

Understanding
the Needs, Wishes
and Concerns

—
Seeing the big Picture

“I want to do everything I can to help my daughter as she moves through life. I want her to feel safe and secure at home, and to learn at school the skills she’ll need to take the next step in life.”

STEFANIE LENZ, SINGLE MOTHER LIVING IN
BERLIN-SCHÖNOW

WHAT WE ALSO UNDERSTAND FROM THESE STATEMENTS:

- The time I spend with my child is valuable and important.
- I don’t want anything to stand in the way of a good education for my child.
- Also as a single parent, I want to offer my child quality of living.



“Bochum is an urban metropolis offering a successful mixture between city and home. More housing space, densification and more mobility within the districts – these are the challenges faced to become a place to be, place to work and place to live.”

THOMAS EISKIRCH, MAYOR OF BOCHUM

WHAT WE ALSO UNDERSTAND FROM THESE STATEMENTS:

- Developing a city is a challenging task.
- I need competent partners for my city.
- People want to be involved.



“After so many years in the working world, now is the time for us to focus on the things we enjoy: music, handicraft, travel. And we might well stumble upon a few new interests as well.”

ULLA AND KLAUS BECKER, TENANTS IN A NEW MODULAR CONSTRUCTION BUILDING LOCATED ON INSTERBURGER STRASSE IN BOCHUM-HOFSTEDE

WHAT WE ALSO UNDERSTAND FROM THESE STATEMENTS:

- We now feel that we deserve an apartment that will suit our needs in the future, too.
- This is the place we want to stay and grow old. We want to have a reliable point of contact to deal with any matters that crop up within the building.



“The senior citizens are often waiting at the door for me when I arrive. A lot of them see me as a shoulder to cry on, no matter how big or small their worries. For some of them, I’ve even become something of a substitute daughter.”

ELKE WERMELSKIRCHEN, SUPPORT WORKER IN THE JOHANNITER ORGANIZATION SERVICE OFFICE IN BERLIN’S ZIEKOW DISTRICT

WHAT WE ALSO UNDERSTAND FROM THESE STATEMENTS:

- I have a meaningful job that makes me and other people happy.
- The people here rely on support.
- I feel satisfied when I can find solutions that suit the individual.



“Whenever I’m sitting in the evening and think there is nothing I haven’t seen, the next day comes along and I’m confronted with a completely new situation. It’s not always easy, but I really enjoy it.”

NORA WOKER, PROJECT MANAGER AND SITE OFFICER
FOR VONOVIA IN DORTMUND-WESTERFILDE

WHAT WE ALSO UNDERSTAND FROM THESE STATEMENTS:

- Neighborhood management requires a considerable degree of commitment and creativity.
- A lot of problems can be resolved on site and, most importantly, through teamwork.
- The commitment shown by our employees is our most valuable asset.



Requirements,
Expectations, Issues,
Responsibilities

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Taking Action

Established in 2015 and online since 2016, it has more than one million “active neighbors” in 2019. The nebenan.de platform serves to promote neighborhood dialogue, addressing a key social issue in the process. After all, in a world that is undergoing dynamic change, our social environment is becoming increasingly important. One of the co-founders provides an insight into the platform.

Neighbors that you know play a key role in turning a home into a good home

Michael Vollmann, co-founder of nebenan.de and managing director of the nebenan.de foundation



What is the idea behind nebenan.de? How did you come up with it?

Michael Vollmann: The idea was essentially born out of necessity. My brother Christian and I come from a small town, like a number of the other four co-founders of nebenan.de. Back there, our day-to-day lives were characterized by experiences enjoyed as a community: Everyone knew each other, people would meet up in the local clubs and associations and doing charity work was the norm. That's something we missed when we moved to the city. Urban environments are very anonymous and older people often experience loneliness. Gone are the days when people used to introduce themselves to their neighbors when they moved in. Nowadays you might say a quick "hi," but that's usually about it.

This was something we wanted to change within our neighborhood – we started off with an email distribution list which very quickly evolved into a specialized local platform. The response was so positive that we wanted to make the platform available to every single neighbor throughout Germany.

It would appear that your idea has touched upon a pressing issue in modern society ...

Vollmann: Exactly. Today, nebenan.de brings interested neighbors from all over Germany together on the online platform. People use the platform to network with other locals in their neighborhoods, they pursue joint interests and set up regular meet-ups in local bars and restaurants. Many of them use the platform to find lost possessions, exchange things they no longer need or organize extra tuition for their children. Voluntary work is another element of the platform: People offer their time to go shopping for older people, get involved in food-sharing concepts and organize non-monetary donations for the homeless or refugees.

