

New prospects for vacant houses and rural communities

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The €1-house model could give municipalities another way to tackle vacancy while making it easier for families to find a home of their own.

When owning a home in the city is out of reach for many families, unusual municipal initiatives can open up new possibilities. Concept illustration: 1-Euro-Haus.de / AI-generated.

Hof, 11 September 2026 – Housing is scarce and expensive in many cities, while numerous older houses in rural areas stand empty. At the same time, young families in particular often struggle to save enough for a deposit on a home. A municipal €1-house model could connect these two challenges in a practical way.

The idea is for municipalities to offer selected vacant houses for a symbolic purchase price of €1, with renovation and use conditions written into the contract. This would give municipalities a way to take an active role in local planning and prevent properties bought for speculation from standing empty for years.

Buyers would have the opportunity to take on an existing building and gradually make it their own home. The savings they have already built up could go straight into planning, additional purchase costs and renovation.

Vacancy affects the whole town

Long-term vacancy is more than a problem for individual owners. Empty houses can harm the appearance of a town, affect neighbouring properties and lead to high costs for securing or demolishing buildings over time. Town centres also lose some of their vitality when homes, shops and meeting places are no longer used.

When a suitable building becomes a home again, the surrounding area can benefit too. New residents use local facilities, may get involved in clubs and neighbourhood life, and can help keep existing services going. In a smaller municipality, even one house put back into lasting use can make a difference.

An opportunity for families – but not a cost-free home

The symbolic price can lower the first financial hurdle. It does not replace savings or a sound financing plan. Before applying, prospective buyers need expert help to assess the building's condition, renovation needs, legal requirements and all the costs that follow.

Doing some work yourself can reduce part of the bill, but it takes practical skills, time and extra money for materials and equipment. Some jobs must be done by qualified professionals.

Funding programmes differ by German federal state and municipality, and may be available at state, local or federal level. Not every applicant will qualify for every programme; the conditions depend on the scheme and the individual case. It is still worth asking specifically about funding before work begins.

Consider your surroundings and your future plans

A cheap house on its own does not necessarily make the right place to live. Families should look just as carefully at whether childcare, schools, healthcare, shopping, transport links, internet access and job prospects fit their lives now and in the future.

The €1-house model makes most sense when interest in a building comes with a genuine interest in the town. The aim should not be to buy the cheapest possible property for a quick gain, but to put it to realistic, long-term use.

Nordhalben is the first to feature

The municipality of Nordhalben, in the Kronach district of Bavaria, Germany, is the first to present two vacant houses on 1-Euro-Haus.de. Both are owned by the municipality and offered for a symbolic purchase price of €1 each. Both need extensive renovation.

Nordhalben decides which applicants to select, how the houses may be used and what renovation deadlines apply. The new information portal 1-Euro-Haus.de presents the project and the properties but does not broker property sales.

“We hope the €1-house model gives municipalities another option and reaches people who dream of a home of their own. But the one euro must never hide the real work involved. What matters is a suitable building, realistic financing and a willingness to become part of the town for the long term,” says Jürgen Klausmann, editorial lead for 1-Euro-Haus.de.

Another option for interested municipalities

1-Euro-Haus.de invites other towns and municipalities that want to try this approach and seek new solutions for suitable vacant buildings to get in touch.

About 1-Euro-Haus.de

1-Euro-Haus.de is an independent information portal run by TOGETHER GmbH, based in Hof. It gives an overview of participating municipalities and the properties they report. Only the relevant municipality is responsible for binding information, viewings, applications, selection decisions and sales.