

# Participation in the development of the “Kiezblock” concept for Nördliche Luisenstadt

The district office is pursuing a step-by-step implementation of the area-wide calming of motor vehicle traffic to promote a more diverse usability of the street space in the residential neighborhoods in the Mitte district.

Participation in the **winter drop-in point** on December 4, 2023

Results of the winter drop-in point in the Nördliche Luisenstadt

## **Background:**

On November 17, 2022, the district parliament, BVV Mitte, decided to **reorganize the traffic situation in Nördliche Luisenstadt**.

The **aim of the resolution** is to reduce traffic-related stress for residents and to make footpaths safer, especially for children and the elderly. To this end, non-local through traffic is to be reduced to the designated main roads. Most of the streets in the neighborhood will then remain accessible to local traffic, but at a reasonable speed. By redesigning the public street space, the aim is to improve the quality of life in the neighbourhood and make the urban space more climate-friendly and, in some places, more conducive to neighbourly encounters.



Illustration 1: Map created by RIFS with QGIS, map base openstreetmap

To this end, the area around Nördliche Luisenstadt is to be included in the **"Kiezblock" plans**, which will be further specified in two further BVV resolutions. The area includes the area around Alte Jakobstraße, Engelbecken and Annenstraße and Märkisches Ufer.

The **exact wording of the resolutions** can be found in the printed documents (DS) [DS 0476/VI](#), [DS 3149/V](#) and [DS 0343/VI](#).

In order to adapt the reorganization of the street space as precisely as possible to existing problems and previously unconsidered needs of residents and neighbors of Nördliche Luisenstadt, they should have the opportunity to contribute needs, conflicts and solutions to the basic planning at an early stage.

As part of the participatory monitoring of the Kiezblocks implementation in Antonkiez and Nördliche Luisenstadt, the Research Institute for Sustainability (RIFS) Potsdam conducted the **first on-site participation in the Nördliche Luisenstadt planning area** on Monday, December 4, 2023 in cooperation with the District Office Mitte (BA). The information from the winter contact points supplements the already known concepts of organized residents' initiatives (e.g. the [Kiezblock-Initiative Nördliche Luisenstadt](#)) and the reporting and complaint situation in the district office and will be used as a further **data basis for the development of an initial neighbourhood block concept**.

The contributions are documented on an [online map](http://u.osmfr.org/m/989223/) accessible to all:

### **The participation method:**

In order to enable the broadest possible participation, the team was out and about in wintry weather from 11:00 to 13:00 in the morning and from 14:00 to 18:30 in the evening at several locations in the neighborhood with a **mobile information and participation offer on the topic of "Traffic in the neighborhood - What's going well? Where are the problems?"**.



*Illustration 2: drop-in point, image: Immo Janssen*

**The aim of the participation format** was to gather experiences, opinions and local knowledge from different groups of people. In particular, people were to be invited who do not normally attend participation formats and are not already organized in an initiative and represented with their opinions. In order to ensure this, it was crucial that all the people surveyed were able to decide randomly and spontaneously to participate. For this reason, no information was deliberately provided in advance.

The three **locations Michaelkirchplatz (North), City-Grundschule and the corner of Inselstraße and Wallstraße** formed a good cross-section of the large project area. By choosing three very different locations in terms of urban development, traffic and socio-demographics, it was possible to reach around **50 people** from very different population groups.

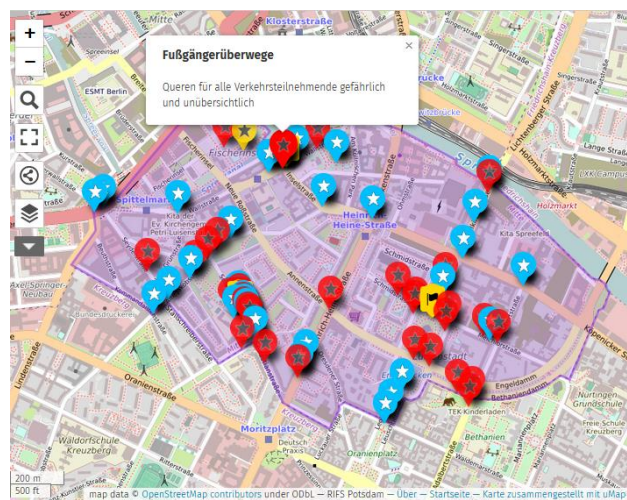
The weather conditions were very challenging with temperatures around freezing point and black ice, but the turnout under these circumstances was exceptionally good and in some cases very persistent. Hot apple juice and tea contributed to a good exchange.

