

Where We Belong

After World War II, Rostock developed into a major industrial center with the largest overseas port in the GDR. As a result, the city's population grew rapidly. As in many other cities in the GDR, Rostock also faced a glaring **housing shortage**, which was further exacerbated by the deterioration of the city's older buildings.

A **housing program**, launched in 1971 at the 8th Party Congress of the SED, was intended to specifically address the housing shortage. In Rostock, new residential areas had already been developed south and west of the Warnow River. Now, huge new development areas were planned for the northeastern outskirts of the city. Starting in the late 1970s, the previously rural settlements of Dierkow and Toitenwinkel were approved for development.

In December 1979, the Office of Urban Planning presented a **design concept** for the Dierkow-Neu development area (*Image 1*). An important urban planning element was the integration of sufficient green spaces for recreation: on the one hand, through the inner courtyards created by the curved building layout, and on the other hand, through a "system of walking paths detached from the main thoroughfare." For the neighbourhood, the state-owned enterprise (VEB) Wohnungsbaukombinat Rostock also developed the new prefabricated housing series WBR 83.

Construction of Dierkow-Neu began on October 6, 1980, with civil engineering and site development work. On December 14, 1983, the cornerstone was laid for the first residential building at the corner of Phillip-Brandin-Straße and Kurt-Schumacher-Ring (*Image 2*). Just five months later, the first tenants moved into their apartments. For years to come, Dierkow remained a major construction site, while the new residents were already settling into their new homes in the neighborhood (*Image 3*). The 4,000th apartment was handed over in April 1986, and the main construction work was completed in 1987. Over the course of seven years of construction, approximately 7,000 apartments were built to house about 20,000 residents.

After **reunification in 1989/90**, Dierkow-Neu experienced a dramatic decline in population. While the district still had 19,531 residents in 1992, by 2010 only 10,499 people remained. The reasons for this were high unemployment and outmigration resulting from the liquidation of the state-owned enterprises (VEBs). The once-high number of children also dwindled as the East German birth rate converged with the West German average, and young families moved to more central neighbourhoods or the surrounding areas. Dierkow-Neu was at risk of becoming an aging community.

However, through targeted support and because rents remained affordable, the population decline was halted, so that after hitting rock bottom in 2010, the neighborhood once again reached a population of 11,244 by 2024. The influx of young families and refugees since 2015 turned Dierkow-Neu into one of the youngest and most diverse neighbourhoods today.

Image 1: Conceptual sketch by Dierkow-Neu showing buildings ranging from 11 to 17 stories, photo: 1981 © Rostock City Archives

Image 2: Ceremonial installation of the first panels, photo: Peter Franke, December 1983 © Rostock City Archives

Image 3: Pouring the foundations in the eastern section of the Allee der Bauschaffenden (today: Kurt-Schumacher-Ring); in the background, the first apartment buildings of the WBR 83 prefabricated

type with their characteristic balconies, whose side walls resemble saw blades. Photo: Siegfried Wittenburg, May 1985 © Rostock City Archives