Loci is shaped by its historically significant architecture and landmarks. Notably the "Ruine Gösting" area, the "Jungfernsprung", a number of historic villas and expansive natural surroundings. The district is embraced by picturesque landscapes, including rolling hills, lush forests, and many tranquil watercourses. The area experiences a strong sense of local pride, with active associations, that are mainly centred around sports, fostering a sense of belonging for many of its residents. Many notable spaces are either not accessible to the public or require significant repair. Efforts could be made to improve the celebrated elements and make them more inclusive to the entire community.

4. **An Evolving Economy**

A wide number of well-established businesses exist within Gösting. They range in size from large industrial sites to a significant amount of businesses that operate from home. Renewal presents an opportunity for the existing economy to develop through providing not only a new centrally located, fine-grain retail and hospitality tenancies but also office or co-working spaces that could see businesses evolve from working from home to having a more public facing position in the community. Collaborative places that offer business coaching, spaces for meetings, and shared office equipment could provide opportunities for the business community of Gösting to better develop and thrive.

5. **The Peri-Urban Mindset**

The infrastructure, lifestyle and character of Gösting is greatly defined by its peri-urban form. Unlike any other area in Graz, this sprawling urban form has remained very static, experiencing little growth in the last three decades. A shift is required to address the existing peri-urban mindset to see a collective community and environmentally focused mentality replace one that is private, individual and car dependant. Encouraging the development of a vibrant central activity area at the heart of the district that reflects local needs and achievements will additionally assist in a more self-sustainable community and provide a better balance between urban amenity and rural tranquility.

6. **An Inviting Identity**

In order for Gösting to become a welcoming place, loved by its residents and visitors, a recognisable and welcoming identity should be developed to better promote the area. Traditionally, the area was renowned for its history of craftsmanship. Such stories are not outwardly reflected through existing primary industries. This history could be better celebrated to attract people to visit to learn woodworking, pottery, or painting. Enabling easy, safe and accessible transport connections throughout the district is important. Whether arriving by riding along the Mur or taking the tram Gösting should ultimately become a fantastic, walkable destination.

The Strategic Response

Inspired by the iconic ruin of Gösting Castle that is slowly being consumed by the natural elements. Our proposal seeks to liberate such ever-changing natural forces that define the landscape upon which the city rests. We aim to redefine Gösting as a place that prioritises caring for and working with nature to enable an ecological approach to future development and renewal.

We have developed the following sequential themes that have informed our process of investigation and define the proposed implementation strategy for shaping Gösting over the upcoming decades. Led by an environmental approach it results in a vibrant and inclusive place for all.

1. **Embed and Environmental Approach**

To cultivate a collective ecological consciousness and nurture a sense of environmental responsibility, actions will be taken to uncover, protect and celebrate Gösting's eco-systems, waterways, landscapes & biodiversity. Giving priority to addressing the natural systems impacting the area will result in a range of new social spaces where people co-exist and engage with nature through everyday life. This will occur by connecting the urban and wild forests, enhancing biodiversity links, and implementing sustainable water management practices.

2. **Establish Sustainable Connections**

By leveraging the implementation of the proposed Transportation Hub as a catalyst for renewing the connective tissue across Gösting, new methods to enable sustainable mobility and movement of people, goods, knowledge, energy and waste can be established. Dynamic and interesting public spaces will be oriented along water courses or biodiversity links to create circulation routes between key sites that prioritise active and public transport and compliment a highly liveable neighbourhood.

3. **Identify Key Growth Opportunities**

Unlike the rest of Graz, growth in Gösting has remained stagnant over the last three decades. Identifying targeted growth areas will enable spaces for development to house future generations and diversify urban form, whilst maintaining and respecting the historical built fabric. Assessing the functions and potential contributions that particular buildings and spaces could make to the urban fabric will identify where transformation opportunities exist and how to most appropriately increase density and revitalise the district.

4. **Curate and Collaborate with Community**

Empower the entire community in directing renewal outcomes to foster collective support and ensure revitalised urban fabric encapsulates a diversity of offerings for living, working, making and learning. Utilising local resources, knowledge and investment to transform the key areas of Gösting will enhance both social and physical cohesions across the suburb. Curating identities through a 'place-based' approach for each milieu and working in collaboration with the community will ensure individual places connect to the bigger whole.

5. **Celebrate Public Life**

Promoting an activated public realm with a diverse range of interconnected spaces for people to mingle and enjoy will provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for locals and guests in Gösting. Celebrating the area's renewed identity will further establish the lively activated centre as a

destination for all. Providing meaningful connection between old and new residents that will stimulate exchange and grow the social cohesion of the area, which will encourage further implementation of the overall development strategy.

Implementation Methodology

Action Area 1

The first priority for this renewal proposal is to increase care and investment in Gösting's waterways and natural ecosystems. As the climate changes, intense rainfall, flooding, extreme heat events and drought will become more common. Gösting is an area that is historically subject to floods and as such increased efforts are required to mitigate risks, to protect and repair the districts waterways and better showcase them as an asset of the region.

