

## **Development of Technical and Management Concepts for Conserving Vacant Old Buildings**

### **Abstract**

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### **Summary**

A great part of the vacant housing problem in eastern Germany is due to empty stocks of old buildings. In many cases, economic utilization and comprehensive modernization are not currently possible. The buildings accordingly face further deterioration, while at the same time continuing to cause considerable vacancy costs. On the other hand, because many of these empty old buildings serve important urban functions, it is often necessary to preserve them despite their lack of a current purpose.

One possibility would be to preserve old buildings with key urban functions until economic utilization becomes possible at a later date, for example through housing market consolidation. This form of building preservation from a commercial perspective was investigated as a strategy of "conserving old buildings". The definition of conservation used here differs from the concept of preservation of historical monuments, in that as well as preserving buildings in a condition that would allow their commercial exploitation in the medium term, it can also involve alterations designed to preserve and increase their value. The normative goal of conservation of old buildings is to bring vacant buildings to commercial exploitation – e.g. sale or modernization – in the medium term, after a period of 7 to 10 years.

The concept of conservation was developed by studying four specific objects and tasks. In cooperation with the Leipziger Wohnungs- und Baugesellschaft (LWB), four potentially conservable multi-occupier buildings dating from around 1870 were selected as possible conservation cases and the necessary measures were investigated.

Protection from damp and moisture, preservation of the substance, protection against vandalism, and a necessary enhancement of appearance were identified as central areas requiring attention. A conservation concept comprising four phases – evaluation, planning and implementation, management and market observation, commercial exploitation – was also developed.

Alongside the technical conservation concept, the question of the costs involved is of central importance for practicability. The top limit for investment in conservation measures is determined by the expected yield (after conservation) and the sum of running costs, which are lower than for a partially inhabited building but higher than for a completely closed one.

Overall, it is clear that the proposed concept for conservation contains a management risk, whose level is however calculable and limitable, but also offers housing management and urban planning opportunities. For a city that is having to deal with long-term falling demand, and whose future structure and image are as yet undefined, this preservation of management options is of great

importance and represents an important element of the urban transformation process. Accordingly it makes sense for conservation measures to be supported through urban development programmes and the Stadtumbau Ost (Urban Transformation East) scheme. Here urban planning concerns and the demands of the market must go hand in hand, because conservation cannot stop the disintegration process that produces a “perforated city”, it can only represent a niche strategy – albeit an important one.