

plan By

*Local development together with the
byalags*

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ARK174

Planning and design for sustainable development in a local context

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ABSTRACT

This project is part of the studio *Planning and Design for Sustainable Development in a Local Context*. The overall theme for the studio is Planning and design for sustainable development in a small or medium-sized municipality.

This year's course concerns the municipality of Mark in the Västra Götaland region. The studio is initiated by analyzing and creating an understanding of the local situation including the larger geographical and functional context, which then is used as a point of departure for an in-depth project.

Our 'in-depth' project concerns two villages in the municipality of Mark - Älekulla and Horred. By contacting local "Byalog" and asking them what they would like to have developed in the near future. The project mainly focuses on the problems affecting small localities and possible ways of solving them together with different actors in order to move towards a sustainable future. Also attracting more residents willing to move into Mark municipality.

The booklet is organized into 3 parts – Introduction, Älekulla project and Horred project. In each part we are going to exhibit the concept and the future plan for these areas.

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1 INTRODUCTION

A lot of smaller villages in Sweden are declining in population. (Hedeklint, 2021)

People living there often lack access to jobs and higher education. (Bjerke, Johansson, Pettersson, 2012).

This forces people to relocate to larger cities. This also leads to public and commercial services also being centralized to the larger cities. (Elmqvist, 2013)

Many inhabitants in the countryside in Sweden therefore feel that they have been “left behind” by modern society. (Saarinen, 2019)

In many ways the rural development has come to a standstill because of the lack of economic drivers.

Therefore it becomes interesting to look at how smaller villages can develop in a sustainable way, so life here can also improve and thrive.

To get some good ideas about what could be done, we started talks with many of the Byalags in Marks municipality. We wanted to hear what they think should be improved in their village.

Goals:

- Find and refine a potential development in the more rural part of Mark
- The development should be sustainable and in the interest of the public
- Placing the project in the local context, taking into account ecological, social, economic conditions.

Dialogue with the Byalags

Byalag (“Village development group”) is a form of association in which the residents of a village organize themselves. Today, the function is often social with, for example, events such as midsummer celebrations, Christmas market and village newspapers, but most byalag also function as an advisory body in municipal and county council matters.

In older times, the village association had a more legal function, when the byalag appointed emissaries to the parish meeting, thus the predecessors of today’s municipal council members.

Byalags started to form again after the municipality reforms in the 1970s (merging small municipalities into bigger municipalities) so smaller villages and towns could make their voice heard in the large scale municipalities. (Isacson, 2009)

By talking to the byalag in Mark we can get a good idea of what the people in the villages in Mark want to see as the actual challenges and what is desired to be improved in the physical environment.

Dialogue

Our dialog with the Byalags started by us approaching them through emails, social media and SMS.

From the text that we sent them:

“We turn to the various Byalag around the municipality to hear what you want to see improved or developed in your locality. Maybe there is a small park that is overgrown and should be restored? Or some building that is not fully used today, or that you would have liked to see be developed into something else? We are interested in hearing any kind of suggestions for improvements to the physical environment in the locality you operate in. We are interested in both larger and smaller projects.”

After we got some answers we talked to the Byalags that replied by phone to get a better understanding of the suggested projects.

After this we picked the projects that we thought matched the most with our initial thoughts.

From the beginning our thought was just to work with either the Älekulla or the Horred project. But after supervision we decided to work with both projects since they were in different scales, and as a whole they could show both the big scale planning and the more detailed planning.

During the design process we visited the different sites and where shown around by represents from the Byalag. In the Horred project we had the chance to discuss parts of the proposals on site halfway through the process.

SWOT

STRENGTHS

- Local engagement
- Smaller scale stronger cohesion
- Natural resources

OPPORTUNITIES

- Shifting perspectives

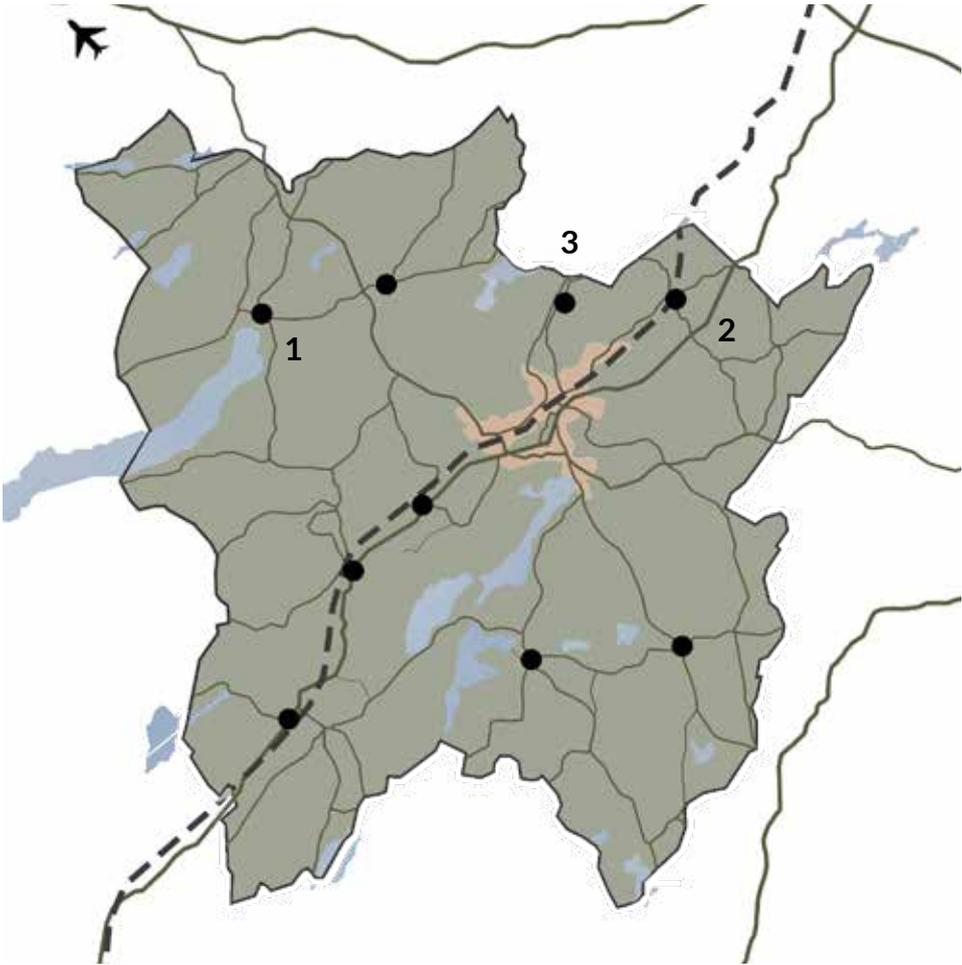
WEAKNESS

- Unequal development of different areas

THREATS

- Uneven population development

PROPOSALS

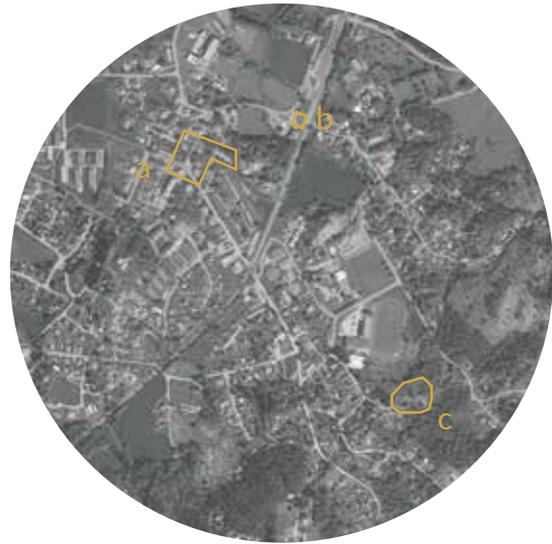


Map 'Mark'



1 SÄTILA

- a. New area/building for culture and shopping combined with bus station.
- b. Improve area around camp site.



