

Temporary greening of a schoolyard in Munich, Germany



Munich is a vibrant and growing city facing competition for space, leading to problems like urban heat islands, noise and air pollution with impacts on the health and well-being of residents. Green public spaces can help address some of these challenges, but these are scarce in the dense inner city. This project looked into how inner-city courtyards can be transformed: how can they be made greener, used in new ways, and opened up to the community? A temporary greening experiment in the St. Anna primary and secondary schools allowed us to explore the pros and cons of changing the space, using flexible, nature-based solutions.

Who was involved?

The project was coordinated by the Green and Open Space Planning unit, within the Department of Planning and Building Regulation, and supported by the Technical University of Munich's Chair for Strategic Landscape Planning and Management. Other key participants included:

- Pupils, teachers and caretakers from St. Anna Secondary School and St. Anna Primary School (participatory needs analysis, activation of space and evaluation)
- Green City e.V. (led participatory activities and construction)
- Spiellandschaft Stadt (led participatory needs and ideation workshop)
- FreiRaumViertel (built outdoor classroom)
- Rockinger landscape architecture (concept design)

NBS INTERVENTION

Temporary open-air classroom with raised beds, a pergola, as well as shaded seating areas and planting in a school yard.

How was this achieved?

Led by the project team in the Department for Urban Planning and with the support of local partners Green City e.V., FreiraumViertel, Spiellandschaft Stadt and Rockinger the planning and implementation process included:

Needs and ideation workshop: In October 2023, around 40 primary and secondary school kids identified their needs and those of fellow pupils through interviews. They then visualised design ideas through photo collages and stop-motion videos, using „PicCollage“, „SketchBook“ and „BookCreator“.

Needs assessment and design development:

The needs were analysed and prioritized, and a design brief developed, taking into account regulatory, safety, and maintenance requirements. Pupils mostly wanted spaces to hide and retreat, sit, stay and linger, with nature and greenery as well as for moving, sports, exercise and studying.

Construction phase with engagement

events: In July 2024, interventions were built and installed. Pupils were engaged through planting, painting raised beds, and weaving a willow fence.

Activation and community events: Several events were organised between October 2024 and October 2025 to activate the space and engage pupils, e.g. opening vernissage with the district council and other local initiatives, two planting events and a participatory mapping activity, to identify favourite and least-liked areas in the schoolyard from the perspective of boys, girls and non-human creatures.



Results

This greening experiment demonstrates the value of using modular and reversible design elements within a heavily regulated spatial and administrative context. Incorporating nature into the learning environment also sparked environmental awareness and hands-on learning experiences for kids and teenagers. Primary school kids involved in a building activity recalled it as a positive experience for a range of different reasons, from learning something new, to getting the chance to see something really being built. After removal in August 2025 to make way for a long-term redesign of the schoolyard, the outdoor classroom has meanwhile found a temporary new home in another school in the north of Munich. A key part of the project was

to evaluate the process of collaborating with the school family, as well as how the space was used and experienced, through observations and group interviews. This is important, because the City of Munich announced in 2022 a strategic initiative to make many schoolyards more nature-friendly and to open them to the community. The project team hopes that the lessons learnt through temporary greening with the St Anna school community can help similar projects in future.

"Involve stakeholders early in the process but also talk about how much time and resources they can realistically contribute. Be clear about what is possible, including budget constraints and regulations." Alice Reil, City of Munich.



KEY MESSAGES

- The activities had to be kept simple, so as to manage risk and work with the time frame usually available for a typical teaching unit (45 minutes).
- Support from staff members at the schools was crucial. In this case, dates were fixed about three weeks in advance and with the help of only one contact person at each school, however the experience shows that internal organisation can be time-consuming and is best managed by a small team.
- It's also important to consider and agree in advance on who will conduct a quality check and maintain built and planted elements when non-skilled labour is involved.