

'By the Woods': White Arkitekter wins social housing competition in Denmark

White Arkitekter's Copenhagen studio has won a competition to design 115 individual homes in Alleroed. Located north of the Danish capital and bordered by woods and a lake, the new neighbourhood invites nature to flow between the buildings and their interiors. The project challenges stereotypes about affordable housing while dissolving conventional boundaries between public and private space.



(Image: White Arkitekter/Beauty and the Bit)

"There is an unfortunate stigma attached to social housing; they are grey, static, generic, colossal buildings surrounded by parking lots, empty lawns and concrete. For us, it was important to have none of that, so we decided to let nature lead the way. Nature is dynamic and resilient – just like we want our neighbourhood to be", said Morten Vedelsbøl, Creative Director at White in Copenhagen.

Unlike traditional social housing developments, there is not an abrupt cut between public and private. Nature gradually transitions into the five rows of housing as comes into the interiors, inviting residents outside to socialise in common areas.

"You need to be able to see that people live here", Vedelsbøl adds.

'By the Woods' consists of 115 mixed-sized row houses of two, three or four rooms. Situated in harmony with the hilly terrain, the houses resemble roots on the forest floor and the neighbourhood is built with, rather than against, the uneven landscape. The buildings are clad in sustainable wood siding on both

exterior facades and the interior walls. The spaces between the structures as well as rooftops have a varied and lush nature.

"We deliberately created the sensation that nature is taking over. We wanted residents to have a sensuous experience with the woods when outside or looking through the kitchen window from the inside", says Mikkel Thams, Design Architect and Project Manager at White's Copenhagen studio.



(Image: White Arkitekter/Beauty and the Bit)

The development is both private and open. Individual terraces are sheltered on the sides allowing residents to move their living rooms, garden furniture or planting beds outside. However, the neighbourhood is designed to be fence-free as private areas are less excluding with less static boundaries - a clear departure from typical row house planning.

"Traditionally, the transitions between private houses and the outside were abrupt, discouraging people from personalising common areas and the exterior of their homes. This sends a signal that the community comes before the individual, but it also alienates residents from using common areas, which turns them into dead zones." says Vedelsbøl.

The project is due to be completed in 2018.

About White Arkitekter

White Arkitekter was founded by Sidney White in 1951 and is Scandinavia's leading architectural firm with nearly 900 employees working in 16 offices in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and the UK. Our work is research focused and our expertise encompasses architecture, urban design, landscape architecture and interior design.

For nearly two decades, White has invested in establishing a unique research-based organisation of highly qualified experts in the field of sustainable design. Our founder's aim was to improve society through architecture and his legacy lives on in our ambition to contribute towards the building of a sustainable world.

<http://en.white.se/>

Design Team: Morten Vedelsbøl (Creative Director) Mikkel Thams Olsen (Architect and Project Manager), Ann Christiansen (Architect), Scott Grbavac (Architect), Daria Cichön (Architectural intern), Marija Ambrasaitė (Architectural intern), Ivanka Ivanova (Architectural intern).

Engineer: Oluf Jørgensen A/S

Visualisations: White Arkitekter and Beauty and the Bit

Drawings: White Arkitekter

Client: Lejerbo Frederiksborg v/ Lejerbo

Area: 11.000 sqm

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