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Planning and building

Bocholt needs 430 publicly subsidized apartments by 2035

Surveyor presents affordable housing study and sees city on track to reach target level

More affordable housing: Around 430 publicly subsidized apartments will be needed in Bocholt by 2035. This is the conclusion of a report by a renowned research institute. According to the report, the city will be able to achieve this target. Thus, 330 apartments in the publicly subsidized housing segment can be expected in the next five years.

The respected research institute InWIS Forschung & Beratung GmbH from Bochum has been commissioned by the city of Bocholt to look into the question of how the supply situation of low-income households in Bocholt looks and what local possibilities for action or influence exist. According to the study, around 430 additional apartments will be needed by 2035.

In a first step, the institute had examined and evaluated the development of the demand- and supply-side conditions in affordable housing in Bocholt. The result: the demand for housing in Bocholt has continued to rise. However, the supply situation for low-income households is becoming more difficult due to the growing number of households, rent increases, rising energy prices and the loss of publicly subsidized housing.

According to expert estimates, there will be a need for around 430 publicly subsidized rental apartments in Bocholt by 2035. This demand is made up of the current pent-up demand, the replacement of apartments that are expected to go out of rent control, and the housing demand for refugees.

How the city creates affordable housing

The municipality has several options for creating affordable housing. "The main fields of action here are municipal land policy, creating incentives for investors, obtaining price commitments in the existing housing stock and creating effective implementation structures," explains Katrin Rüter, chairwoman of the expert committee for land values in the city of Bocholt. The instruments used in Bocholt include, in particular, land management, municipal interim acquisition, the housing construction program and the conclusion of urban development contracts.

Expert Höbel from the InWIS Institute praised the fact that these instruments are regularly combined in Bocholt. In the period from 2010 to 2021, a total of 283 new rent and occupancy commitments were created. Of these, 147 apartments, or 52 percent of the "ties," were created through municipal control.

Höbel: "The city of Bocholt has so far achieved considerable success in the creation of subsidized rental housing through the use of municipal control instruments." This applies not only to the subsidized rental housing already created, but also to the rental housing needed in the future, he said.

330 apartments are in planning

The city of Bocholt has currently contracted for around 330 apartments in planned projects and has thus already been able to cover the future demand of around 430 residential units to a considerable extent. These apartments are expected to be completed within the next five years. Bocholt's city building councilor Daniel Zöhler says: "The city of Bocholt has been and continues to be very active in meeting current and future needs."

InWIS expert Regina Höbel discussed how the remaining need of around 100 publicly subsidized apartments can be ensured by 2035 with representatives from politics and

administration in a policy workshop in June 2022. She presented her findings and recommendations to the Planning and Building Committee at the end of September 2022.

According to these, further new construction of subsidized apartments on the one hand and "winning ties in the housing stock" on the other hand could be considered for covering the remaining demand.

The argument in favor of additional subsidized new construction is that sustainable housing qualities can be created here, for example in the area of energy efficiency or accessibility.

In view of the high number of apartments secured in subsidized new construction, the high number of expiring commitments and in the interest of conserving resources, the policy workshop unanimously welcomed the possibility of using existing rental apartments to meet demand. For this purpose, there is, for example, the instrument of "indirect occupancy". This means that an investor uses subsidies to build and rent out a new apartment free of ties and, in return, places two existing apartments under rent control. The use of subsidies for modernization can be used to accompany this.

Currently 1,630 publicly subsidized apartments

In Bocholt, around 60 percent of the 1,630 publicly subsidized apartments are currently in the hands of four larger housing companies. InWIS expert Höbel sees this as a "particular plus", as it is possible to talk about many apartments with a manageable number of owners and to enter into "profitable joint ventures". This was seen as an efficient instrument for creating publicly subsidized rental housing, both by the experts and by politicians and administrators.

Höbel recommends that the possibilities of indirect occupancy and the use of public funds for housing modernization, which are anchored in the housing promotion regulations of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, should be focused on and, to this end, "cooperation with the housing companies operating in Bocholt should be further intensified."

The housing companies would contribute to fulfilling the municipal supply mandate of ensuring access to affordable housing for broad sections of the population, and the city of Bocholt would support them in achieving sustainable portfolio and neighborhood development and rounding off the portfolio with targeted new construction projects.

Expert opinion for download

The expert report by the InWIS GmbH Bochum Institute is published on the website of the city of Bocholt at www.bocholt.de/rathaus/planen-bauen-verkehr/fachaustausch-bezahlbares-wohnen-in-bocholt.





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