

Real Estate

Transforming the past, sustaining the future: BESIX RED's ESG commitment to renovation and sustainability

In the dynamic landscape of real estate, BESIX RED stands as a responsible and ambitious actor committed to shaping a sustainable and innovative future through its developments.

Gabriel Uzgen, CEO of BESIX RED, says: "In alignment with our ESG strategy, we are constantly progressing on our journey towards renovation. With Lighthouse and Anthea, we have extended the Cosmopolitan's legacy in Brussels, demonstrating our dedication to developing properties that have a minimal environmental impact. By doing so, we aim to benefit the planet, the local community, and, of course, our clients."

This article explores two transformative projects in Brussels: Lighthouse and Anthea.



LIGHTHOUSE: PRESERVING THE PAST, ILLUMINATING THE FUTURE

Situated on Avenue des Arts in Brussels' Central Business District, Lighthouse is being transformed from an outdated office building into a modern workspace that prioritises environmental and well-being standards.

A renovation integrating architectural legacy and subtle modernisation

Lighthouse was originally built in 1962 by architects Jean and André Polak, the same renowned architects who designed the Atomium for Expo 58. Lighthouse's renaissance, led by BESIX RED and B2Ai architects, maintains and magnifies the remarkable façade designed by the Polak brothers. The addition of a transparent glass dome rooftop ensures high visibility and a unique identity for the future occupants. The building's interior is designed to encourage collaboration, with open floor plans, meeting areas, and green outdoor spaces to enhance the occupants' well-being.

The low carbon footprint of the building, kept under 300 kgCO₂/m², is achieved through the preservation of the 1960s structure. The concrete structure is carefully conserved and adapted, which includes opening plateaus and reinforcing the structure to meet the load-bearing requirements of the dome.

Preserving architectural elements is at the core of Lighthouse's renovation. An ongoing pre-demolition audit is in progress, proposing recycling measures in accordance with the project's programme, a critical step in achieving BREEAM Outstanding certification. Despite challenges, the iconic helical staircase is partially reused, with a focus on preserving its architectural significance. In addition, some elements, such as RF doors and guardrails, are conserved and meticulously restored, maintaining the historical fabric of Lighthouse.

Engaging with circular experts for second-hand construction materials is also a strategic initiative under analysis.

Concrete steps to sustainability

Lighthouse prioritises the well-being of its future occupants, incorporating innovative features to enhance sustainability and connectivity. A planted patio, accessible from the first floor and adorned with a notable species of ash tree (*Fraxinus Ornus*), along with accessible terraces at levels 1, 2, 5, 10, and 11, contribute to a vibrant environment that encourages biodiversity and offers occupants a pleasant green outdoor space at the heart of the city.

Fossil-free heating, facilitated by heat pumps and integrating 193 m² of photovoltaic panels, will enable Lighthouse to be a very low-energy building with an EPB Label level A.

The use of efficient techniques and rainwater recovery via a 50 m³ tank for sanitary facilities highlights Lighthouse's commitment to optimise water consumption.

Lighthouse is adopting cutting-edge connectivity and building monitoring technologies, in particular Square Sense technology, to achieve high levels of SmartScore and WiredScore certifications. These technologies optimise energy usage, resource management, and overall operational efficiency, marking a significant leap forward in creating a state-of-the-art and more sustainable office experience.

"With Lighthouse, we are revitalising an outdated office building to create an inspiring workspace, that prioritises sustainability and occupant comfort. It's not just a landmark; it's a demonstration of renovation's transformative power, with goals of achieving very high levels of BREEAM and WELL certifications", concludes Raphaël Legendre, Country Director Belgium, BESIX RED.

Project details

Lighthouse

Project type

Offices

Location

Avenue des Arts 14, Brussels, Belgium

Total area

5,513 m² over 11 floors

Parking

20 parking spaces

Architect

B2Ai architects

Expected delivery

Q4 2026

Certifications

BREEAM Outstanding, WELL Platinum

Project structure

BESIX RED (100 %)

Real Estate

ANTHEA: A SUSTAINABLE URBAN METAMORPHOSIS

Anthea, named after the goddess of flowers, gardens and trust, undergoes the transformation of an office building into a primarily residential development. The project features 48 high-end apartments and 385 m² of office space, located on Boulevard du Souverain 360 in Brussels and facing the majestic Val Duchesse domain.

