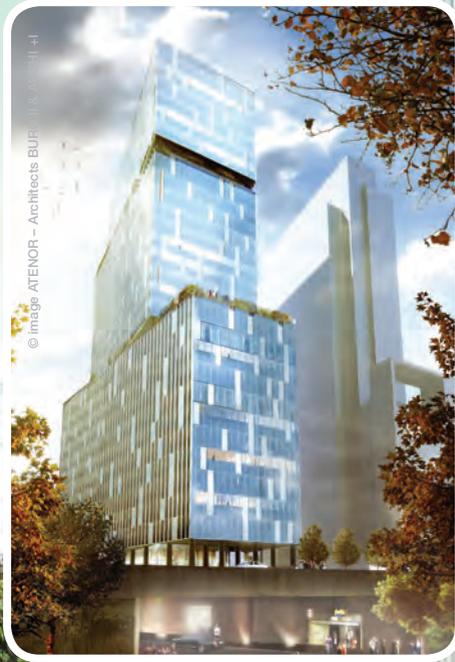


BRUSSELS | EUROPEAN DISTRICT | TOWN PLANNING |



Brussels Europa is an example of the principle of mixed urban functions (employment, housing and shops) and responds to the demands of sustainable development and of a compact, dense city.



BRUSSELS EUROPA

INTEGRATION INTO THE NEW URBAN FRAMEWORK

At the beginning of February, during a seminar organised by Laurence de Hemptinne relative to the new real estate and town planning landscape in Brussels, real estate developer Atenor unveiled the first full views of its project for Brussels Europa, to be located in the very heart of the European district, at the junction of the Chaussée d'Etterbeek and the Rue de la Loi. This project falls within the context of an evolving urban framework.

■ Bruno HODITTE

In 2005 Atenor acquired the Crowne Plaza Brussels Europa hotel, located in the heart of the European district. The objective was to convert the building into a quality mixed real estate project, once the hotel activity ceased in December 2011. The project is now becoming a reality, within an evolving legislative framework, which has resulted in Atenor revising its plans, having originally lodged a permit request at the end of 2008, and lodging a modified permit request in December 2012.

114 metres high, 47,000 m²

The Atenor project involves 47,000 m², this surface area being spread across the floors of a 114 metre high tower, with a ground area covering half a hectare. Brussels Europa is characterised by two breaks at different levels of its elevation, architectural devices which should be pleasing to the eye.

The development forms part of the 'Projet Urbain Loi' (PUL), one of the twelve urban and architectural projects set out by the European District blueprint, adopted by the Brussels Capital Region government in April 2008. Designed to be a catalyst for the redevelopment of the European district, the Projet Urbain Loi conceived by French architectural bureau 'Atelier Christian de Portzamparc' was evaluated

and approved by a Brussels decree on December 16th 2010. The PUL has a number of objectives. It aims to bring more density to the constructed area and to add a mix of functions into the district, with the target of minimum 12.5% of residential accommodation along with shops and services. The PUL aims to enable the Rue de la Loi to evolve from a 'corridor' into an open and lively street, reducing the number of driving lanes and creating many public areas of 'pocket park' type. To achieve this, the project schedules that several buildings are set back, and defines volumes and sizes according to type of construction.

Stéphan Sonnevillie, CEO of Atenor, developer of the future Brussels Europa confirms the approach his company has adopted: *"At the junction of two emblematic roads, Brussels Europa intends to perfectly reflect and bring into being this return of housing to a district dominated by offices. The Chaussée d'Etterbeek crystallises the human and convivial dimension of a very cosmopolitan district, while the Rue de la Loi remains profoundly characterised by the presence of European institutions"*.

The winding road of the RRUZ

In order to make the ambitions and philosophy of the Projet Urbain Loi a concrete reality, the Brussels government for the first time

adopted a Zoned Regional Planning Legislation (RRUZ). This translates the ideas and concepts of the PUL into regulatory terms. The RRUZ was drawn up and approved by the government during 2011 before being put to public enquiry in 2012. Many observations were advanced by the district committees, which persuaded the Brussels Region Minister-President to carry out an impact study for the RRUZ at the end of 2012, in order to discover the strong and weak points of the dossier. Following this impact study, the text of the RRUZ had to be modified and the new RRUZ regulation is set to be definitively adopted over the coming months. Buildings which conform to the Projet Urbain Loi, such as the Brussels Europa project, will then finally be able to be built. Stéphan Sponneville comments on this course taken in order to arrive at lodging the environment permit request within a rapidly evolving planning and legislative framework: *"With our architects we went back to the drawing board in order to respond to the demands of the RRUZ (in its initial form – ed.) particularly in terms of recess and volumes, thus turning an obstacle into an opportunity. We also paid great attention to the environmental nature of our project, making it a sustainable and passive building, both in terms of the choice of materials and in construction methods"*.