

PARTICIPATION CAMPAIGN 'NAME WANTED'

City of Oldenburg

INTRODUCTION

The participation campaign 'Name Wanted!' had one clear goal: to actively involve citizens in naming a new recreational area on 91er Straße. Residents from the surrounding neighbourhood, as well as people from across the city, were invited to submit name suggestions for the new public space. The campaign was designed to **get people engaged with their city's development** and **build a stronger sense of identification with the new area**. At the same time, it offered a low-threshold way for citizens to **experience municipal decision-making first-hand**.

Participation happened directly in public spaces, complemented by additional communication channels to reach as many people as possible. This combination helped attract a diverse group of participants and gave the campaign visibility across a broad audience.

The name suggestions that came in reflect a wide range of ideas, perspectives, and associations from the local community. Together, they help point toward a name that resonates with many citizens, and support the new recreational area in becoming a recognised, valued place within Oldenburg's urban landscape.



GERMANY

ENGAGEMENT LEVEL

- ☐ Inform
- ☐ Consult
- ☒ Involve
- ☐ Collaborate
- ☐ Empower

MANDATE

The campaign was initiated by the **City of Oldenburg's Coordination Office for Participation**, in cooperation with **other departments** of the municipal administration.

All submitted suggestions were **collected and documented** to serve as a basis for the later decision on the area's official name. That final decision usually rests with **political committees or the city administration**, so the campaign gave citizens a way to **contribute to the naming process** without holding formal decision-making power themselves.

This **open, experimental approach** was possible because the site is a **temporary recreational area**: the City of Oldenburg leased it from the State of Lower Saxony for three years. That temporary status gave the naming process more room to be **organised informally**, without the same constraints a permanent decision would carry.

RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Participation was **open to anyone interested**. The city spread the word through **several channels**, including press releases, its website, and social media. On top of that, activities took place right **on-site at the recreational area**, aimed especially at people from the **local neighbourhood**.

PROCESS DESIGN

The campaign was designed to be **low-threshold**: an easy, creative way for citizens to help shape a new public space. People could **submit their ideas right there on-site**, but it wasn't just about collecting suggestions. **Staff also talked with citizens about what the area meant to them and how they used it**. Those brief conversations, with passersby and local residents alike, captured a **wide range of perspectives and personal associations** with the place.

FOLLOW-UP

A range of name suggestions for the new recreational area were **collected and documented**, providing a basis for the final decision on the site's name.

RESOURCES

The campaign was initiated and organised by the City of Oldenburg's **Coordination Office for Participation**. Since the format was intentionally kept **low-threshold**, the **organisational effort behind it stayed relatively light**: staff supported the campaign on-site and collected the suggestions as they came in.

IMPACT

Beyond the names themselves, the campaign showed something bigger: even a **small-scale format** like this can make a **real contribution to engaging the wider urban community**. It also gave **insight into how citizens see the space and what they expect from it**. These results can now feed into further decisions about how the recreational area is developed and communicated.

STRENGTHS

- A low-threshold way for people to take part, through **direct exchange in public spaces**.
- A **stronger sense of identification** with a new place in the city.

CHALLENGES

- Spontaneous formats naturally have **limited reach**.
- Hard to engage a truly **diverse group**.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Even small participation formats can **meaningfully shape a culture of civic engagement**.
- Participation in **public spaces** lowers the barrier for people who rarely take part in these kinds of processes.
- **Creative prompts**, like name suggestions, work well as an easy entry point into participation.



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