To what extent can institutions use the platform as well?

Vollmann: nebenan.de is open to anyone that plays an active role in neighborhood development work, urban development or neighborhood initiatives. This includes associations in particular, as well as charitable and municipal institutions. The only criteria that we impose are that the organi-

zation has a link to the local area and that the neighborhood will benefit. The platform offers municipal authorities, in particular, a new way of communicating with their citizens: They can use it to draw attention to local events, find voluntary workers and provide information on projects within the area. The city of Hanover, for example, is using the platform to provide registered neighbors with information on its support services for senior citizens, while the local authorities of Berlin-Lichtenberg post information on current neighborhood activities on the platform.

Does that include information on businesses?

Vollmann: Yes, but the businesses have to be local ones. We see the local retail sector and local service providers as key players in the neighborhood and we want to help



strengthen the role that they play. The yoga school, the physiotherapist and the little food store operated by a sole proprietor are key elements of a functioning neighborhood. The framework for their participation, however, is limited, meaning that nobody can use the platform for targeted advertising measures or to roll out data-driven business models, for example.

What about your foundation? What is its role?

Vollmann: Our fundamental focus is on the social idea behind the concept. The not-for-profit nebenan.de Foundation is also helping us to turn this idea into a reality. It has allowed us to attract additional strong partners, such as the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Diakonie Germany (the social welfare organization of Germany's Protestant churches) and also Vonovia. We work hand-in-hand with these partners to organize events such as "Neighbors' Day" or the "German Neighborhood Award," for example. Vonovia also provides key support for the prize.



What is the idea behind the German Neighborhood Award?

Vollmann: Since 2017, this award has gone to individuals who show a particular commitment to fostering a sense of community within their neighborhood. The foundation nominates 100 or so projects out of all of the applications received. 16 state juries and one federal jury then select the winner from among the nominees. The aim is to showcase commitment within the neighborhood and give it the recognition it deserves.

What day-to-day problems do you face? How do you deal with the issue of data protection?

Vollmann: It takes a long time for new concepts to be accepted in Germany and people are very skeptical about anything relating to the Internet. One of the main tasks that we face is trying to dispel these fears. The issue of data protection was a top priority for us from day one. We only request the data that is absolutely necessary to operate the platform. This essentially includes the user information. An external data protection officer makes sure that we stick to these principles. We use a comprehensive verification process to ensure that the people who want to communicate with each other on the platform really are neighbors. We have obtained certification for our technical platform from the German Association for Technical Inspection, TÜV.

What is your impression of people in Germany?

Vollmann: The level of commitment shown is impressive. The Germans really like getting involved. At the same time, we can see that digitization is releasing centrifugal forces that would appear to be pulling society even further apart. Younger and older people don't run into each other anymore. Community service has been abolished. People from different social groups barely mix. This poses a threat to social cohesion and it's a trend that we want to counteract.

Has anything taken you by surprise?

Vollmann: We have noticed that people are really interested in the concept of the neighborhood. Ideas such as "belonging" to a certain place, or having a place to call "home," are becoming more important.



7,000 neighborhoods have already been connected at www.nebenan.de; this number is expected to grow to 30,000.

There is a certain pull back towards the idea of a “local” community. Neighbors that you know play a key role in turning a home into a good home. This is certainly a trend. I was surprised by the high level of commitment shown by people when it comes to getting down to the hard work. At magazin.nebenan.de, we tell some great stories about local people who are committed to helping refugees or other people in need. We have 3,500 registered local initiatives on our platform, and then there are the countless activities that are organized informally. The wealth of ideas and the dedication shown are impressive. It’s something that really motivates us and confirms that we are on the right track.

What are your plans for nebenan.de? What is your vision for the future?

Vollmann: In the medium term, we want the platform to be self-sufficient in financial terms. We also want our foundation to have even more of an impact in terms of supporting democracy and promoting social cohesion and integration.

We currently have 1.1 million active users in more than 7,000 neighborhoods located in over 350 municipalities. My vision is for us to one day be able to offer a platform to all 30,000 neighborhoods in Germany. I hope



that our work will turn the large number of strangers who are currently living next to each other day in, day out, into good neighbors again and that this will help to alleviate loneliness and strengthen social cohesion at local level. Neighborhoods can offer us a place to call home in our dynamic world.

📄 For more information on nebenan.de, please visit the website: www.nebenan.de.

📄 You can find out more about the German Neighborhood Award on the website www.nachbarschaftspreis.de.