2 FRITSLA

- a. Improvement of town square.
- b. New train station building.
- c. New kiosk in Viljans Park.



3 RYDAL

- a. Restore Rydal mansion wing buildings for over night stays.
- b. New outdoor stage by the mansion.



4 ÄLEKULLA

a. New plots for housing combined with kindergarten.



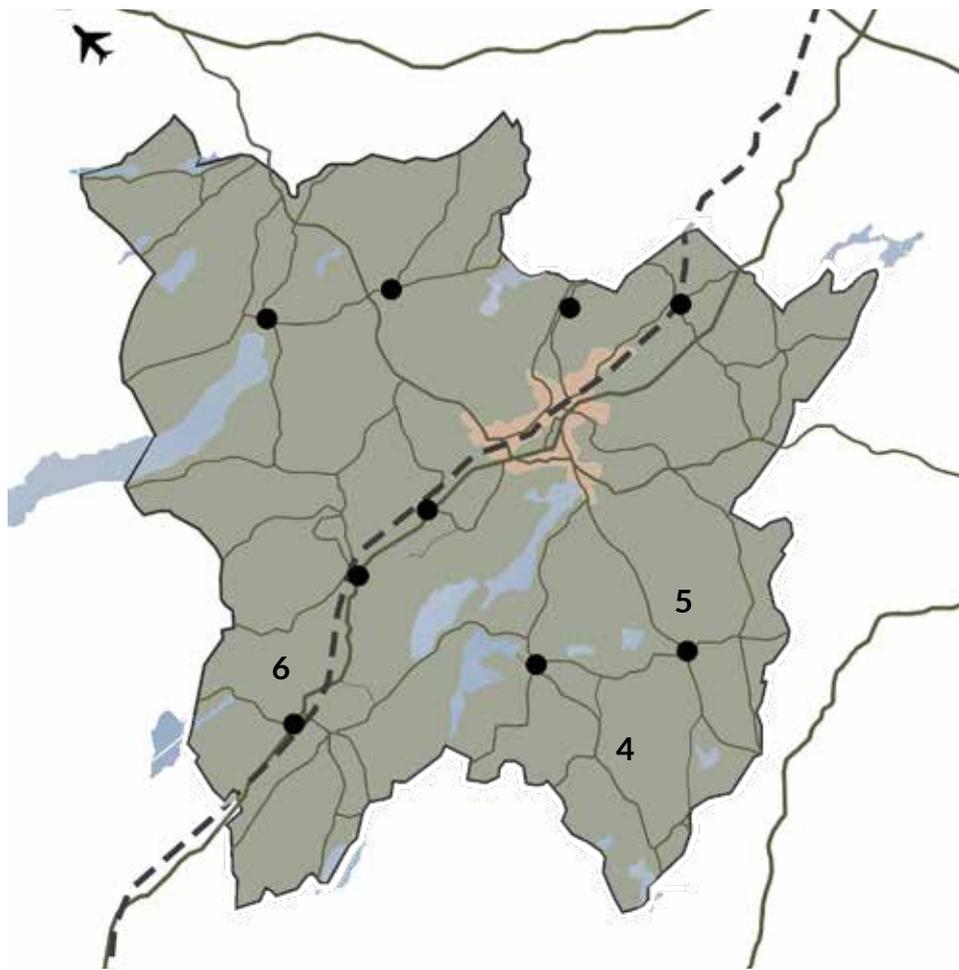
5 ÖXABÄCK

a. New outdoor gym.



