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Planning and building

Affordable rental housing: City of Bocholt already well positioned

Research institute presents results // Remaining need for action "not very high"

Affordable housing has been a recurring topic in politics and administration for several years. The city of Bocholt commissioned the research institute InWIS Forschung & Beratung GmbH from Bochum to conduct a short study on this topic with the aim of taking an in-depth look at the supply situation of low-income households and the municipal options for action and influence.

In a first step, the institute conducted a fact check and, on this basis, derived a forecast of the need for publicly subsidized rental housing. According to the expert's assessment, there will be a need for around 430 publicly subsidized rental apartments by 2035. This need is made up of current pent-up demand, replacement for housing that is expected to go out of rent control, and housing needs for refugees.

There are several tools that can be used to create affordable housing. The main fields of action here are municipal land policy, the creation of incentives for investors, the extraction of price commitments in the existing housing stock, and the creation of effective implementation structures.

The city of Bocholt has always successfully used numerous instruments from the various fields of action and has thus made a significant contribution to the creation of newly subsidized rental housing units in recent years. Through municipal control, around 50 percent of new rental apartments have been created in the subsidized segment since 2010. City building official Daniel Zöhler says, "The city of Bocholt has been and continues to be very active in meeting current and future needs."

"A lot of provision has already been made."

The instruments used include land management, municipal interim acquisition, the housing construction program and the conclusion of urban development contracts. The instruments are regularly combined. The city of Bocholt has already managed to contractually secure about 330 apartments in projected projects, thus covering the future demand of about 430 housing units to a considerable extent. Ms. Höbel of the InWIS Institute says: "This is already an extraordinary contribution. A lot has already been provided for, the remaining need for action is no longer high."

In a policy workshop at the Europahaus on June 7, the results of InWIS were presented in detail and discussed with the administration and politicians. The politicians present were satisfied with the work of the administration and the results.

The workshop also discussed how to meet the remaining need of around 100 rental apartments in the publicly subsidized segment by 2035. The short study by InWIS clearly showed that the instruments used so far have proven their worth and focus on new housing construction.

"Due to expiring subsidized loans, about 600 apartments will lose their rent control on a completely regular basis by 2035. There is enormous potential here to regain at least a larger proportion of these apartments and provide them with rent control again. The advantages: the apartments do not have to be newly built, they are integrated into neighborhoods with existing infrastructure," says Ms. Höbel of the InWIS Institute.

The possibility of using existing rental housing to meet demand was unanimously welcomed at the policy workshop. For this purpose, there is, for example, the instrument of indirect occupancy, in which an investor uses subsidies to build and rent out a new apartment without a commitment and, in return, places two existing apartments under rent

control. In addition, the instrument of modernization subsidies can be considered. Mrs. Ludwig (B90/ Die Grünen) praised this instrument "in the sense of resource conservation".

In Bocholt, of the current 1,630 publicly subsidized apartments, about 60 percent are in the hands of four larger housing companies. This was seen by InWIS as a particular plus, because one can talk about many apartments with a manageable number of owners and enter into "profitable joint ventures." This instrument was seen as an efficient tool for creating publicly subsidized rental housing by both the experts and the politicians and administrators. Depending on the design, win-win effects could be achieved.

As a result of the policy workshop, it can be stated that the instruments used so far have been able to achieve great effects, especially in the new construction segment. In new construction, qualities can be created that are difficult to implement in existing buildings, such as barrier-free access. In addition, the existing stock offers enormous potential for using existing structures. In the future, there should be a greater focus on this in the interest of conserving resources.



*Bei den bezahlbaren Mietwohnungen ist die Stadt Bocholt bereits gut aufgestellt
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