

SSA Architekten, Basel, Switzerland

Weltpostpark Bern: a residential building with a sustainable effect

Currently the new urban quarter *Weltpostpark* is being developed on the Murifeld in the Swiss city of Bern. Among the projects are three residential buildings by *SSA Architekten*. The first of these will be ready for occupation in December. *SSA Architekten* are not only increasing the density on the site, but are also at the same time creating high-quality, yet affordable housing. And all of the energy that is required for the residential buildings will come from renewable sources.

In light of the continuing high demand for housing in Bern, *Swiss Prime Site Immobilien AG* decided to develop the site that was up to recently zoned exclusively for offices and service providers and convert it to residential use. The three residential buildings by *SSA Architekten* aim for sustainable and high-quality architecture which takes its cues from the heterogeneous environment and at the same time creates attractive, protective housing with its own identity. Thus the angled volume (House A) establishes a flowing transition to the housing developments to the west, while the stretched building (House B) shelters a quiet courtyard from the noise of the adjacent motorway. Several spaces for retail and commercial premises with outdoor areas along the *Weltpoststrasse* will be provided on the ground floor of the U-shaped structure (House C). As a result, welcoming and pedestrianised courtyards were created in the spaces between the buildings. The landscapers from *Fontana Landschaftsarchitektur* have created an environmental concept for this densely developed and sealed up site which evokes a park-like atmosphere. Most of the residential floor plans are dual aspect which, besides letting in an even light, enables cross ventilation. The loggias provide private external areas that are set apart from the publicly accessible courtyard. Building heights of the urban ensemble are aligned with the six-storey office buildings to the east.

At first sight the clearly cut structures and the homogenous clinker brick facades make for a uniform, unpretentious appearance. But the kilned bricks are not, as is usual, mounted with the clean obverse layer towards the exterior. Instead, the rough base of the bricks has been set into the visible outer side of the wall. The second "little difference" lies in the clay used for the bricks: the subtly diverging colours of the three buildings contribute to a better sense of orientation when moving about in the development.

Swiss Prime Site Immobilien AG attaches significant importance to a high standard of building quality, as this reduces long-term running and maintenance costs. At the same time they are creating affordable housing in combination with high-quality architecture. While rental apartments in House A and B lie in the mid-range rental price bracket, units at the entry level of pricing can be found in House C. The monthly net rentals for some of the 3-bedroom apartments are set at CHF 2,000.-, which is a very affordable price for a new build apartment in Switzerland. And the mix on offer - from studio apartments to flexibly useable 4-bedroom flats - covers a wide range of demands. The different types of accommodation in their various rental price ranges will also ensure a social mix in the development.

All buildings are certified to Swiss Minergie-ECO standards and are constructed in accordance with the SIA Energy-Efficiency Path (SIA 2040), and the demand for energy in the development is met in its entirety by regenerative sources, including solar energy. Heat output and hot water processing takes place through four ice storage systems combined with wastewater heat regeneration. "This is currently the biggest installation of its kind in Switzerland", says architect Herbert Schmid, founder of SSA Architekten.

On December 1 the new owner, *Allianz Suisse Immobilien AG*, will hand over the first of the three Weltpostpark buildings to the residents. The elongated building (House B) will comprise of 63 apartments. The completion of the remaining apartments in the 170-unit development is scheduled for spring of 2020.

SSA Architekten

SSA Architekten is a Swiss architectural office with thirty employees that is based in Basel and Visp and operates throughout Switzerland. The office, which is managed by Herbert Schmid, Ibo Aktepe, Michael Armbruster, Daniel Hofer and Alexander Stakelbeck can look back on more than 25 years of experience in planning complex and demanding projects for private and institutional clients as well as the public sector. The range of projects spans all sizes: from residential housing to infrastructure buildings to urban planning and site developments in connection with construction on vacant lots. The requirements set by the clients in relation to functionality, budget and deadlines are the basis for an independent architectural language which is dedicated to equally fulfilling the functional and aesthetic demands. For SSA, sustainability which goes beyond purely numerical values is always paramount: flexibility of floor plans, innovative energy concepts and the durability of materials used are the foundation for buildings that are fit for purpose and which will outlast the zeitgeist. A selection of some of SSA's significant projects: new build of Visp train station, WellnessHostel⁴⁰⁰⁰ & Aqua Allalin Saas-Fee, new build European headquarters Fossil Basel.

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