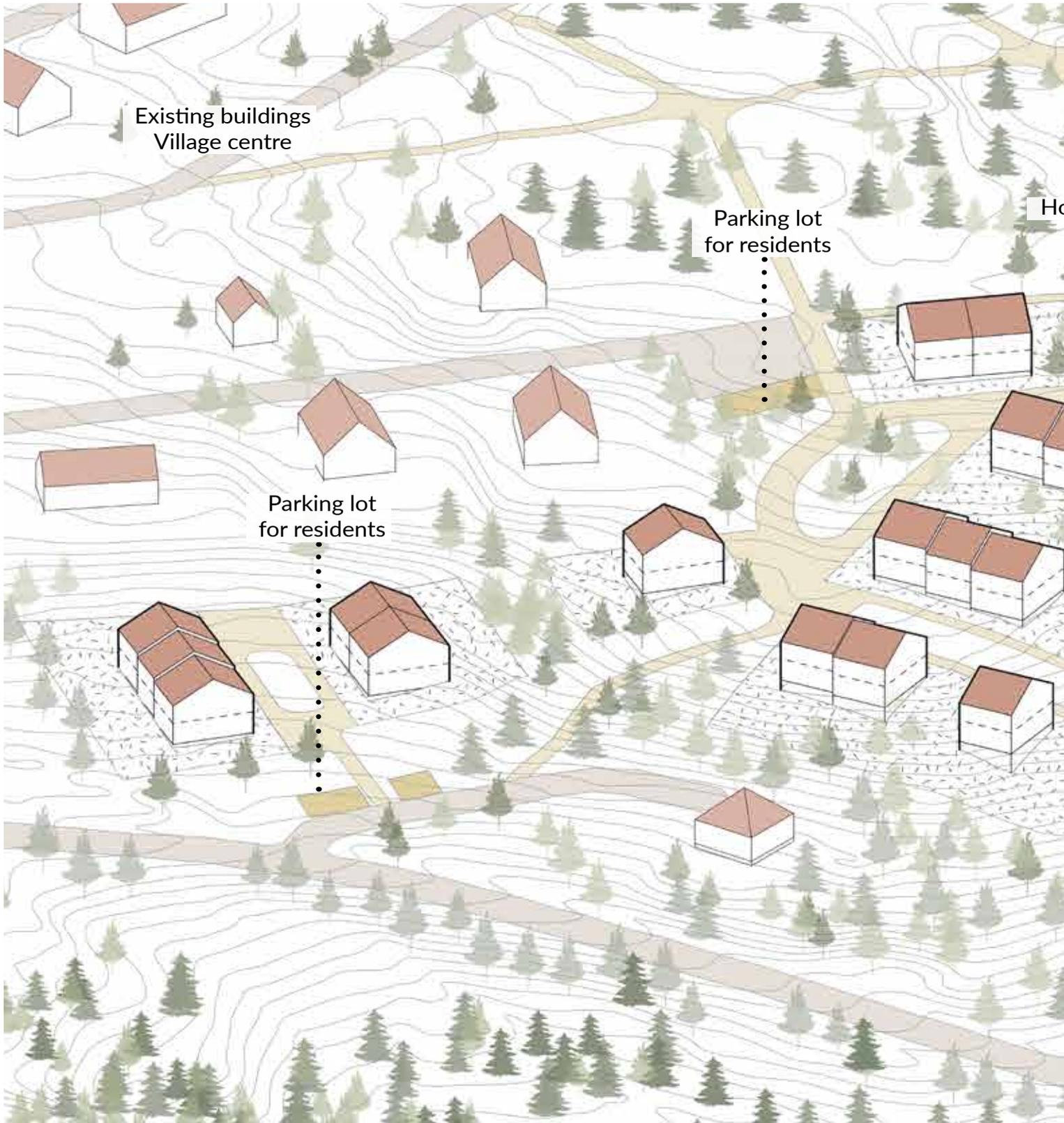
6 HORRED

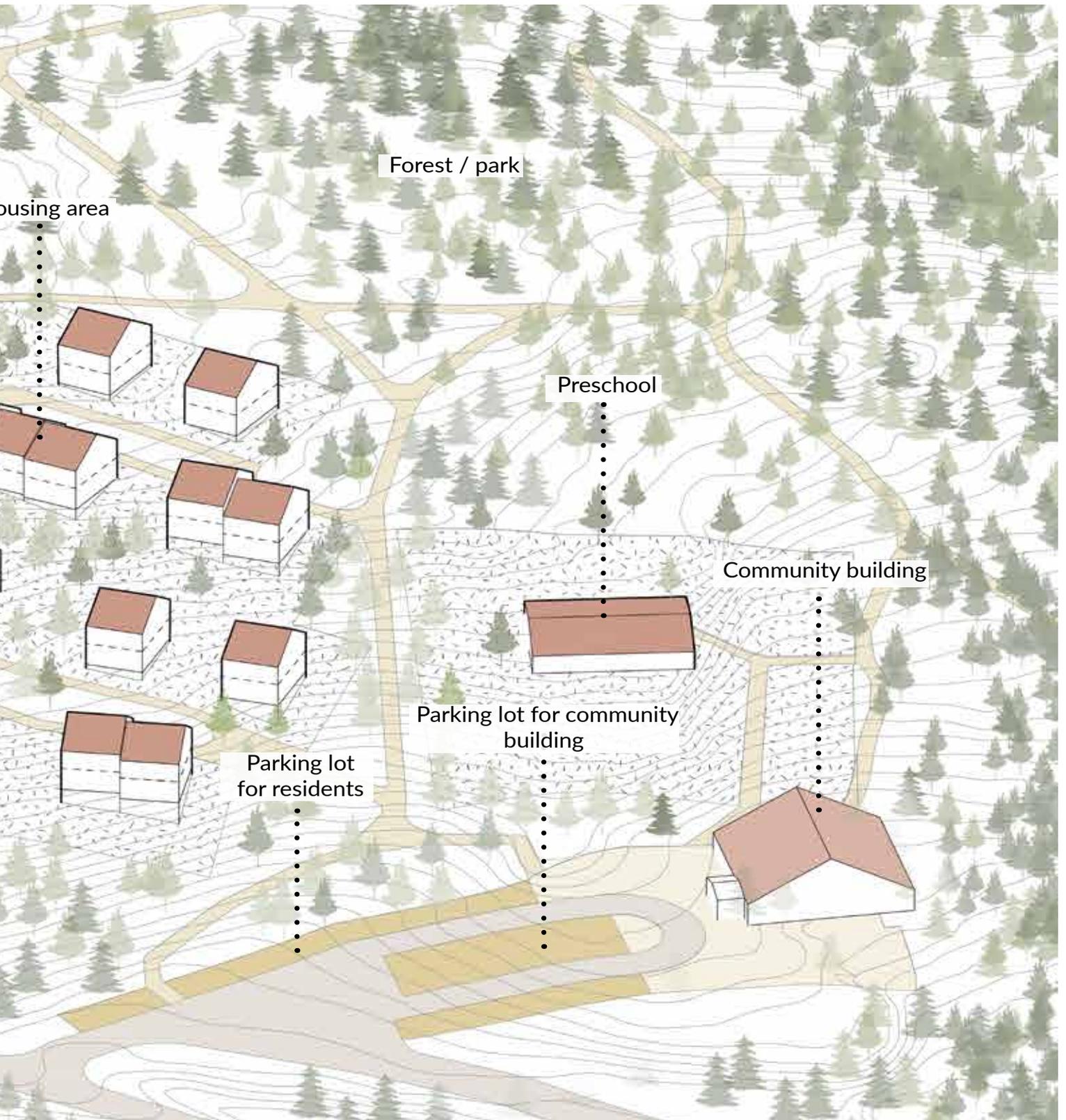
a. Restoration of Eksäterparken



Map 'Mark'

2 ÄLEKULLA





DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME

Älekulla

Population: 300 inhabitants (80 in the center)

Size: 62 km²

Services: Grocery store, gas station, bus station church, football field, gym and community center.

Älekulla is a small village in the south-east corner of Mark. The road between Torestorp and Gunnarsjö passes by the village. New plots should attract people to move to Älekulla and be a part of their lively community.

The maps from 1960 to now show a development of plots and houses, which don't really attract the center. Due to a primary water restriction zone in the middle of the village it is not possible to build houses there. So, most of the municipal plot is not made for new ways of housing. In some areas near it is swampy and trenches and brooks don't form a good land to build on. The current proposal contains new plots which attract the center and build a nice foundation for living conditions.

In the municipal area the suggestion includes an interesting form of row housing together with gardens, co-spaces and shared facilities. It forms nice community spaces, is surrounded by nature paths and offers great views to the forest. Spatial qualities match with alternative transportation in form of car pools and sharing e-bikes for carry on and build a strong concept with a good perspective for the future. Natural resources build the fundament of housing structures, which run on low energy use. Therefore renewable energies are used and the buildings almost melt with the current natural environment. A new kindergarden, proposed by the byalog from Älekulla, is also part of the new concept and offers a great possibility for especially younger families to move there and it satisfies the needs of people who currently live there.

