

Zentrum Töss

archive

Die baulichen Veränderungen im Dorfkern von Töss



Das Flugbild des Modells von Süden her zeigt: In der Diagonale die Zürcherstrasse mit der Bahnüberführung. Rechts von der Zürcherstrasse die bisherige unveränderte Ueberbauung. Links von der Zürcherstrasse unten drei Wohnblöcke, nordöstlich der Bahn die Fortsetzung der zweigeschossigen Ladengebläude längs der Strasse, anschliessend nach hinten mehrgeschossige Wohnhäuser. Ein freier Platz als Kern, umgeben von Hochhaus (unten), Laden- oder Restaurantbau auf der Rückseite, mehrgeschossigem Scheibenhause gegen die heutige Schlosstalstrasse. — Links und parallel zur Zürcherstrasse die Schillerstrasse mit grossem Auto-Abstellplatz. Noch weiter links vorerst mehrgeschossige Wohnhäuser und gegen den Tösskanal hin Einfamilienhäuser. — Rechts oben im Bild die projektierte neue Schlosstalstrasse.

Article about the changes in the planning of Töss' village center. Winterthurer AZ Nr. 145, 24. June 1963

Töss City in Sight

The construction of the new Winterthur-Töss motorway junction in the late 1960s brought sweeping changes to the district. Entire rows of houses were demolished, including the old Hotel “Krone”, which had once contained a large community hall. Several small shops also disappeared to make way for the new traffic infrastructure.

In response, a comprehensive urban development plan was drawn up to reshape Töss into a model of modern living and planning. The vision reflected the optimism and functional ideals of postwar urbanism: two residential high-rises, new apartment blocks, and a shopping center were to symbolize progress and efficiency.

The new Zentrum Töss was conceived as a multifunctional hub that would give the district its first real village square, complete with shops, services, and a restaurant — a place where work, living, and leisure could coexist.

Ample parking facilities were considered essential, illustrating the growing importance of the automobile in everyday life. What emerged was a showcase of 1960s modernist planning, aiming to unite mobility, convenience, and community



Most of the plots of land on which the Zentrum Töss stands belonged in the 1960s to the Rieter company and the City of Winterthur. Most of them were housing units for the working class. In the picture, the future center is already indicated by the site markings.



The Zentrum Töss in Winterthur was commissioned by a consortium consisting of Rieter AG, Winterthur Versicherungen, and the City of Winterthur. The architectural design was created by the firm Klaiber, Affeltranger & Zehnder, based in Winterthur. Construction began around 1968, with the structural work completed on November 8, 1969.



For 66 years, the distinctive Hotel Krone stood at the main entrance to the Winterthur suburb of Töss. As a restaurant, hotel, and event hall, it became part of the village's history — a gathering place in both good times and bad.



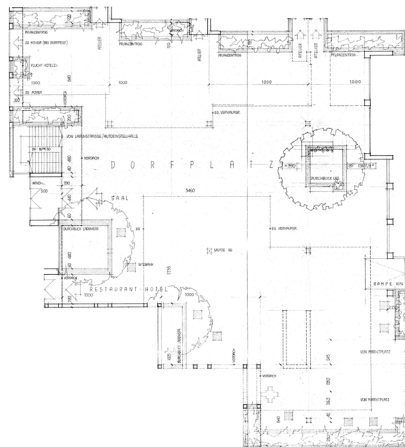
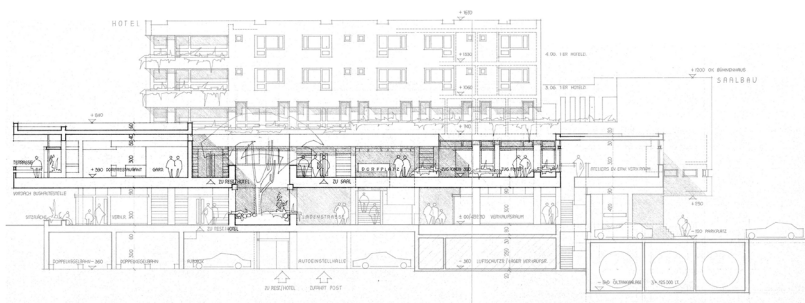
In 1962, the building was sold to the owner of a furniture company, who used it as a showroom. The hall was therefore no longer available for community events, and only the restaurant continued to operate. Shortly afterward, however, the entire building faced demolition — it stood in the way of the construction of the N1 motorway (today's A1). The Canton of Zurich purchased the property, and in March 1965, it was demolished during a large-scale civil defense exercise, along with the adjoining garage and residential building. As a replacement for the former Krone Hall, a new event hall was opened in Zentrum Töss in 1970.