Creating new living space

Our cities are becoming increasingly attractive, but living space remains in short supply. This is an issue that we want to tackle by building new apartments designed to suit people's needs.

Germany needs up to 400,000 new apartments a year. Around 300,000 were completed in 2018. The gap is proving a problem for the country's major cities, in particular, because their populations are growing at an above-average rate. Our modular construction concept allows us to create new, but also affordable living space, within a short space of time. We started work on the construction of 1,000 residential units last year. Once everything is running smoothly and the processes in place at the local authorities are fully up to speed, we will be able to realize more than twice as many apartments every year in the future. As things stand at the moment, we expect that we can use conventional project development to build around 12,000 new apartments in the years to come.

In order to exploit the opportunities open to us to the greatest extent possible, we are focusing on three approaches: vertical expansion, densification and project development in new areas. We use technical systems to identify potential for densification and vertical expansion in particular: These systems "scan" our portfolio for opportunities that conventional methods might have missed.

The neighborhood environment is something that we also always consider when thinking about new construction. In the current fiscal year, eleven neighborhood development projects encompassing a total of around 6,800 residential units are in the operational implementation stage across Germany. Our objective is always to achieve sustainable improvements within the neighborhoods in question.

Knorr district: Construction for today and tomorrow

When we want to create new living space, we think not only about the apartments themselves, but also about the surrounding infrastructure. One example is the project located on Knorrstrasse in the central Frankfurt district of



In series, yet still individual: Modular construction provides a way to create new apartments quickly and efficiently.



You can find more information on this in the press section:
www.vonovia.de/ueber-vonovia/presse

Gallus, which was completed last year. As part of this project, we modernized a portfolio of 100 apartments built in 1956 and 1957, including measures to add balconies and elevators. At the same time, we also built 40 new residential units on existing open spaces using serial wooden hybrid construction. Eight of these apartments were created by adding additional stories to existing buildings. All in all, this equates to almost 3,200 square meters of new living area in a central location and at fair prices.

As far as measures to improve the neighborhood are concerned, we modernized the sewage system, laid a power line and renewed the road surface. We also created 52 car parking spaces and added green spaces. Today, the Knorr district is an attractive neighborhood for existing tenants and new customers alike, and is a flagship project that showcases innovative living space concepts. The project has inspired us to realize similar projects in other locations in the future.

By 2035, 24 million people living in Germany will be aged over 65, meaning that they will be in need of senior-friendly homes. At the same time, digitization is opening up new opportunities for making homes more comfortable and secure. We aim to exploit these opportunities to the benefit of our customers.

Offering a place to live for a large number of people





People tend to become less mobile as they get older. For many people, this means having to leave the place they have called home for many years because it no longer meets their needs. As we also want our older tenants to be able to stay in the place they call home, we are gradually making our apartments more accessible. And when we build new apartments, we take the criterion of “senior-friendly” living into account from the outset. The fact that the costs are added onto the rent over a prolonged period makes them manageable for our customers.

Our customers want to enjoy all of the modern conveniences in their homes. In line with our strategy of positioning ourselves as a service provider, we have already identified numerous approaches that tie in with this idea of contemporary living, offering services that our customers value: Cable TV, bathroom and kitchen modernization in response to tenant request, mailboxes for packages in our buildings, special apartment security measures or convenient processes allowing electricity costs to be settled via the rent. We take care to ensure that all of these services are attractive for our customers.

Shared living facility for dementia sufferers: rising to everyday challenges together

Particularly in old age, many people are forced to live with an illness that calls for a particular form of support: dementia. The

condition affects around 1.7 million people in Germany, a figure that is set to rise to three million by 2050 due to demographic change. In order to demonstrate our commitment to working towards solutions in this area, too, we opened the first shared living facility for dementia sufferers in Vonovia’s portfolio in Essen in November 2018. With the support of the nursing care provider Humanika, the facility allows up to ten residents suffering from dementia to live largely independently.

The shared facility features individually designed rooms and communal areas such as a large living room, a kitchen and a bathroom. With professional assistance on hand to help them master the day-to-day challenges that they face – and to provide the appropriate medical care if need be – the residents can enjoy a safe environment that meets their needs and allows them to live largely independently and with the dignity they deserve.

We plan to step up our cooperation with Humanika over the next few years to realize more projects like these in the future.

 You can find more information on this in the press section:
www.vonovia.de/ueber-vonovia/presse

Most people want to be able to stay in their own homes as they grow older. And with the right living concepts, they can.





Promoting community life

Demographic change, migration and increasing individualism are changing the face of our society. These developments are also leaving their mark on our neighborhoods. We want to help ensure that neighborhoods remain stable and that integration is a success story.