1960



1975



2022



CURRENT SITUATION



Map - Land use





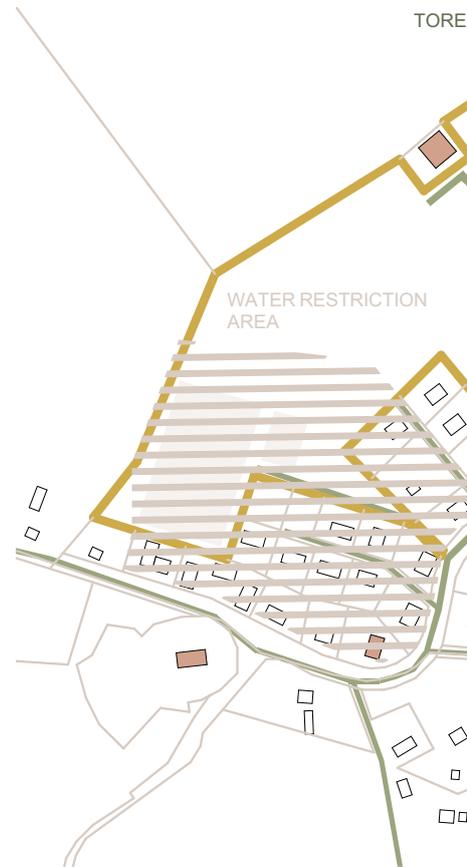
On-site / current situation

AREAS WITH POTENTIAL

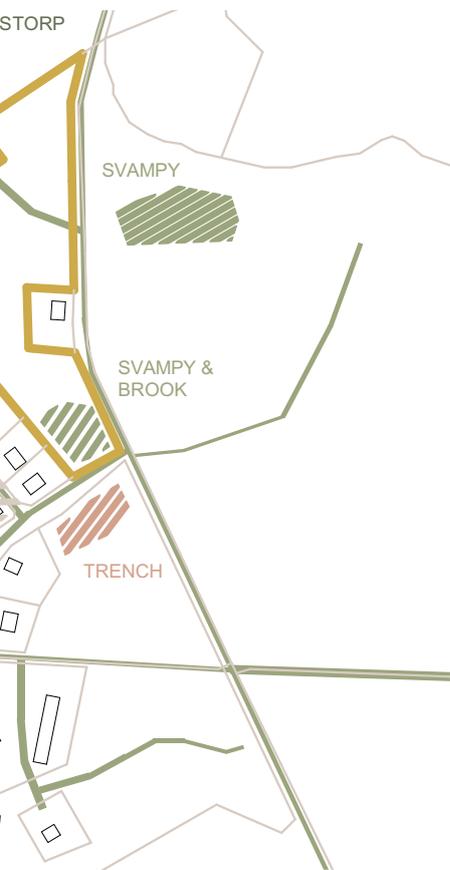
CURRENT SITUATION



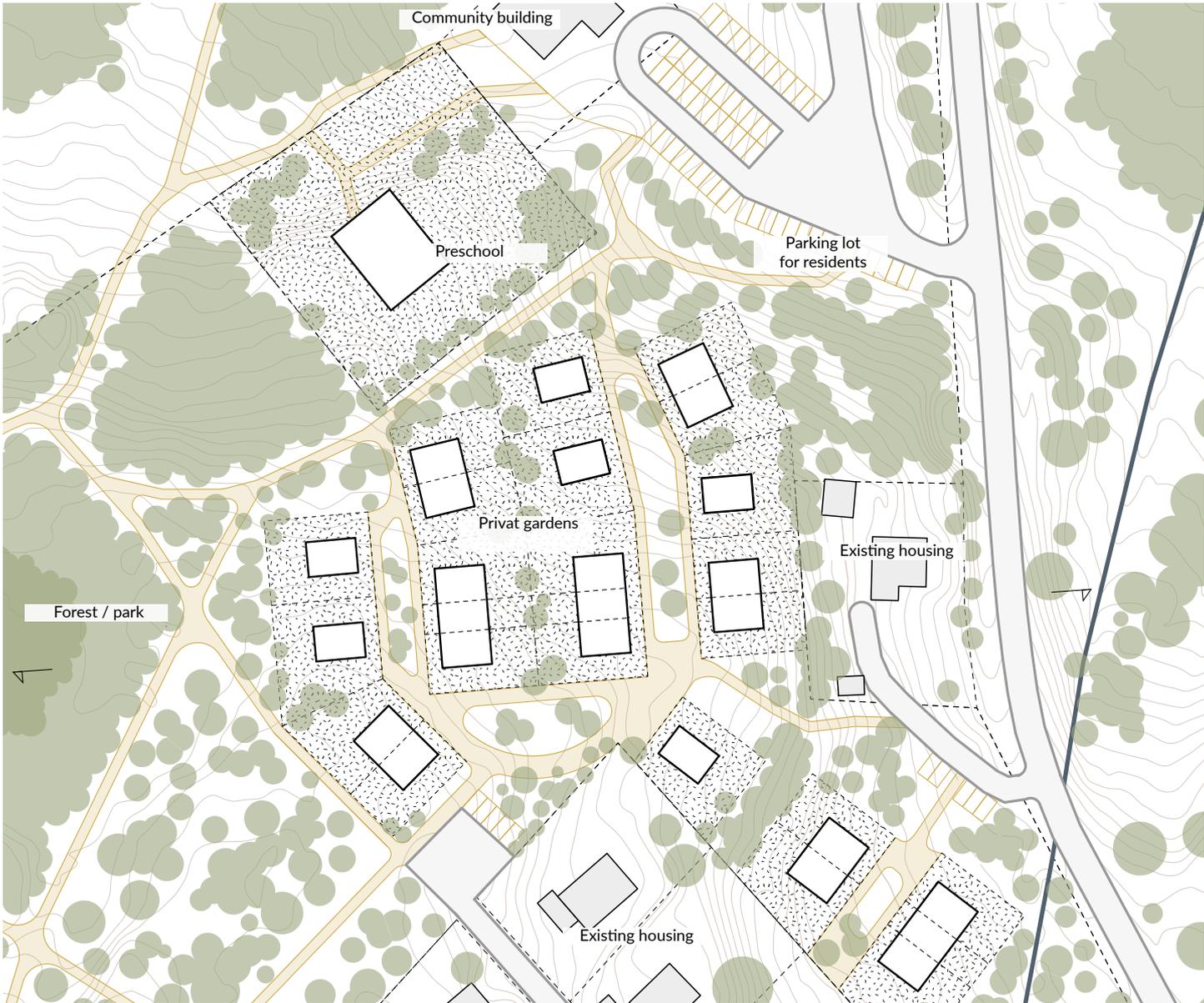
WATER RESTRICTION



NEW AREAS



MUNICIPAL PLOT



Site development plan



The main task of this part of the in-depth project was to propose a village development plan with a strong emphasis on the residential part, in order to meet the village's ambitions for further development.

Taking into account the scattered development in Älekulla, a municipal plot located in the center was chosen as the main site for new building plots and residential development. The plot features a varied topography, seen as a potential. The challenge was to address restrictive groundwater protection regulations. The existing conditions forced a limitation of the residential area within the plot and indirectly led to a clear functional division into residential, service (with the preschool) and recreational (park and sports facilities near the former sports field) parts.

In the residential area, 14 new residential buildings have been proposed, of which 5 are semi-detached houses, another 5 are detached single-family houses, and 3-unit terraced houses, in which further subdivisions into apartments and alternative forms of living such as co-living are possible, in order to meet future social changes and increase sustainability.

Each building or unit has its own private garden, and in addition, residents share green spaces between the buildings. Paths running through the estate are intended for pedestrians and cyclists, and create a connection to the community building and preschool, as well as to the village center.

The main idea of the proposed residential estate is to provide diverse and more sustainable living options, and to create a space that is conducive to establishing close social ties and developing a strong community.

Although the project does not provide specific building designs at this stage, the main guidelines for the buildings are the use of sustainable, local building materials, reference to the local traditional building forms, and a high degree of adaptability.

CONCEPT

To enhance feasibility, the project assumes a phased development of buildings and landscaping elements - pathways, green common spaces, etc.

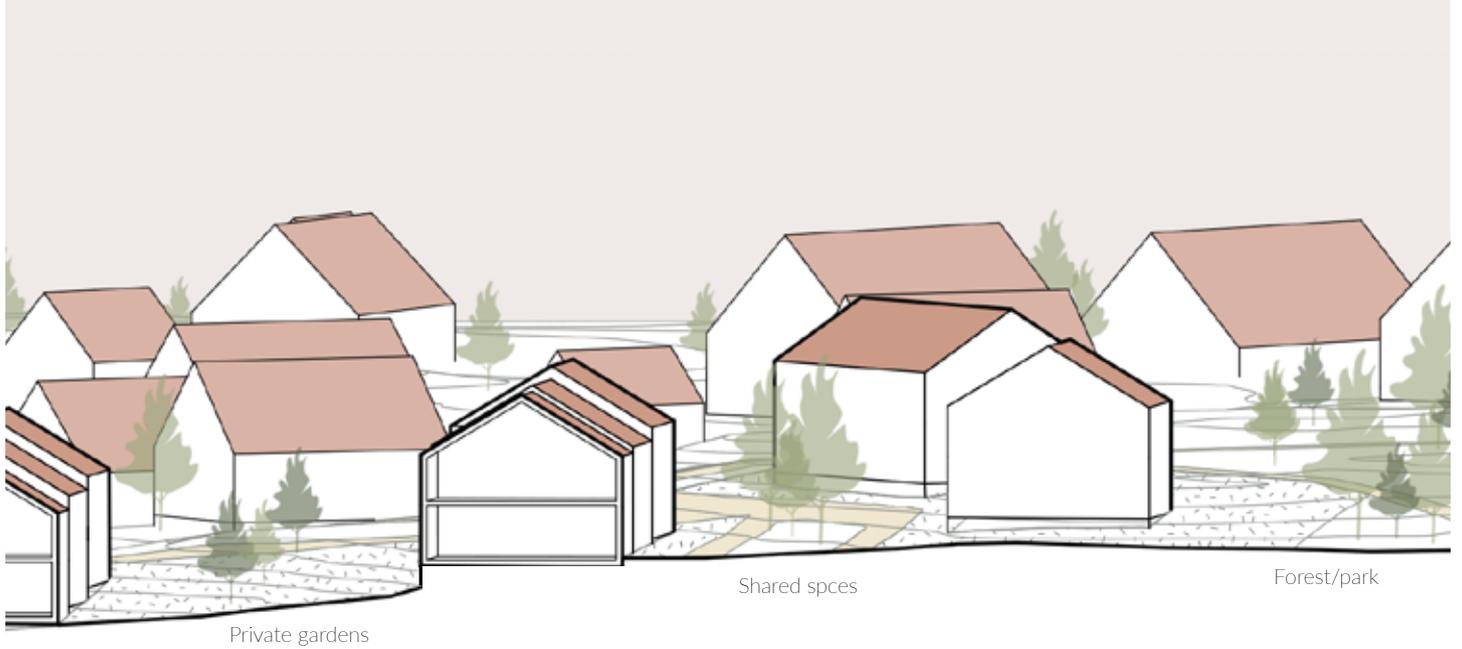
The preschool has been located near the existing community building, which provides an opportunity to attract young families and meet the needs of the people who currently live there.