On the opposite side of the street, at Zürcherstrasse 135, the Workers' Association had acquired a property roughly 100 years before the opening of Zentrum Töss. In May 1873, a store that was considered large for its time was opened there.



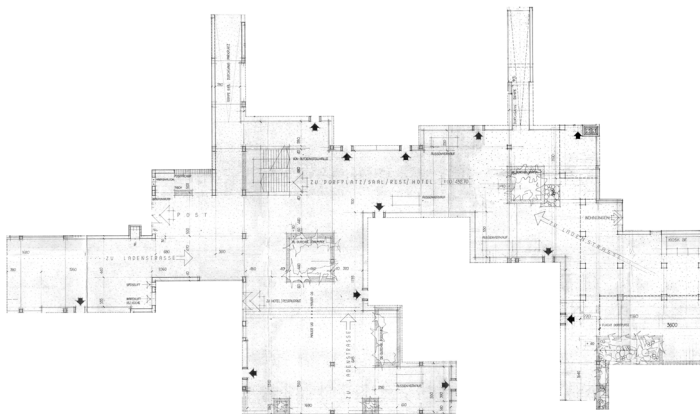
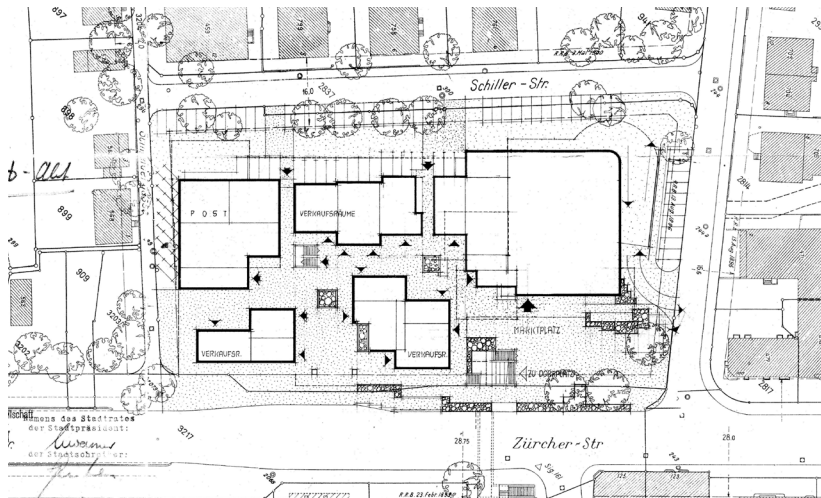
Since the opening on October 1st 1970 one of the most important tenants is the Migros Cooperative, which until then had operated a branch somewhat further into town on the east side of Zürcherstrasse. With the rise of modern shopping centres the so-called “shop death” began: small businesses, once embedded in neighbourhoods, were squeezed by the scale and convenience of chain retailers and modern malls. Shopping habits and consumption patterns changed drastically.



a new ‚Dorfplatz‘



The Zentrum Töss opened with a charming ‚Dorfplatz‘, flanked by a library, a hotel with its own restaurant, the residential tower, and the Migros restaurant. The square was enhanced with both fixed and movable planters and designed exclusively for pedestrians. Visitors could access it via a broad open staircase from the ‚Marktplatz‘ or a covered stairway from the ‚Ladenpassage‘. Conceived as a lively and welcoming space, the square was meant to foster social interaction and community life.



a lively ‚Ladenpassage‘



To provide a new space for the shops displaced by the motorway construction, a covered ‚Ladenstrasse‘ was created on the ground floor of Zentrum Töss. At certain points, there are openings in the ceiling that not only allow natural light to reach the lower level but also create a visual connection to the ‚Dorfplatz‘ above. The arcade was designed with external sales areas and, around the atriums featuring plants and seating, invited visitors to linger and relax.

a buzzing ‚Marktplatz‘



In front of the Migros, a ‚Marktplatz‘ was created, featuring a fountain and serving as an inviting place for both vendors and shoppers. The area also includes plantings, seating, and gives priority to pedestrians.