The scale of projects proposed to do this vary in size. Significant infrastructure projects are put forward such as the widening of Thalerbach, particularly in areas of open public space, along with exposing existing ground water flows to continue the Thalerbach through to the Mur and diverting flows of the Muehlgang to form a body of water central to the park proposed at the vacant field at Gösting's centre. Smaller interventions would provide opportunities for local volunteer participation through tree planting and river clean ups to collectively care and educate the community about the value of such complex ecosystems and embed an environmental approach to the district's renewal.

Action Area 2

Leveraging upon the proposed improvements along waterways, a revitalised active transport network will be implemented to reorganise and greatly improve the pedestrian and cycling network across the district to better connect the fragmented existing urban form. This will primarily run adjacent to creeks and rivers and will be developed as green corridors to create safe highways for active transport whilst also providing crucial biodiversity connections throughout the district. The green corridors will connect important locations like schools and the future Transport Hub location as well as connecting the districts open public spaces. Furthermore, additional public open spaces are proposed through opening the gardens at Schloss Gösting to the public, potentially negotiable through public investment to the Thalerbach running through this location, also a space at the rear of the Volksschule on the Thalerbach and the development of the vacant field along the Muehlgang to become a significant public park in the heart of Gösting. Ultimately, the goal is to create self-regulating natural areas that provide lush, inviting connections and movement routes throughout Gösting from the Mur through to the hiking trails of Plabutsch. The result will benefit locals, visitors, overall biodiversity levels and most importantly, it will enable Gösting to better negate the effects of a changing climate.

Action Area 3

The major focuses of this phase centre on research, consultation and advocacy as place specific outcomes are developed in collaboration with the community. We acknowledge that Gösting is a district comprised of a number of different milieus, each with their own distinct character, constraints and opportunities. To adequately address the complexity of such different conditions we propose to develop a 'Göstinger Placeplan' that would identify a specific vision for each defined milieu and incorporate how the objectives of the overall strategic proposal can relate to each place. Our current proposal describes high level, masterplanning principles that will effect each of the milieus and aim to collectively improve the amenity and well-being of the entire area. A more granular approach is required for identified areas, such as around the Gründerzeit Villas, allotment gardens and typical residential streetscapes, however this is best undertaken in collaboration and through consulting with the community to gain support for the objectives and to identify areas that require additional consideration. This will introduce us to the local heros, the 'lazy land', existing community networks and potential issues that aren't observable through a typical spatial or architectural response. It will also allow support to be expressed for unlisted historical houses,

natural areas that should be formally protected and built form regulations to establish a framework for future sensitive and sustainable growth with the backing of the wider community.

Action Areas 4

The proposal aims to make a very deliberate change to the face and character of Wienerstrasse. Through a series of interventions we envision Wienerstrasse becoming a vibrant 'downtown' area where it's wide street width can provide excellent conditions and a collection of places for public life to play out.

To achieve this we propose rezoning the properties directly adjacent the major road to incentivise development with a requirement for active ground floor uses. This will both increase the density of people living in central Gösting and provide a greater number of fine grain retail, hospitality, office and co-working spaces at ground level to better activate the public realm. Growth opportunities are prioritised for this area as it will have the least impact on existing natural assets and the predominant neighbourhood character of surrounding peri-urban form, furthermore many of the buildings in this areas are noted as being in poor condition and needing renewal. Through developing a central activity area, Gösting will begin to present a much more forward facing identity, one that will entice visitors to come and spend time in the area.

In addition to this we propose that Wienerstrasse begins to service both cars and trams as a measure of prioritising the environment, and active and public transport over private car usage. We wish to ensure no new roads or impervious surfaces are produced at the expense of natural habitat and existing buildings to produce a new tramline. This will further promote arriving at the Transport Hub and travelling through Gösting with sustainable transport methods. A further tramline is also suggested to continue to Shopping Centre Nord where existing carparks can offer a 'Park and Ride' for people travelling to Gösting from the north.

The goal is to produce and support a vibrant 20 minute neighbourhood with a centre that is not overrun by cars, which includes appropriate densification at human scale and a renewed streetscape that produces a lively area for living, working, making and learning.

Action Area 5

The final phase of this proposal sees construction completed to the new train line and opening of the Transportation Hub along with a restructuring of Interspar to densify and diversify the range of program at this site. The vision for this area is to see both the Transportation Hub and the neighbouring site act as a connective node at the heart of the district that facilitates sustainable mobility and movement of not only people, but also goods, knowledge, energy and waste. We understand that in order to establish healthy inclusive places, a diversity of program is required that welcomes all members of the community. The Interspar site has been identified as having a very large footprint, much larger than any supermarket found in central Graz. It is currently a hotspot for local activity, however given the prominence of its location, the site could easily offer more to the community programatically. As such, we are proposing that half the ground floor footprint remain available to the supermarket, still a significant 3800m². The existing structure and basement carpark will remain however, hospitality spaces and a new library will front on to a public plaza facing a widened Thalerbach providing a green corridor that connects the Transport Hub through to the new centrally located public park. The library space should include bookable meeting rooms and a range of modes for study, work and leisure. The rear of the site will include recycling drop off area and a skate park. Whilst the roof will be renewed to include a wide array of PV and greening to reduce impact on waterways and provide solar power back into the grid.

The finalisation of the new train station will become the last piece of the puzzle in enabling Gösting to progress from a peri-urban village to a vibrant activated neighbourhood that celebrates its community and embraces its natural environment.