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FARSIGHTED INWARD CONSOLIDATION

Since 1945, Winterthur has largely been designed as a garden city, or “green carpet”. Nowadays, though, the districts have different needs. The extension of the multi-storey building on Weberstrasse in Winterthur takes account of these changes. Instead of simply abandoning the idea of a garden city and building over existing open spaces, the aim was to achieve a conversion and extension—a consolidation—of this investment property belonging to a major bank. The project preserves the character of the district, the neighbouring detached houses and the existing green spaces.

The original plan was to erect an additional three-storey building alongside the 13-storey residential block from the 1960s in the rezoned Mattenbach district. However, the tree population would have had to be removed and the shadow cast by the tower block would have been problematic for the new building. As an alternative, the architects Marianne Burkhalter and Christian Sumi therefore proposed to build a “rucksack” on the north side of the building, covering twelve storeys and comprising nine three-room apartments. Initially unconvinced by the plan, the client was ultimately persuaded by the idea of a compact volume and the option to use the existing lifts and staircase. In addition, the concrete extension made it unnecessary to renovate the north side of the building and gave the brickwork tower the required earthquake protection.

Using the existing fabric of the building for the extension kept the consumption of materials to a minimum, while the character of the existing architecture was preserved despite the new 20 cm thick thermal insulation. The thermal bridges around the balconies have been substantially reduced. To save energy, the block is connected to the district heating system. The existing lift was adapted to meet current regulations and the shaft was extended with an additional stop on the attic floor. The requirements placed on the consolidation have been more than fulfilled.

As part of the refurbishment, the existing small apartments in the tower block that are no longer in demand were combined into 25 family apartments, thus creating space for younger families in the ageing district. The rather cramped balconies were also enlarged, while the new duplex apartments—similar in design to those of the Unité d’habitation by Le Corbusier in Marseille—also have terraces.

The skilful architectural solution and a fresh colour scheme have given the structure a new face. The character of the existing architecture has been preserved, as has the character of the district as a garden city as a whole. This long-term upgrade in the right place benefits the whole district, while the maximum occupation of the building also meets the investors’ objectives.

This consolidation in the middle of an urban district is exemplary and persuasive. The building known as “Haus Weitsicht” (“Foresight House”) on Weberstrasse lives up to its name in every respect. The urban development approach and the architectural aspiration implemented here can be transferred to many comparable properties in Switzerland.

AWARD

EXTENSION AND REFURBISHMENT
OF A MULTI-STOREY BUILDING,
WEBERSTRASSE, WINTERTHUR

Location

Weberstrasse 91, Winterthur

Client

Winintra AG, c/o UBS Fund Management
(Switzerland) AG

Team

Architecture: Burkhalter Sumi Architekten,
Zurich; Bednar Albisetti Architekten, Winterthur
Civil engineers: Nänny & Partner, St. Gallen
HVAC planning: 3-Plan Haustechnik, Winterthur
Electrical engineers: Gutknecht Elektroplanung,
Au
Building physics: Zehnder & Kälin, Winterthur
Environmental design: Thomas Steinmann,
Winterthur
General contractor: Allreal, Zurich

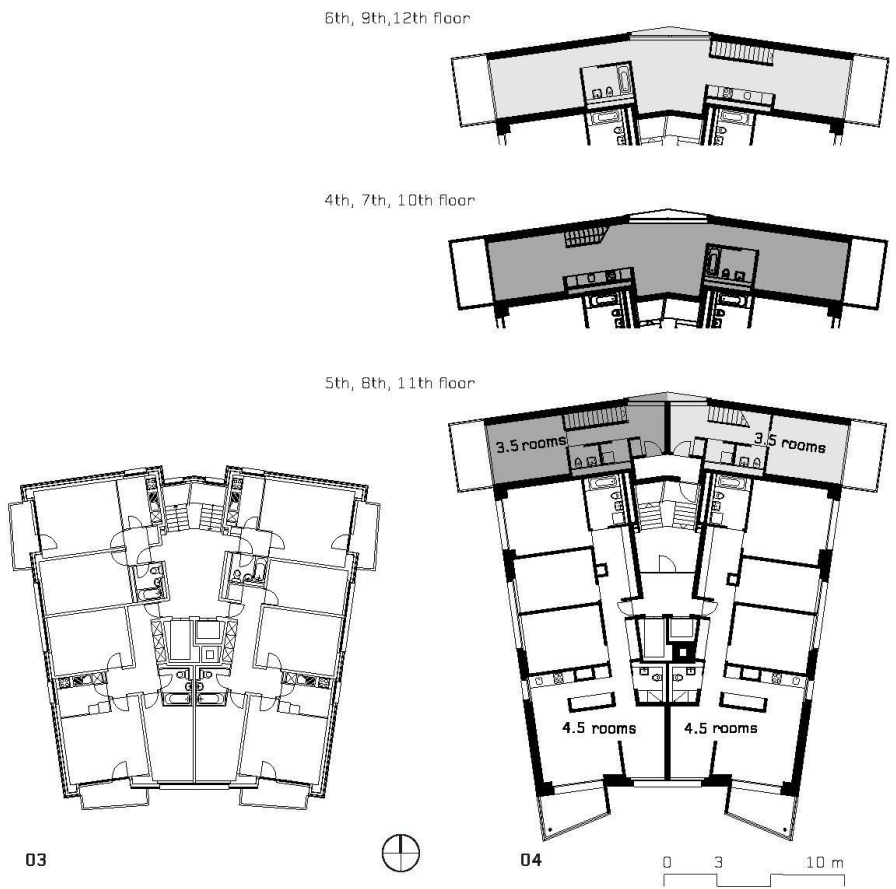
Planning and execution
2007–2008



01



02



03

04

01 The south façade with the enlarged balconies (photo: Heinrich Helfenstein)

02 Map (plans: Burkhalter Sumi Architekten)

03+04 Existing structure and floor plans after conversion





06 Extension and refurbishment of multi-storey building, Weberstrasse, Winterthur
(photo: Jules Spinatsch)