ERNOTTE - IXELLES 2006 - 2011

Urban planning and construction of 314 low-income homes, daycare center, and landscaping chaussÃ©e de Boitsfort in Ixelles.



Site
ChaussÃ©e de Boitsfort 1050 Brussels

Client
SLRB

Structural engineer
VK Engineering

Services engineer
Axis-Engineering

Contractor
Cei-De Meyer et Jacques Delens

Budget
34 913 164 EUR htva

Movie
http://www.archiurbain.be/?p=208

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Our built environment knows no limits be they administrative, physical, or political : as such it is the concrete materialization of how we live, reflecting our common efforts to survive ... but also our individual struggles to pull through. It must guarantee secure use, but at the same time encourage exchange and participation, both key factors favoring re-integration of populations often cut-off from active society. In particular, our built environment must demonstrate individual rights nonetheless insisting on our obligations, placing collective interest before private concern. This was our mindset designing Ernotte.

Massing here is instinctively landscape-oriented : it sticks to and respects existing topography organizing itself around common north-south oriented green areas reserved for recreation, creating as such three large and leafy ensembles. Two east-west oriented housing blocks (subsidized units) perfect for double-oriented flats are proposed, and one north-south block (middle range) ideally positioned to take advantage of free solar heat.

The central open space is the focal element stretching itself across the whole site, again respecting present slopes, but dividing itself into two squares one higher up to the north and a second one down at the opposite end. Insides of blocks are pluri-functional including both individual activities (backyards and vegetable gardens) and shared ones (footpaths and alleys, playgrounds, ...). Generous indigenous planting prevails wherever possible, creating a bucolic feel, but in fact each sqm is clearly attributed as private or public, determining without any doubt who takes care of what, defining responsibilities without any doubt.

Smaller public side-spaces are proposed around the principal squares, articulating the whole: for example a more intimate (and easily secured) playground for young children in a very central position, and a different more open one for older children out west on the edge of the site. Special attention is paid to making all public areas and resident entrances accessible to the disabled.

The organization of each wing defining the blocks is justified by the following criteria:
- compact volumes offering minimum residual nooks and crannies, resulting in easy-to-secure open space;
- diversified entities with varied flat sizes and therefore varied family sizes grouped around a sunny central exterior staircase where neighbors can meet out in the open with an eye out onto the squares where children play (not in a dark damp underground parking nor in a sad neon-lit indoor stairwell) ;
- a limited number of flats organized around each staircase in scale with human interaction : you can get to know 8 or 9 neighbors and build relationships with that small number ... avoiding the anonymity and indifference that comes when that number swells. Landings are therefore shared by maximum 2 or 3 families, the whole entity by 8 or 9 ... with generous views out towards the landscaped greens from staircases designed for hanging out, playing with the kid next door, or just chatting with your neighbor.

Honors
Regional Housing Plan - Project Laureate, december 2007