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STREETFORUM-TOOL #residentialstreetlife

(German: #wohnstrassenleben)

GUIDELINES

WHAT IT IS

#residentialstreetlife is a tool designed especially for residential streets (in Austria: Wohnstraße, Belgium: woonerf, Sweden: Gångfartsområde; Turkey: Yaya Öncelikli Yol, and so on, depending on the country). In the context of street and public space transformation, this analogue tool, developed by space and place and its co-creators since 2018, helps people to take ownership of public spaces and foster new, consumption-free social spaces by encouraging the legal use of residential streets as people-oriented spaces – **streets for people**. **It enables stakeholders** (e.g. residents, people living and working on a given street, pupils from a neighbouring school...) **to experience the residential street in a new way**.

Usually, these streets are used by cars only. **#residentialstreetlife opens up this social space for all mobility participants**. This happens within the legal framework of these streets (see download: "Residential Street Regulations"): **It is possible to spontaneously and legally organise a #wohnstrassenleben on a residential street without registering**. The activities take place within a more or less customary local framework – for example, you should avoid making excessive noise and be respectful towards all residents and visitors to the street.

Activities on residential streets can be communicated under the hashtag

#residentialstreetlife (in German: **#wohnstrassenleben**). Users appropriate this public space and participate in the co-creation of the 'Residential Street Culture'.



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The regulations for residential streets can be found in the respective road traffic regulations of the various countries and are similar. Since the rules are often only briefly described and the streets – until now – are rarely used as a 'living room in front of one's own front door' in practice, there remains a certain grey area in which one can interpret how the residential street is used.

The tool #residentialstreetlife encompasses a wide range of socio-cultural activities for and with people of all genders and age groups (see below). People with physical disabilities also have good access to the residential street, especially since it is usually barrier-free.

In this guidelines, we aim to give you, as a user and facilitator of #residentialstreetlifes, an introduction to the tool. We also give you **specific examples of activities and related tools** that you can further develop and apply on the residential streets of your neighbourhood or community.

WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR

#residentialstreetlife ...

- ... **raises awareness for the alternative use of residential streets.**
- ... through artistic and sociocultural means can **foster a common understanding of issues and build trust.**
- ... **enables collaborations and empower people to** (temporarily) appropriate streets and **create new social spaces**



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HOW IT WORKS

Residential street life is not an 'event'. It's a habit – a way of life: everyone may engage in this practice on a daily basis in their residential street. During #wohnstrassenleben, people stay on their residential street, putting furniture in parking spaces and using them to read a book, play games, hold office meetings or have picnics with friends. Furthermore, people take over the public space of the residential street in a creative and spontaneous way, thus **they are expanding everyone's right to the city and its public spaces.**

- **Choose a residential street** you would like to transform into a temporary public living room.
- **Consider whether you want to use the street simply for sitting and chatting, or if you want to organise more elaborate activities** that may require cooperation with third parties.
- **Set a date and time for your #residentialstreetlife** and make sure your target group knows about it. **As an alternative**, you could **simply start an activity and see if anyone joins you in the public space 'residential street'.**
- Gather all the **materials** you need and organise **transportation** if necessary.
- On the residential street: **fill empty parking spaces** with (colourful) folding tables, folding chairs or beer benches, cushions as well as deckchairs to **invite people to make themselves comfortable and socialise**.
- Offer small snacks, coffee and, fruit (possibly for a voluntary donation) on a small table.
- **Provide parlour games** (chess, dominoes, etc.) to encourage people to spend more time in the residential street.

- **Mount A1 signs with requests for passers-by and drivers** on easels or hang them from chairs, lamps, etc., e.g. 'Come and have a chat', 'Drive slowly', '**Welcome to the residential street**' ...
- **Provide street chalk or tape of different colours** to give people the chance to make the space more colourful and be creative.
- **Actively invite passers-by** to take a seat, participate in an activity or offer them something to drink.
- Last but not least: **Enjoy your residential street!**



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Create your #residentialstreetlife and **make sure it doesn't look too professional**. If you want others to emulate your activities, make it easy for them so that they feel confident enough to implement the activities in their own way and thus contribute to shaping residential street culture.