Architectural evolution through a deconstruction approach

Guided by BESIX RED and Urban Platform, Anthea embarks on a deliberately crafted architectural metamorphosis.

Based on a meticulous deconstruction approach, the project prioritises maintaining core structures for the existing edifice's robustness, implementing targeted demolitions with stability in mind. Once the structure is laid bare, the project will be reconstructed primarily using elements from dry construction methods, such as wooden façade panels, new structures, and partitions. Additionally, reclaimed façade elements will be utilised for ground floor cladding and landscape design.

"This deliberate preservation and reuse of existing elements serves as a tangible homage to the building's history. Our commitment to historical continuity remains strong, even without specific heritage protection measures", explains Raphaël Legendre, Country Director Belgium, BESIX RED.

The choice of natural stone for the façade further strengthens this connection, echoing existing elements in materiality and tone, paying indirect tribute to the building's past. Additionally, the project proposes a conversion of the existing technical floor into a residential space.

The renovation of façades and upper levels aims to improve insulation efficiency, resulting in significant reductions in heating energy consumption. The introduction of terraces represents a deliberate architectural choice to alter the building's vertical orientation with a view to create a more unified and horizontally extended structure. The strategic placement of façades follows a calculated oblique arrangement, serving practical purposes such as framing scenic views, minimising visual impact on neighbouring structures, and contributing to an enhanced overall horizontal aesthetic.

Sustainability and well-being at its core

The apartments at Anthea, averaging 110 m², feature plenty of natural light in spacious living areas, large bedrooms, and well-equipped kitchens. Anthea comprises 3 studios, 42 apartments, and 3 penthouses, each with a terrace or garden, and some offering beautiful views of Val Duchesse's greenery.

Anthea's apartments all achieve an EPB A energy classification. Solar panels on the rooftop contribute significantly to renewable energy utilisation and reduce the project's carbon footprint.

Architecturally, Anthea prioritises energy efficiency through high-quality insulation, reducing heating requirements. This pragmatic approach aligns with environmental goals while offering economic benefits to residents.

The sustainability focus extends to Anthea's terrace design, intelligently addressing overheating concerns and negating the need for air conditioning.

In terms of water conservation, Anthea incorporates rainwater harvesting, efficiently repurposing it for common areas and outdoor taps. The project also provides charging stations for electric bikes and cars, promoting eco-friendly transportation alternatives.

Transitioning from concrete to green

The metamorphosis of Anthea involves replacing the concrete ground level with a Boulevard-side garden featuring distinct sections, a landscape trench for rainwater storage, and indigenous shrubs and hedges along property boundaries.

Emphasising green and outdoor spaces, each apartment at Anthea offers balconies or private gardens.

Guided by strong landscaping principles, efforts focus on preserving open soil areas, ensuring permeability, and incorporating indigenous species to enhance biodiversity. The sustainable reuse of prefabricated concrete elements, particularly for flooring, adds an eco-conscious dimension.



Project details

Anthea

Project type
Residential

Location
Boulevard du Souverain 360,
1160 Brussels, Belgium

Total area
6,389 m²

Number of apartments
48

Office space
385 m²

Parking
51 parking spaces, 117 bicycle
bays (including cargo bikes)

Architect
URBAN PLATFORM

Expected delivery
Q1 2026

Project structure
BESIX RED (100 %)

Conclusion

BESIX RED's commitment to renovation and sustainability, inspired by past successes like The Cosmopolitan, finds new expression in transformative projects like Lighthouse and Anthea. These endeavours not only breathe new life into outdated structures but also pave the way for a future where buildings seamlessly integrate with the environment, promoting well-being and reducing our ecological footprint.