

LEOPOLD VIEWS 2014 - 2019

Conversion of an office tower into housing avenue de Genève in Evere



Site

Rue de Genève, 10 1140 Brussels

Client

Matexi

Structural engineer

SGL Consulting

Services engineer

SGL Consulting

Budget

EUR htva

Copyrights

GABARI

Sustainability

OZE

From afar, coming from the city pulsing at the Boulevard's rhythm, L'Opold is apprehended on the move, fast, and by car: its identity and nature must be quickly assimilated. The proposed volumes are therefore simple and fluid, broken down in the competition project into 3 easily grasped horizontal parts replacing the original indigestible auburn hunk. Coming up close and slowing down to the Rue de Genève's less hurried pace, the project reads like a horizontally stratified honeycomb: what's going on inside each individual recess becomes the clincher, creating a distinguishable pattern identifying the whole. In effect, how each alcove is colonized personalizes the original impersonal built form, the 3 layers creating a sub-scale easing the project into its urban context.

The existing concrete structure is maintained (minimizing impact due to demolition, and maximizing thermal inertia) but all skins and circulations modified. Access to flats from ground-floor up is rational and ultra-flexible, organized at each floor around a central elevator-hub, and ending initially with a sunlit viewpoint at each extremity. Load-bearing walls are limited and techniques concentrated, allowing considerable flexibility. Each home is ergonomically designed like a welcoming cocoon in which light, fluidity inside and inside-out, material choice (like timber), and comfort play a decisive part.

Top-floor commons include sunroom, wide terraces east and west, and a communal lounge for gatherings. A large sun filled bike-room including repair-space fills up the high-ceilinged ground-floor, the entrance itself occupying the see-through central zone linking the busy boulevard west and the tree-lined lane east. South, a small daycare centre is planned. Landscaping preserves most existing trees, creating a convivial user-friendly garden with bucolic low-maintenance indigenous planting, softening the tower's landing while clarifying pedestrian/car/taxi routes.

Cost-control has been key from the onset, resulting in a standard budget for medium-income housing in Brussels. Construction choices proposed by the architect and developed with OZE and SIBOMAT (pre-fabricated timber facades, extensive thermal insulation, 0,6 air-tightness) together with extreme compactness all contribute to the exemplary energy efficiency attained. The rooftop photovoltaic canopy also proposed covers electricity consumption for all commons, reducing service charges. Such options are an integral part of the occupant-friendly approach pushed by the studio, becoming as hoped not just extra topping but an effective marketing argument heavily-exploited by a ductile client.