Community life, education, culture – these are three areas that offer straightforward solutions for fostering integration and community spirit. We are actively involved in all three areas, either directly or via our foundations. We organize a whole range of different events, launch competitions and grant scholarships.

It is not just in their apartments that people come together, but also in the area surrounding their homes. Their neighborhoods are their living environment and we want to make sure that this environment is one they feel at home in. We organize green spaces, maintain trees, install benches and design playgrounds and outdoor gyms.

Our customers have diverse cultural backgrounds. We offer our customer services in various languages and are also on hand on site to ensure that tenants settle in to their new environment. And should particular issues arise in the course of day-to-day life, then our social and neighborhood managers can help to iron out any problems.

A neighborhood community center in Berlin-Ziekow

“Thinking ahead and exploiting new opportunities” – this is the principle based on which we will gradually be converting a total of 145 apartments in two high-rise residential buildings in Berlin-Reinickendorf to make them fully accessible and senior-friendly. We have already laid the foundation for ensuring that our older residents in Berlin-Reinickendorf are well integrated into the community. One step in this process is the cooperation with the Johanniter Unfallhilfe accident assistance organization of the Order of St. John.

Since last summer, the organization has been running a neighborhood community center that allows older people to make use of support services ranging from group lunches to assistance with minor day-to-day tasks. In addition to individual advice, the services also include the opportunity to take part in group activities such as exercise programs for senior citizens, memory training courses and excursions. Residents can also make use of outpatient nursing care services, a meals service, concierge services and a home distress call solution.

Based on the positive experience in Berlin-Ziekow, we will be turning similar projects into a reality in other locations in the future. At the same time, we are considering expanding the services that we ourselves offer our older tenants: for example a laundry service, a medication delivery service, the acceptance of mail and parcels or the installation of a home distress call system.

 You can find more information on this in the press section:
www.vonovia.de/ueber-vonovia/presse

In an aging society, social care occupations are quickly becoming important. With 22,000 employees and around 37,000 volunteers, the Johanniter organization contributes to this greatly.



In order to limit the implications of climate change and to ensure that global warming does not surpass the two degrees mark, our buildings also have to become more environmentally friendly. As a real estate company, we want to play an active role in ensuring that this objective is met.

Doing our bit to protect the environment



The size of our portfolio entails a tremendous responsibility for protecting the environment. At the same time, however, we cannot lose sight of the cost effectiveness and affordability of our apartments. We are helping to protect our environment first and foremost through our energy-efficient building upgrades aimed at reducing energy consumption and emissions. This is also an area in which the standards that apply to new buildings are much higher than those that apply to our existing portfolio.

We are also realizing modern energy concepts to make a further contribution to climate protection. We already operate 208 photovoltaic plants and have been supplying 450 apartments with biomass district heating since last year. We will be implementing further projects to substantially increase the number of our environmentally-friendly systems over the next few years.

Our coordinated organizational processes also allow us to make a significant contribution to climate protection: Smart route planning for our craftsmen and the high level of digitization inherent in our processes, for example, allow us to avoid a large number of unnecessary trips.

Car sharing mobility concept

The infrastructure in our conurbations is already so advanced that many people can easily do without their own car entirely: Cars are relatively expensive and the space used to park them could otherwise be used for residential or open spaces. And that's not to mention the fact that they are bad for the environment. Last year, these concerns prompted us to think about more contemporary approaches to mobility: We have been offering tenants in our neighborhoods car sharing services available directly outside their front door since the middle of the year. Our partner in this initiative is Flinkster, the



Especially in cities, parking lots are important spaces where modern mobility concepts can be put to different kinds of use.

car sharing network with the highest level of coverage in the German-speaking world. A second exclusive partner is the shared mobility provider MOQO HOME.

Our tenants can book car sharing services quickly and easily using the website of the partner concerned. The car they choose is unlocked, and then locked again after its return, using a cellphone app. The costs are billed directly via the cooperation partner. The vehicles on offer include small cars for the city and station wagon models for family outings or bigger shopping trips.

After the concept was rolled out in the Stuttgart, Berlin, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Essen and Dresden regions in the summer, tenants in Kiel, Bremen, Dortmund, Duisburg, Frankfurt, Mannheim and Freiburg are now also able to use the convenient system to collect their cars and then park them in the designated areas once their trip is complete, with no stress involved. The next step in the project will involve the installation of electric charging stations in car sharing parking lots. The first electric charging station in Vonovia's portfolio has already been installed in the Eltingviertel District in Essen.

 You can find more information online: www.vonovia.de/carsharing