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SMART HOMES AND COMMUNITIES
Fostering Sustainable Architecture
Brick Neighborhood

Ljubljana, Slovenia
dekleva gregorić architects

The mandate of the Slovenian-based firm of dekleva gregorić architects was to create a neighborhood with a clear spatial, material, and social identity. This needed to be addressed through a unique design and spatial organization of the dwellings and their surroundings in order to establish a connection among its present and future residents. The creation of a diverse, public open space, which caters to all individuals, is crucial when meeting basic community development aspects.

With an area of 5 acres (2 hectares), a public open space was planned in between the apartment buildings. Therefore, communication between the two sides that make up the community is strengthened and further motivated by this space. Benches and a children’s playground were introduced as well. One unique aspect of this communal space is the inclusion of poems by Slovenian poets that feature on objects such as playground equipment, benches, and doors. Each communal space is culturally enriched by the chosen poetry, establishing a unique identity and increasing cultural awareness among the residents.

The spatial organization of each of the 185 apartment units creates 17 different types of dwellings, ranging in size, volume, internal arrangement, and circulation—all of which can meet the needs of present and future inhabitants. Furthermore, each unit also has a unique play area with both external and internal aspects. Articulating the external brick façade to give a distinct look, for example, gives each apartment its own identity and allows for further community distinction. The use of brick is a historic tribute to the site’s former function as an industrial brickyard. Corridors among the apartment units are designed as places of meeting between the two sides. Common spaces above the buildings’ entrances also accommodate social interaction. These spaces illuminate the possibility for children’s birthday parties, indoor playgrounds for the winter season, and exercise classes.

The design demonstrates that highlighting the visual identity of each space by using different materials and unique artistic expressions can contribute to social cohesion among residents.