When you leave the place – which functions as a 'public living room' – please ensure that no rubbish is left behind (Unfortunately, colourful tape decorations must also be removed from the street after #residentialstreetlife). Even **during the #residentialstreetlife, someone must always be present on site**. Should an emergency vehicle need to arrive or depart, or someone need to leave, it is important that no one is obstructed. **Furniture may not simply be left unattended on the street** – unless it is officially intended for this purpose and is therefore usually permanently installed. **While individuals are allowed to use the road as a private street** (e.g. for playing, running, doing sports), **other road users must not be obstructed** (see attachment "Residential Street Rules")



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It is important to note, that #residentialstreetlife does not necessarily have to be planned. In general users of a residential streets may organise #residentialstreetlives without much preparation time or follow up. These are e.g., people or creatives from the neighbourhood or pupils from a local school. They can use the tool very spontaneously without much coordination.

Of course, #residentialstreetlife can also be organised for more than just a handful of people. In addition to staging the public living room in the manner described **space and place** has so far carried out the following activities, among others:

- **Sporting activities** such as yoga, skipping, hula hoops, running competitions for children and a 'rollator course' for older people, as well as strength training with therabands.
- **Clothes swaps**
- **Language learning:** Some persons whose mother tongue is not the native language spend an hour teaching simple words and phrases in their mother tongue. Participants have the opportunity to get an insight into these languages and get to know some aspects of the respective culture of a person.
- **Artistic activities** such as music rehearsals (at the usual local volume) or readings, writing workshops or photo exhibitions
- **Inviting a DJ to play tracks at a reasonable volume or set up a silent disco** (you can only hear the music through headphones)
- **For more best practice examples see:** <https://spaceandplace.at/wohnstrassenleben/>



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#residentialstreetlife also works well in combination with the following tools space and place developed or further developed in the framework of the project StreetForum.

- **art.interview**

from the CITYplanning series, developed by Julia Scharinger-Schöttel and curated by space and place, involves personal interviews with residents about their relationship to and visions for residential streets. These insights are artistically visualised through illustrations, capturing core statements and emotional impressions in diverse artistic styles. The resulting artworks foster awareness, stimulate discussion, and encourage community engagement on local street development – highlighting diverse perspectives while inspiring visual debate in public spaces or exhibition settings. The tool can be used for other topics too. © Julia Scharinger-Schöttel, spaceandplace.at / <https://mindkitchen.info/>



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- **Art Installations**

such as 'umbrella.blossoms' or 'cariage' draw attention to the potential of residential streets. They mark a place or a street and provide space for stimulating discussions on various topics. Wherever they are played, these places are instantly transformed into spaces of well-being, inviting people to linger, enjoy themselves, and take part in a variety of other activities. (The open-source guidelines can be found at: <https://streetforum.eu/toolkit/> and at http://spaceandplace.at; © alain tisserand.



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- **rich picture.talk**

This two-part workshop method addresses complex problems creatively, facilitating solution-finding through structured group discussions and visual techniques. Building on Soft Systems Methodology, it combines drawing specific challenges - from urban planning to social issues - with structured dialogue to reveal fresh perspectives. The colourful visualisations create shared understanding amongst participants; together with the participatory process it transforms abstract problems into tangible insights and actionable pathways for sustainable decision-making.

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- **Keep the Balance OPEN AIR**

This sociocratic negotiation game for public spaces helps groups discuss challenges and develop ideas for e.g., residential street activities or public space changes. Based on the Sociocratic Circle Method, participants learn collaborative decision-making that ensures everyone's voice is heard. The process creates genuine consensus-building – so that everyone is on board. Open a discussion and reach a decision supported by all.

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You can find detailed instructions for 'art.interview' in the attachment below as part of #residentialstreetlife. The other three StreetForum tools are described in even more detail on the website <https://streetforum.eu/toolkit/> as well as on <http://spaceandplace.at>.

WHAT YOU NEED

Time

For Facilitators –

these can be local residents, municipal staff, NGOs, artists, urban planners, or community organisations working e.g., on street transformation. In 'art.interview' contexts, facilitators are interviewers and painters; in 'Keep the Balance OPEN AIR', they are initiators bringing people together for collaborative solutions.

