

CANAL WHARF 2014 - 2023

Construction of 60 flats on the Canal de Willebroeck in Brussels



Site

22 Quai de Willebroeck 1000 Brussels

Client

AG Real Estate Development & Vooruitzicht

Other architects

Stéphane Beel Architect, 51N4E

Structural engineer

Establis

Services engineer

Istema

Contractor

Van Laere

Budget

8.090.000 (parking exc) EUR htva

CANAL WHARF is part of a 260-flat ensemble designed in partnership with architects StÅ©phane Beel and 51n4e. Characterized by four simple volumes defining a large orthogonal city block, a peaceful central garden serves as federating shared space, rest-and-play space, in short meet-your-neighbor space destined to all occupants. It is meant to make a clear break from past industrial typologies where ground floors systematically covered the entire plot as shown in the photographs of the existing site. As such CANAL WHARF's people-friendly courtyard typology is its strongest asset.

The 60-flat wing presented here is on the south-facing side of the proposed block, overlooking a new pedestrian passageway slicing thru the dense over-built terrain, clearly connecting the Maximilien Park and Brussels beyond on the east to the canal and the city's outskirts west. Along this tranquil tree-lined passageway light-filled double-height porches are positioned, piercing the main volume's ground floor offering views into the new block's leafy center. The strong relationship instilled here between the bustling realm of sidewalks, cars and traffic flow street-side and the serene ambiance garden-side is key to generating the project's integrated identity amidst the urban mayhem surrounding it. Following the cue, design at all levels strives to do its equal share of articulating these two worlds, for example by reserving hospitable unbuilt space at the building's extremities outside, or inside by implementing wherever possible see-thru corner connections instead of dark junctions, resulting in a qualified envelope on all five sides, rooftop included.

As such a permeable rapport between new build and the existing context is developed, activating interaction between old and new, public and private, animated and calm, mineral and planted. Living quarters organized on the south facade take advantage of the generous sunshine and relative absence of vehicle traffic below, clad almost full-length with a delicate cantilevered beehive in light-colored metal. Composed of deep balconies, sun-shading and diverse overhangs it forms a continuous ribbon of private out-door space, a welcome extension for each flat. Top floors are set back in order to reduce visual impact street level, while bottom floors along the boulevard welcome offices and or convenience shops.