The format proved more successful than initially expected in the winter conditions. The **high number of people** who stated that they had **not previously or normally participated in official participation formats and events** was particularly noteworthy. The high number of parents and especially mothers with small children who were able to locate problems and provide information on important routes for children was also very striking.

In addition to the widespread view that they themselves had nothing to contribute, the language proved to be an inhibition barrier to participation for many initially hesitant people. A **renewed and positively encouraging approach**, in the case of language barriers also in English and sometimes other languages, then often made participation possible after all - often for the first time ever and sometimes even more detailed and with particularly valuable information. Many thanks for your courage! Only in very few cases was participation not possible due to language barriers. On several occasions, relatives or passers-by were able to help out with spontaneous translations - thank you for that too! Language mediation in Turkish/Arabic would be ideal.

### **The results:**

The high quality of participation was remarkable. Although the topic of transport is currently highly polarized in the media and politically, the contributions were almost all constructive. Critical voices were mostly able to be clarified objectively and specifically located. At all locations, very specific needs were proactively expressed that could be used in planning. All contributions are documented on this [online map](#).



*Illustration 3: Screenshot online-Karte, created with uMap*

The dangers posed to pedestrians, especially children and people with limited mobility, by **too fast and, above all, too much motor vehicle traffic** were the subject of almost all comments, even from people who stated that they themselves enjoy driving. It was also very noticeable that the behavior of "drivers" was hardly a topic, with the exception of **speeding, car racing, dangerous parking and sidewalk cycling**. This indicates that many respondents see human error as less of a problem than **systematic deficiencies in traffic management** and a lack of unsafe or unsuitable traffic routes.

In front of the City Primary School in Sebastianstraße, the exact problem situation with the high number of **parent cabs** stopping in violation of traffic regulations, chaotic traffic in both directions of the very narrow street and thus a very dangerous traffic situation, especially for primary school children, was clarified once again in direct discussions with schoolchildren, school crossing guards, parents and teachers and located more precisely on a map.



Illustration 4: drop-in point school, image: Immo Janssen

In addition to **confusing crossing and intersection situations**, suggestions were made for calming motorized traffic, in particular **through traffic** and (incorrect) parking.

Apart from this, the issue of parking rarely played a role, with one example being that "the cars have to go somewhere", "there is not enough space for the increasing number of cars and it is difficult to find a parking space". However, even car-driving respondents often said that the increasing number of cars could no longer be reasonably accommodated in the neighborhood ("Kiez") and that it severely restricted public life, especially for older people and children, and that it led to dangerous situations on a daily basis, especially due to parked corners. The situation of pedestrians at crossings was mentioned many times: **Traffic light cycles** are too short, **visibility** is poor and there is a lack of safe **crossing points**. At Wallstraße, schoolchildren were even instructed not to cross directly, as motor vehicle traffic is extremely heavy and fast here, which was clearly confirmed on site. The difficulty of crossing Alte Jakobstraße, especially for children, due to fast drivers was also mentioned many times. The crossing is very important on many routes to school and between homes and local shops.



Illustration 5: mapping, image: Immo Janssen

On the other hand, there were fewer comments on street design, the time spent on the street and greenery, which, when asked by some participants, could be due to both the winter weather and the priority need for traffic management or hazard-reducing measures, without which a redesign of the street space would not be conceivable or sensible. Unsurprisingly, but strikingly, a lot of feedback was also given on the immediate vicinity of the respective location of the contact point. The need for information on

projects or decisions by the district authority was only expressed very selectively and often only in conversation.

**Acknowledgements & further information:**

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You can find all the contributions from the winter contact point on the [online map \(http://u.osmfr.org/m/989223/\)](http://u.osmfr.org/m/989223/)

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You can find more information about the project on the [RIFS website](#) and information + FAQ about Kiezblocks in Berlin-Mitte on the [website of the district office](#).