- One session: from 4 hours to several days (depending on scale of the #residentialstreetlife and number of activities).
- Time distribution for facilitators:
 - 40% preparation (planning, eventually fundraising, co-creator selection/invitation, schedule, materials, promotion)
 - 5% logistics before activity (shopping, setup, furniture, transport, assistant coordination)
 - 40% activity time (e.g., set up a "Public Living Room" plus other activities)
 - 5% logistics after activity (dismantling, cleanup, return transport)
 - 10% follow-up (feedback, documentation, networking)

For Users –

these can be residents, passers-by, local organisations, school groups, or multipliers from diverse backgrounds - all ages, genders, education levels, languages, and abilities.

- Participation spans from a few minutes (passers-by) to half a day (engaged participants).
- Local users (e.g., neighbours, school groups) can organise sessions spontaneously with minimal planning.

People

- 2-8 facilitators/supervisors, depending on the size of the #residentialstreetlife.
- 3-200+ participants
- Larger events require more supervision and might fall into the category of an 'event' subject to registration.

Location

- Outdoors in residential streets
- Nearby indoor access (e.g., schools, cafés, coworking spaces) is beneficial for storage and restroom access.

Materials

Depending on the planned activity, the material required will vary. It can be a very small activity with, for example, just a table and five chairs and a game or a large activity that is e.g., supported by the following equipment, among other things:

Basic Setup

- Folding tables and chairs, benches, cushions
- Street chalk, tape, games

- Drinks/snacks: water, tea, cake, fruit
- Bowls, cups, thermoses
- Informational signage (download "Alternative Residential Street Signs")
- String or clips for wind
- Street paint
- Parasols with heavy stands (for sun/light rain)

Optional Equipment (depending on activity scale)

- Easels, poster/display boards
- Post-it walls, decoration (pennant chains)
- Clothes racks/hooks for swap activities
- Sports equipment: therabands, hula hoops, table tennis
- Mobile phone/bluetooth speaker or musical instruments (battery-powered preferred)
- Art supplies and exhibition objects
- Language learning materials
- Printed flyers/posters

Costs

- DIY, small-scale: € 0-50
- Large-scale: depending on the activities, this could cost several thousand euros.
- Costs vary based on:
 - Voluntary vs. paid facilitation
 - Equipment transport vs. local availability
 - Use of professional services (e.g., PR, photography)

Permissions

In Austria for example:

- No special permits usually required in #residentialstreetlife context.
- Use of parking spaces for non-disruptive, quiet activities is typically tolerated.
- Must allow a lane for cars and maintain reasonable noise levels.
- Activities may count as "events" if noisy or obstructive, requiring notification or permits.

International context:

- Legal frameworks vary. Always check local street use regulations. Refer to "Residential Street Regulations" in the attachment.

Consent needed for:

- Recording or photographing participants
- Participating in special activities such as art.interviews, where a person and their ideas can be showcased.

CREDITS

Copyright #residentialstreetlife (#wohnstrassenleben)

Tool-development: © spaceandplace.at and co-creators

Text guidelines: © Brigitte Vettori, spaceandplace.at

Alternative Residential Street Signs: © spaceandplace.at

Photos

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LINKS

space and place / Residential Street Culture:

<https://www.spaceandplace.at/kompetenzzentrum-wohnstrassenkultur>

Residential Street Map of Vienna:

<https://spaceandplace.at/wohnstrassenkarte>

space and place / best practice examples:

<https://spaceandplace.at/wohnstrassenleben/>

More StreetForum tools on: <https://streetforum.eu/toolkit/>

(e.g., Art Installations, Keep the Balance OPEN AIR, rich picture.talk)

StreetForum - a JPI Urban Europe project: <https://jpi-urbaneurope.eu/>

Österreichischen Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft (FFG): <https://www.ffg.at/>

ANNEXES

- Residential Street Rules and Regulations
- Alternative Residential Street Signs (overview and print template in English and German)
- Guidelines for using the 'art.interview' tool

Processing status: September 2025 – The StreetForum page is not updated.
The latest version of the document can be found at <http://spaceandplace.at>