Mayor Urs Widmer (SP) with his partner in the festival hall of Zentrum Töss during the inauguration celebrations in 1970.

The People of Töss

The Zentrum Töss was met with optimism by many residents. The Winterthur suburb of Töss, with its village-like character, was not through it not to lose connection to the city's growth.

Many clubs and associations were pleased to find a new venue for their activities within the center.

People came from all over Switzerland — the third-largest shopping center in the country offered attractive working conditions. The apartments in the complex were also highly sought after.



Edwin Flacher, janitor

'Zentrum Töss itself was a renovation project
from the moment it was completed'

Edwin Flacher was one of the first residents of the Zentrum Töss tower. A former Sulzer apprentice and later **janitor** of the complex, he and his wife maintained both the shopping arcade and the residential tower. Despite its modern design, the building soon showed serious construction defects such as leaks and faulty windows.

After decades of caretaking, Flacher retired in 2005 and still lives in Winterthur — carrying with him a lifetime of stories about the ups and downs of Zentrum Töss.



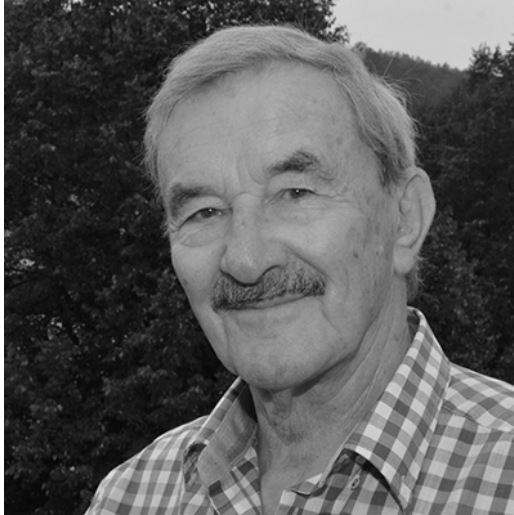
Ruth **Werren**, manager

'I had the most beautiful view from Töss.'

One of the best-known residents of Zentrum Töss was Ruth Werren, a long-time FDP city councillor and advocate for the Eschenberg wildlife park. She moved into a top-floor apartment and claimed to have had the best view of whole Töss.

When her employer, a Sulzer engineer, opened a garden and pet supply store in the center. From a trained saleswoman, she advanced to become a certified **sales manager** and later directed ten garden centers at Hauenstein. Looking back, she described the center as a “flawed concept” — cheaply built and poorly coordinated among shop owners. Still, the early tenants formed a close community.

After 35 years, in 2005, Ruth Werren left the Zentrum and moved to Seen.



Fritz Fawer, bank director

'The branch ran very well and the centre's
events were real ,Dorffeste'.'

Fritz Fawer, the first bank director at Zentrum Töss, moved into the residential tower with his family shortly after the center opened. Coming from Zurich, where he had worked shifts at the Sihlpost, he found in Töss both a new home and community. His family combined a four-room apartment with an additional one-room flat, creating a spacious home.

Fawer quickly became part of local life — singing in the choir and joining the gymnastics club. In 1986, the bank expanded with a new vault, but by the late 1980s, as Rieter and Sulzer declined and the building's defects grew, the center lost its appeal.

When the Hypo Bank merged with Bankverein in 1993, Fawer retired the following year, choosing to step back while still in control of his own path.



I r m a **U t e l l i** , s h o p o w n e r

‘We at the centre were a tight-knit community.’

Irma Utelli, a trained stationer from Aargau, moved her small stationery shop from old Töss into the newly built Zentrum Töss, where she also rented an apartment in the tower for her family.

She had taken over the original shop in 1962, but when the new underpass construction hid it behind barriers, she decided to relocate to the center — “otherwise I would have had to close,” she recalled. The move proved successful: her affordable prices and wide range attracted customers from far away, and she trained seven apprentices during her years there.

With time, the apartment felt too small, and the family moved to Brütten. Irma Utelli retired in 1992, and her former shop is now a grocery store with a bistro.