An important aspect of the new development plan for Älekulla's center is the restoration of woodland on a large part of the community's land to protect groundwater and enhance natural values. New paths are being designed among the restored forest, around which small architectural objects may appear over time to diversify the public space.

For the kindergarten approximately 15 children in Älekulla are in kindergarden age. In addition to some kids of villages nearby, where the parents' way to work is on the road, a number of 15-20 overall is calculated. So, indoors a space of 200-260m² is required and outdoors about 700m². The building perfectly fits two storeys into the environment and is a short walking distance connected to the community hall. The lower floor includes the entrance, storage and sanitary rooms. The upper floor is connected to the outdoor playground on two sides and it contains 2 units which are oriented towards south(-east) for maximum daylight exposure, a sanitary room, a small kitchen and an indoor playground with an integrated sleeping room and a wardrobe.

Here the concept also focuses on flexible spaces for children and staff and forces a low energy use level. A wooden construction and ecological/robust building materials guarantees for long usability.

SPATIAL QUALITIES



NATURAL RESOURCES

TOXIC FREE MATERIALS



LOW ENERGY USE



RENEWABLE ENERGIES



FITTING INTO NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT



CAR POOL

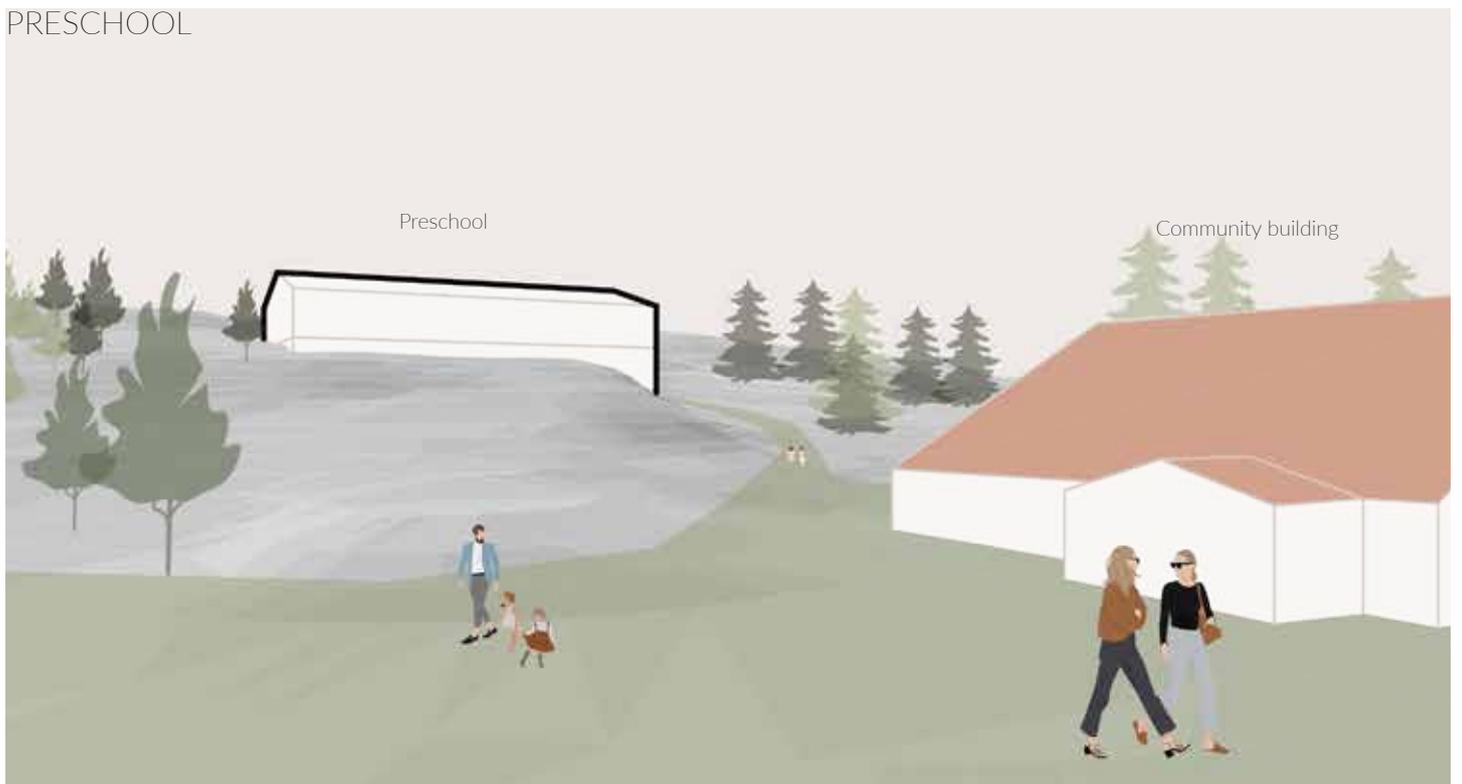


SHARING



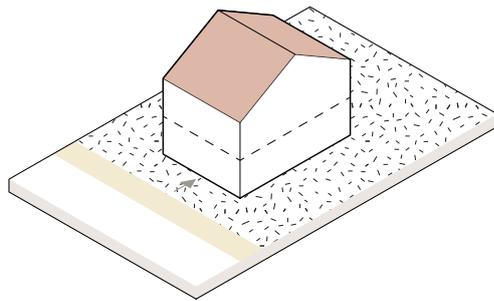
E-BIKE WITH CARRY ON

PRESCHOOL



CONCEPT

STRATEGY FOR RESIDENTIAL AREA



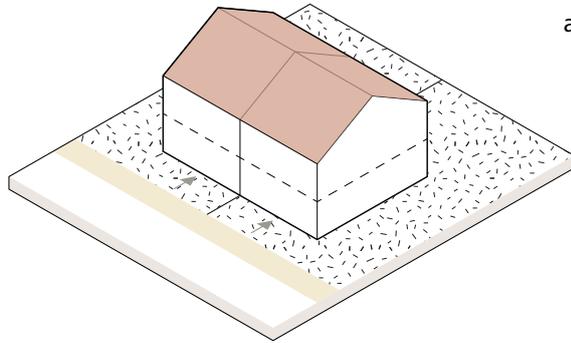
approx. 120 m²



287 m²



4 - 5



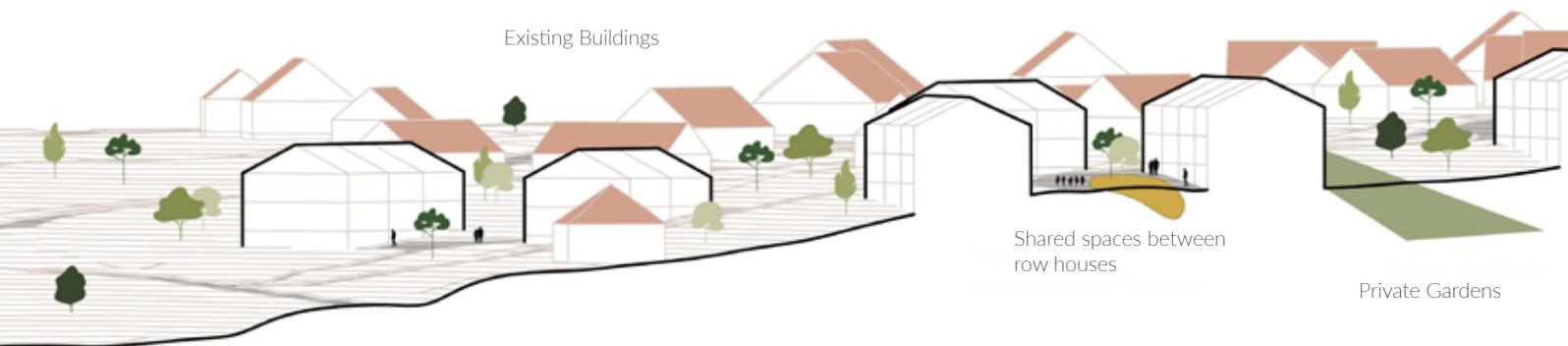
approx. 240 m²



364 m²



8 - 10

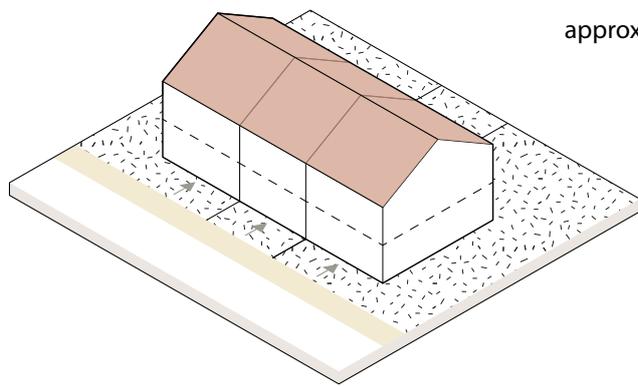


Existing Buildings

Shared spaces between row houses

Private Gardens

Section



approx. 345 m²



434 m²



11 - 14



Shared spaces between
row houses

Walking path

Restored forest
Park

3 EKSÄTERPARKEN





BACKGROUND

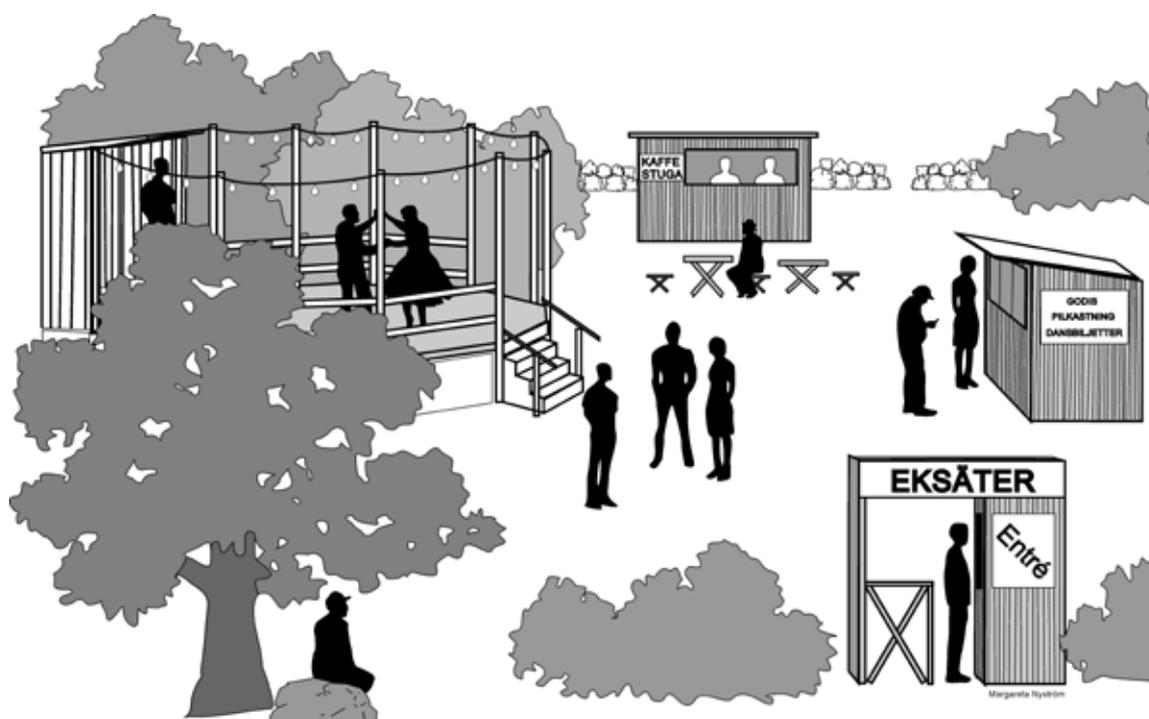


Illustration - former park

Horred

Population: 1 261 inhabitants

Size: 46 km²

Services: Primary school, residential college for adult education, grocery store, hardware store, design outlet, gas station, restaurants, train and bus stations, church, football field and indoor sports hall, running trails, community center.

The Byalag and Hembygdsförening in Horred want to recreate the meeting place that Eksäterparken once was in the 1950s.

Today the site is generally an overgrown natural area located between residential areas and football pitches and sports hall with bowling alley. The old park had a dance floor with performances, like a small public park in the middle of society. However, it has been overgrown for many years, although the foundation for the dance floor remains.

The area is bounded by Eksättersvägen and Sjöby Norrväg, as well as two footpaths in the other two directions. The property is owned by the municipality.

The Byalag and Hembygdsförening in Horred recommend that the park should be resurrected in some form. Discussions around this issue have already been going on for a few years among various residents. To appeal to different ages, some form of nature playground and perhaps some form of water are suggested.

