

## **A Home for Karin Dom**

### **Creating a Village in a Forest**

#### **A Dwelling Concept**

*Karin Dom is a place where children, parents and professionals feel welcome, able to have fun, create and play, learn, build independence and make friends.*

Our design derives mainly from the above statement, which we interpreted as creating a home for users of the building. What defines a home is the way in which the occupants feel inside it; whether or not they feel comfortable inside and whether they can feel an intimate relationship with other occupants.

The architecture takes this desire to all levels of the design, from the disposition of the building down to the arrangement of the building functions and individual building details. The result is a series of blocks that evoke the silhouette of houses clustered together, creating a village within a forest which gives Karin Dom a defining character and a sense of belonging.

#### **Architecturally Creating a Home**

Reading the mission and operation of Karin Dom, we have appreciated the passion and care that is given to the children and users of the facilities. In our design, we have tried to create a space that could support this usage and to bring it beyond a mere facility and into a community. Different functions are grouped to form the three-storey building. Facilities which are more public and would benefit from direct access to the outdoors are placed on the ground floor. Above are facilities which require more privacy and seclusion, and at the top are the staff and training facilities. These facilities are then further separated on plan into five main blocks, which create a sense of belonging for users by making the building form appear smaller and more easily relatable, especially to children.

#### **Creating a Village with Soul**

The design also aims to create a lively and engaging environment by creating informal meeting places within the building. At the heart of the design is the central garden, with access provided from various rooms for use by visitors and occupants. This garden becomes an informal meeting place where chance encounters can occur. Internally, the individual blocks are shifted along the axis to create nooks and crannies for people to sit, rest and chat.

#### **Connection to Outdoors and Nature**

The building design adopts passive strategies of ventilation and lighting to bring occupants more in line with nature. By shifting the individual blocks, towards the garden, each room is given access to a window and natural lighting. Aside from these windows, skylights are also opened above the main circulation corridors. These spatially define the different spaces of the building, helping children and users in their orientation and wayfinding around

the building. The raised roofline of the building is oriented towards the south to capture sunlight, at the same time creating the distinctive cluster of houses silhouette.

### **Connection with Others**

All the various design gestures aid in encouraging interaction amongst different users, occupants and staff. The rooms are structured around the common corridor, which itself is oriented towards the garden, creating a clearly legible flow through the building. The visual and physical connection between people transforms the circulation spaces into a lively theatre. Voids and atriums across various levels also allow people to appreciate the openness of the building as well as feel connected to the outdoor garden, even at the upper levels.

### **Programmatic Distribution**

Visitors to the building enter through the reception, which is a large volumetric space containing the main vertical circulation staircase. Off to one side is the Montessori Centre, which has its own independent entrance from the street. A corridor which abuts the landscaped garden leads to the Physiotherapy centre and Hydrotherapy unit, making access to these more physical spaces easier. Above are the center for Diagnostic and Therapy, the Early Intervention Center and the Center for Family-Mediated Intervention. These spaces take advantage of the greater privacy offered at an upper level, whilst still being relatively easy to access for the public. At the top are the supporting facilities such as the Administration Offices, the Staff Rest Areas and the Training Centre. This legible arrangement of programme allows users to find their way around the building with ease.

### **Minimizing Excavation**

Considerable thought had been put into the planning and arrangement of the various programme in order to maximise the efficiency of the site and to minimize construction cost. As underground works are notoriously more expensive than above ground works due to the excavation required, the hydrotherapy unit with the required swimming pool is placed towards the south-eastern corner of the site, which is at a naturally lower level than the north-western corner, thus reducing the excavation required.

The underground parking lot is also located towards the south-eastern corner of the site for the same reason.

### **Simple Structural Design**

A simple structural design is adopted to minimize cost and construction complexity. Instead of a long span structure, load-bearing walls with in-filled slabs is proposed, reducing the need for a separate column and beam design. The small footprint of the building allows this structural design to be adopted without impact and hindrance to the design flexibility and operation of the building.

### **Materials**

A palette of rich and warm material is adopted for the building, with the predominate material being brick. A material that is often used throughout history, the brick has acquired a sense of familiarity, particularly due to its

human scale. The design adopts a palette of off-white, gray and graphite for the various houses to create a unique and identifiable aesthetic to each block while creating a modern aesthetic for the village.

To assimilate into the neighbourhood, the roof is clad in the traditional red clay tiles which are omnipresent throughout Varna.

### **Cost**

Based on a cost per square meter calculation including the site formation, sub-structure work, structural system, building services and superstructure works, the approximate cost of the project is €1.364M.

Much consideration has also been put into the operational cost of the building. The reliance on natural lighting and ventilation and the choice of low maintenance materials help reduce the recurring cost of operation.