

Six-storey wooden residential building 2007: A world novelty in Berlin

Until now, the German building laws have imposed narrow confines upon architects building wooden houses. Scarcely anybody adds more than one or two storeys to a wooden ground floor, although it has become accepted that wood, contrarily to common prejudice, possesses excellent properties with respect to fire protection and statics. The new Berlin Building Code acts upon this fact and offers new possibilities for building multi-storey wooden structures.

The Berlin architect firm Kerbl is seizing this opportunity and venturing an architectural world novelty: the six-storey wooden residential building will be realised in the Berlin district of Lichtenberg in Spring 2007. The enterprise is receiving support from the research project “Holzwende 2020plus” (“Wood on the rebound”).

The project „Holzwende 2020plus“, which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, aims to access new markets for building with wood (www.holzwende2020.de). As a renewable, all-purpose construction material, wood contributes to energy reduction and to climate and resource protection. It has the potential to increase regional employment opportunities and provides for healthy room and living conditions. The research project is accompanying and supporting the construction of a six-storey nursing home built of wood in the Berlin district of Lichtenberg. This construction project represents the worldwide first realisation of a six-storey residential building using the solid-wood construction method.¹

Applied project: Construction of a six-storey nursing home built of wood

The Berlin architect firm Kerbl was awarded a contract to design a new building with a total of 90 long-term care beds for an existing nursing facility. The building, which will comply with the special needs of its inhabitants, will be completed by the middle of 2007.

The planned wooden structure with a height of approx. 15,8 meters for the uppermost storey floor makes apparent that the construction material wood not only enables the realisation of excellent ecological and economical concepts but also of buildings which attain high fire protection standards.



¹ See Eimertenbrink, M., Fichter, K. (2006): Mehrgeschossige Bauwerke aus Holz. Eine Recherche zur Identifizierung von 6- oder höhergeschossigen Wohnbauten als Holzkomplettlösung, Berlin

Given that the project at hand is a nursing home, German legislation foresees greater fire protection requirements than for buildings designated for standard use. The fire protection plan prepared was awarded the German Fire Protection Prize 2006.

Of all construction materials, only wood could fulfil the comprehensive quality requirements placed upon the building. This applies both with respect to the quality of living conditions and safety as well as in relation to the costs of use and environmental benefits. Nevertheless, no one has yet had the self-evident idea to build six-storey-high with wood.

World novelty: Each year, one million travellers come to Nara, one of Japan's oldest cities, to view the historic five-storey Kofuku-ji. The famous Todai-ji Temple with the world's hitherto largest wooden building and the world's largest bronze Buddha statue never fails to impress the visitors.



This historic temple, the long-standing record holder, is soon to be overtrumped – by six wooden storeys in the inner city of Berlin!!

Today, nearly half of all people live in cities. The appearance of Mega-Cities – agglomerations with a population of eight million or more – on the world map has become increasingly common over the past decades. Multi-storey wooden buildings in inner-city areas open new opportunities for innovative building solutions and render urban living sustainable.

Building houses can be a tedious task, but not so when building with wood. The six-storey wooden shell will be realised in approx. six weeks – and this also is suspect to break records.

Where:

The site of construction is in the Lueckstrasse in Berlin-Lichtenberg. Accompanying measures are planned in and around Berlin.

When:

The construction of the building shell is scheduled for the period from March to May 2007.

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