A vision turns into reality!

Over the past few years a visionary new cooperative district on the Hunziker Areal has been created at the heart of the Zurich Leutschenbach development area. Approximately 370 modern, low-cost apartments have been let for the first time in the last six months. 1300 new residents have already moved into their homes, transforming the Hunziker Areal – which was still under construction at the beginning of the year – into a lively district.

On 4 July, the International Day of Cooperatives, we are holding a big Launch Event to celebrate the success story of the building cooperative mehr als wohnen. The event is for members, partners and neighbours of mehr als wohnen, as well as interested members of the public. It starts at 10.30 a.m. with the official opening ceremony at Hunzikerplatz. Visitors will be enticed on a tour of discovery through the new neighbourhood, including a look at some apartments and the launch of an architecture app, which they can use to download information about the architectural, environmental and technical aspects of the Hunziker Areal to their smartphones. Businesses ranging from a violin-making studio and the Züriwerk workshops through to the district initiative for local supply or a district currency, will have an opportunity to introduce themselves. At 3 p.m. there will be an urban development panel moderated by Hochparterre magazine, while a children's programme takes place simultaneously. The magazine's special feature on the Hunziker Areal will be presented and there will be a discussion with experts regarding the progress to date of the building cooperative mehr als wohnen. At 5 p.m. the cooperative party begins, featuring a host of musical and culinary delights provided by residents from the Hunziker Areal, Zurich and beyond.

The planning and development of this flagship project for cooperative residential building, supported by the Swiss Federal Office of Energy (SFOE), have been unparalleled. mehr als wohnen works to create high-quality yet affordable housing for modern living, while also striving to implement the 2000 Watt Society. Energy-efficient technologies and the recycling of reusable materials are key components of mehr als wohnen's broad-based sustainability concept, which encourages resident participation. We are delighted to invite you to our Launch Event and to have the chance to show you how the Hunziker Areal has become a place of innovation and learning. There will also be a media tour of the Hunziker Areal at 11 a.m. on Friday, 3 July. Thank you in advance for your interest and for registering to attend.

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View from Leutschenbach school building over the Hunziker Areal. Photo: Ursula Meisser

Genossenschaftsstrasse 11 and playground next to the school pavilion. Photo: Ursula Meisser
Factsheet: mehr als wohnen building cooperative

History

In 2007 the City of Zurich celebrated 100 years of not-for-profit housing construction under the slogan "100 Jahre mehr als wohnen" ["100 years of more than living"]). The anniversary gave fresh impetus to the desire to look ahead with confidence and venture into new territory. mehr als wohnen was to be characterized by new approaches to home design, technical innovation, participation and sustainability. The Hunziker Areal project may be regarded as the first fruits of this process. This innovative, forward-looking laboratory for living and working was constructed in the Zurich-Leutschenbach development area. The Hunziker concrete factory formerly stood on the site, which measures approximately 40,000 m². When mehr als wohnen was founded, the City of Zurich was looking for a buyer for the plot and awarded mehr als wohnen the right to build on the land.

Architecture competition

In order to meet the ambitious objectives as fully as possible, an architecture competition was launched by the Public Works Department of the City of Zurich in 2008. The participants had to submit an urban design and residential concept as well as proposals for an individual building. The demanding economic and ecological standards of the building cooperative also had to be taken into account. The prize jury assessed the content and potential of the 25 projects entered – under the scrutiny of interested members of the cooperative. The winning urban design project by Zurich architects futurafrosch and DUPLEX Architekten in conjunction with Müller-Illien Landschaftsarchitekten persuaded the jury through the generous scale and dynamism of the buildings and types of dwellings it offered. Cooperation and dialogue were also a recurring theme in the architecture. The design of the residential buildings was revised and implemented with the help of the other competition winners Müller Siegrist Architekten, Miroslav Šik and pool Architekten, as well as the building cooperative. Building types designed by all the participants were integrated into the plans for the housing estate, with the individual buildings being optimized and coordinated.