The place has many benefits. The site contains several large old oaks and a ditch for stormwater management runs through the area. Between the trees you have a beautiful view of Viskadalen.

The focus of the project has been to create the type of meeting place the people in Horred wants, but which is also as simple as possible to implement. We have therefore to a large extent tried to work with the existing landscape and carefully selected the building additions that we have made and keep them in a small scale.

CURRENT SITUATION



Map - Land use





Plan over current situation. Scale 1:1000 (A4).



CURRENT SITUATION



The tennis court.



The old foundation of the dance floor.



Place of the old park.



Current footpath through the area.

Dance pavilion

The dance pavilion will be the park's main building. It can be used for all kinds of gatherings, for parties or everyday life. In front of the pavilion is the park's main room, the open lawn. The pavilion becomes a weather-protected addition to this room. The pavilion has a dance floor and a stage connected with stairs and a ramp.

The dance pavilion is built out of wood with a polyester fabric roof to create an interesting ceiling that connects to Horred's textile industry tradition.

Entrance

In order to expand the park's possibilities of use, we have proposed an entrance building with the possibility of sales and equipped with a simple kitchen, toilets and storage for tools for maintenance of the park.

The entrance is also a strong symbol associated with the Folk parks' heyday. After talks with the Byalag in Horred it was suggested that the neighboring sport grounds facilities can be used at events. For example toilets and a bigger kitchen.

Pond and playground

Currently, stormwater is channeled through the area to act as a delay reservoir. This is developed by slightly excavating the wettest part of the site to create a dam.

Next to the new dam, a natural playground made of materials from the site in the form of young ash trees, logs and stones is built. The young ash trees are bent and shaped into huts and tunnels. The logs can create climbable structures and the stones can be used as stepping stones in the pond. In connection with the dam, spandrels are being built that connect the footpaths and lead out to Sjöby Norr väg.



Site plan. Scale 1:1000 (A4).



Finance

If this project would be developed by the byalag in Horred, the byalag would be able to apply for fundings at various contributors. For example, from the EU financed Leader program (maximum 300 000 sek), the local banks foundation Sparbankensstiftelsen Sjuhärad (around 200 000 kr) and Boverket (maximum 300 000 sek). And of course the municipality could raise money for the project. This together with volunteer work from members of the byalag and other volunteers and some discounts by local contractors and suppliers, the budget could add up.

The buildings are planned to mainly be made of wood. This makes it easier for non-professionals to participate in the construction and the local sawmills can provide the material.