2000 Watt Society

The building cooperative – like the City of Zurich itself – is committed to sustainable development in accordance with the objectives of the 2000 Watt Society. The homes on the Hunziker Areal have been constructed to be 2000-watt compatible and meet the MINERGIE-P-ECO energy-efficiency standard. Despite offering a high level of living comfort, they feature very low energy consumption and have been built to comply with health and ecological building standards. The district is heated with warm air extracted from the neighbouring City of Zurich computer centre. Heat pumps are used to produce hot water, while roof-mounted solar panels provide the necessary electricity. For the first time in Zurich, mehr als wohnen is working with the utility company EWZ to implement own-consumption regulations for rented properties. Energy-saving potential can be found not only in the way the buildings are operated but also in terms of transport and personal consumption by the inhabitants. A key factor where transport is concerned is that tenants do not usually own a car and the Areal has good connections to local public transport.

Over the next three years, mehr als wohnen is being supported by the flagship programme of the Swiss Federal Office of Energy (SFOE). For this purpose, data on sustainable energy management for an entire housing estate is being collected so that the energy system can be fine-tuned with a view to meeting the targets of the 2000 Watt Society when in operation. Measures are also being taken to raise residents’ awareness of the potential for saving energy in their daily lives. The example of the flagship project at the Hunziker Areal shows how the future for energy can look on an urban housing estate.
The partnership between the client and Steiner AG was of central importance even at the negotiating stage and subsequently formed the basis for the successful planning and realization of this unique and complex project. The intensive three-year construction phase was accompanied by a constructive dialogue between the building cooperative and Steiner. For Daniel Ducrey, CEO of Steiner AG, the complexity of the Hunziker Areal in terms of architecture, building technology and operational requirements was one of the main reasons why Steiner wanted to execute this order as a total contractor: "I am very proud that mehr als wohnen chose Steiner as its construction partner. Together with the client and planners, we were able to implement a pioneering and particularly ambitious project with innovative designs and technologies, incorporating a total of 13 different building structures. Thanks to the standardization and harmonization of products and components, Steiner AG met the quality and cost targets at every stage, thus making a substantial contribution to completing this project on schedule." The lively new district is really impressive and fills the total contractor with pride.

**Broad residential mix**

mehr als wohnen regards achieving a social mix as a main pillar of social sustainability. The large-scale buildings on the Hunziker Areal therefore include a broad range of dwellings: traditional family apartments and new types of homes for single people, couples, small families or large elective families who opt to share the same premises. mehr als wohnen is thus responding to changing residential requirements.

**Initial letting process:**

The initial letting process went well. Most of the apartments were let and occupied between November 2014 and May 2015. This entailed overcoming a number of self-imposed challenges. The apartments were let in accordance with a pre-defined profile. Both hard and soft factors were crucial for applicants wishing to obtain an apartment: minimum occupancy requirements, waiving of a private car, income level and contribution to the social life of the district. Furthermore, mehr als wohnen aimed to reflect the social mix of the residential population of Zurich. Although many young families with small children applied for the apartments, as did single people, it was more difficult to find older people or families with teenagers so that the desired population mix could be achieved in the short time available. In order to rent out the satellite apartments – a new type of dwelling for eight to twelve people – mehr als wohnen arranged meetings to support the formation of apartment-sharing communities. Some of the apartments on the Hunziker Areal were made available to charities and organizations which offer space for innovative and integrated living arrangements: these include Domicil, Züriwerk and Woko.

**Communal areas and participation**

The Hunziker Areal has seen the creation not only of an architecture which fosters a sense of community, but also an infrastructure which permits a wide range of cultural and social activities. These include ten "Allmend" (communal) rooms, as well as community terraces, spacious squares, play areas and communal gardens. Members of the cooperative pay a means-related contribution into the solidarity and cooperative fund, which makes resources available for social and cultural projects. The Allmend Committee, which is responsible for the management of these resources, is to be elected from among the residents in 2015. Residents of the Hunziker Areal can come together to form community groups. These enrich the Hunziker Areal by providing amenities such as a district café, community workshop and quiet room.