Steps of development

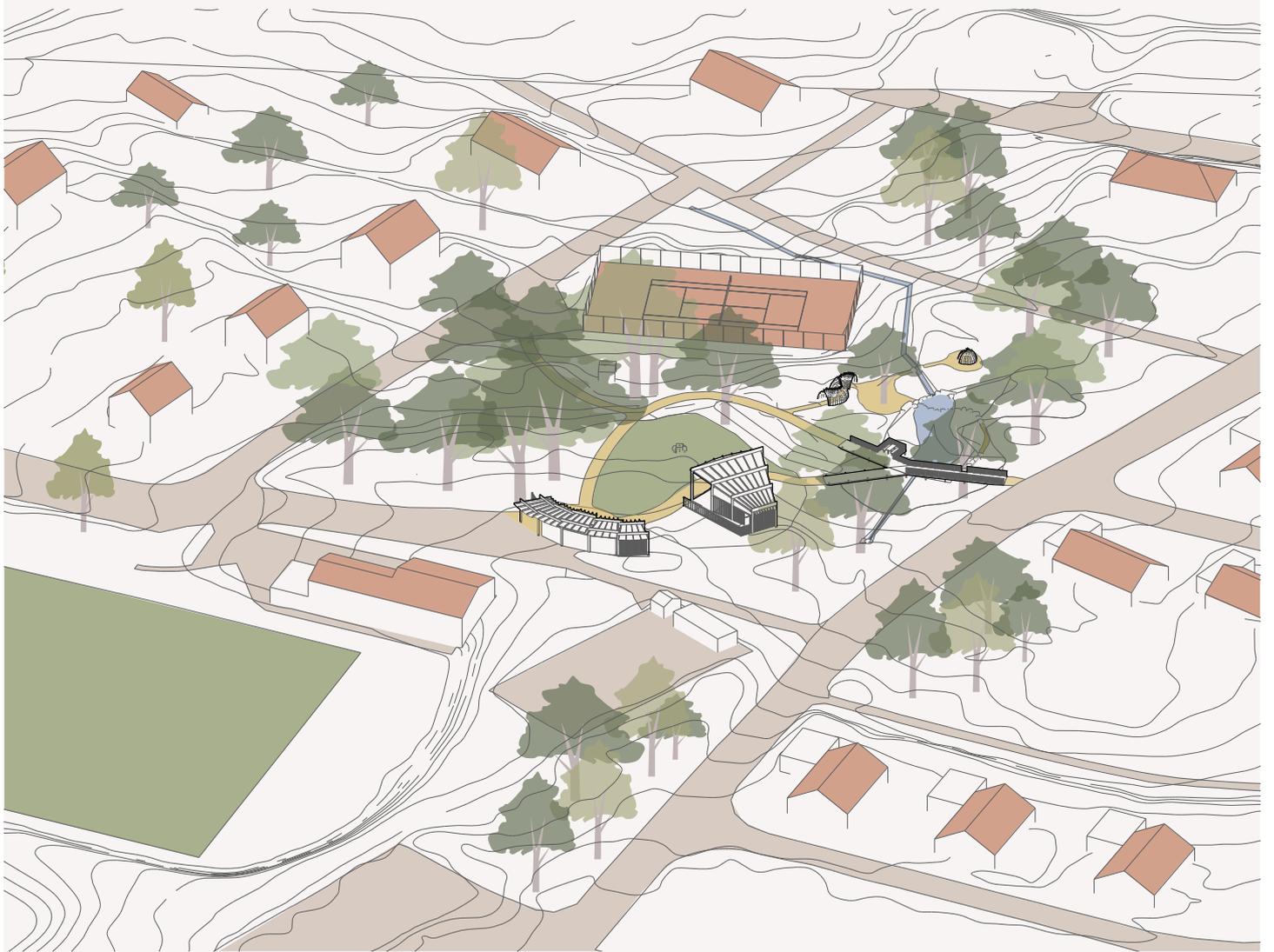
Since the playground is quite easy and cheap to make, it could be a first step in the transformation of the site. The dance pavilion and main lawn gives the park its main functions and is therefore the most important things to develop. The pond and entrance building are not as crucial and would therefore be the last steps of development.

Maintenance

We have also tried to minimize the need for maintenance in the park by allowing a wildgrown nature in the design. Bushes can continue to grow on large parts of the site and help to create different rooms in the park. These need to be cleared once or twice per decade. Only the grass areas in front of and around the dance floor need to be mowed regularly. The walkways in the park are indeed gravel, but grass is allowed to partially grow into the walkways. The packed surface of the gravel path will still provide a good walking surface even with grass growth.

Ownership and responsibilities

The property of our site is owned by Mark Municipality. To develop this project, the byalag in Horred and Mark Municipality could have an agreement similar to the one in Fritsla for Viljans Park between Fritsla Byalag and Mark Municipality. Mark owns the land and are responsible for some parts of the maintenance while Fritsla Byalag are responsible for the buildings and most of the maintenance.



Axonometric view on the new park.

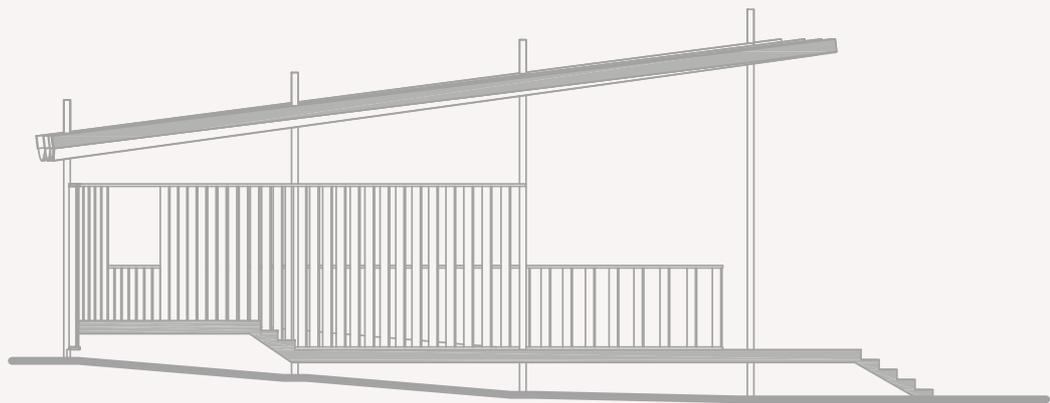
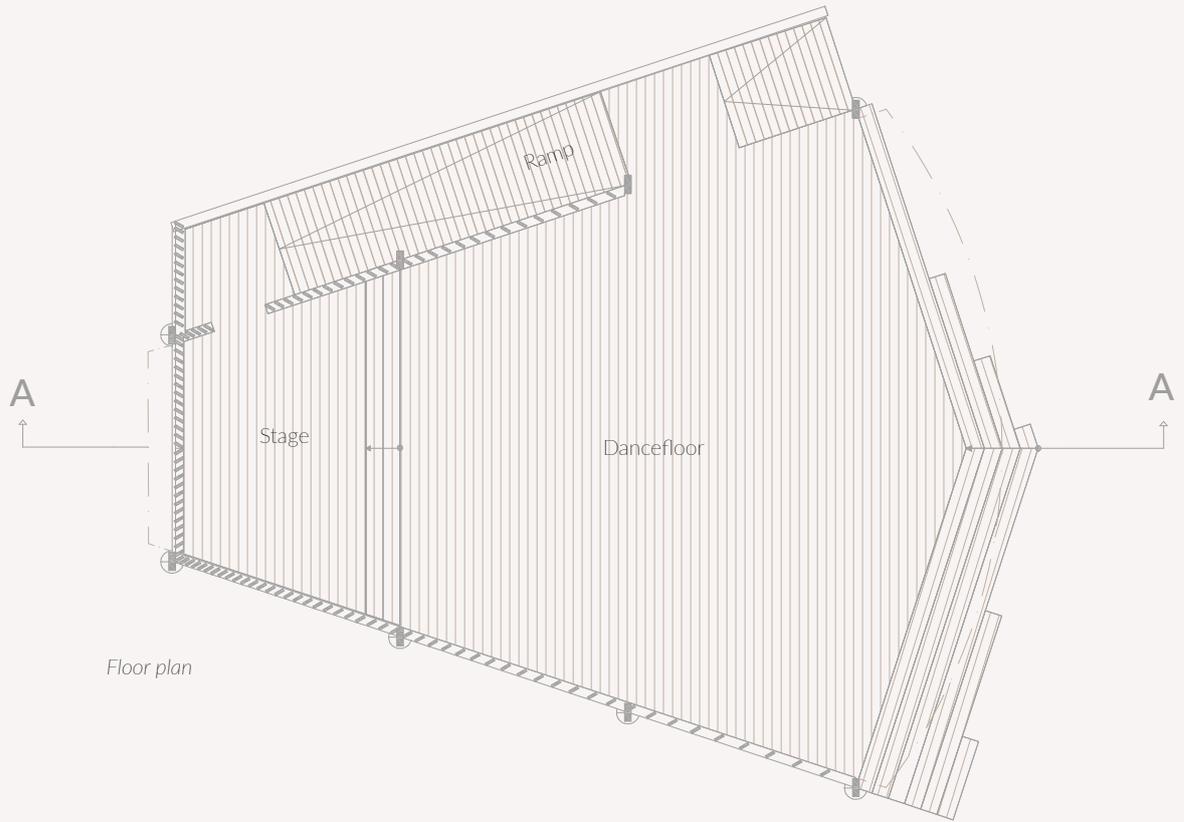
DANCE PAVILLION



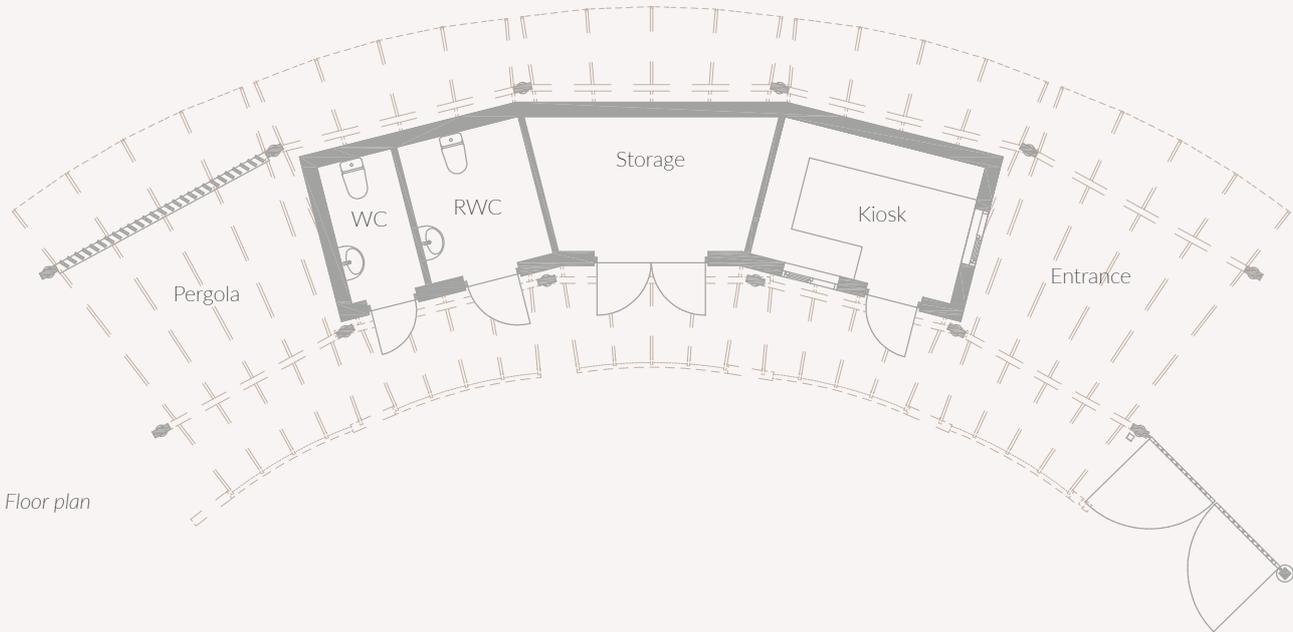
The dance pavillion at night.



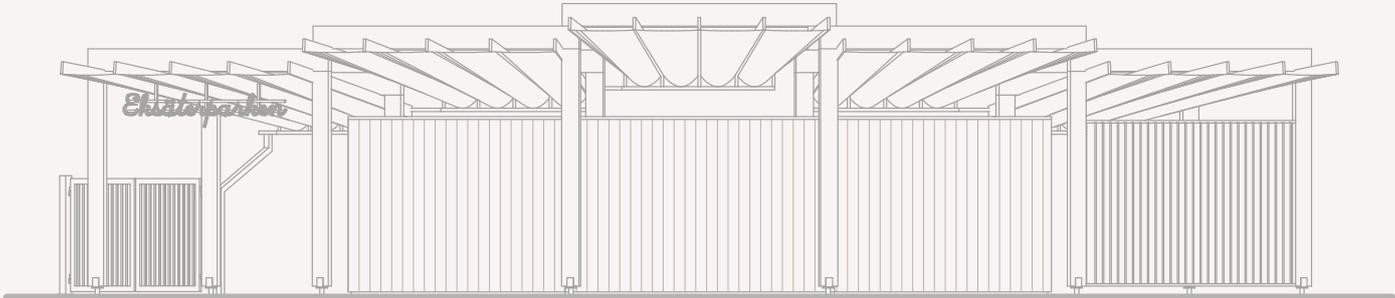
The dance pavillion and main lawn. The old dance floor foundation could be used as foundation for a Maypole.



ENTRANCE



Floor plan



Elevation West



The entrance seen from inside the park.



The entrance seen from outside of the park.

POND AND PLAYGROUND



The hut and climbing tree at the playground.



The pond with stepping stones.



The hut and climbing tree at the playground.



The sprandel seen from Sjöby Norrväg.

REFLECTIONS

During the design process, we were often asked about the relevance of these two cases and why we chose these two topics for this design. As we went through the design process, we slowly realized that although the scale of the two cases were very different, one was focused on a park in the community to provide a better public space for the neighborhood, and the other was a rearrangement and planning of a whole area, which may not be directly related to each other, but if we look at the two cases together, we can think of the park as a part of the overall planning that we practice in the Älekulla project.

In addition, we looked at the town structure of the entire Horred area and the future development direction of the local government and found that the existing downtown area is becoming saturated and will inevitably expand outward in the future. Therefore, the design of this park will not only be the result of our efforts to meet the needs of the local residents, but also the result that this place will become a very important gathering place in the town in the next 10 or 20 years, which can meet the recreational needs of the local residents, and also extend and link the green areas of the nearby houses is make the green public space as big as possible.

So that public space is also an important entry point for us in planning the whole area of Älekulla, by experimenting with different housing arrangements to create the largest public space for the local residents, and also by creating more different open spaces such as workshops, kindergartens, etc, to create the greatest attraction for the future population to want to move into the area. And also we hope to preserve the largest part of the natural environment and minimize the impact on the original environment while the town is developing.

To conclude, these two cases may not appear to be related at first glance, but to us designers, they are the results of our experiments on local development, environmental sustainability, and regional regeneration. For our sites we seem to have what we think is a good way for the future development of these places, but it is definitely not the only way, and there is absolutely no single way for this issue, and even the same way will have very different results in different areas with different backgrounds and different environmental factors. We are glad to have this opportunity to approach on this kind of issue. Maybe there are some areas that we have not thought through and some shortcomings, but we really hope that our design and ideas can inspire to really improve the lives of local residents and bring about positive results.

The design that can solve the problem is a good design.

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Thank you!

To the Byalags in Mark for thier exciting ideas
and helpfull co-operation!

