



Designing a sustainable future: a conversation with architect Guntis Ziņģis

When architect Guntis Ziņģis and the HAGBERG team first arrived at Dzilnupes in early 2022, they were faced with an unfinished and neglected housing project. With its excellent location, close to both nature and the city, they saw unique potential in this place. Within a few months, a reconstruction project was formed and construction work began in order to create energy-efficient rental housing where to enjoy a harmonious life in nature without sacrificing the comforts of the city. Today, the first families are already living in Dzilnupes.

Welcome to the story of Dzilnupes, as told by its author - architect Guntis Ziņģis.



Guntis Ziņģis
Architect

Guntis has been working in architecture for about twenty years. During his studies he worked as an assistant architect in local architectural offices, and after graduating he gained experience as an architect in offices in the Netherlands, China, Azerbaijan and Latvia. For several years now Guntis has been running his own architectural firm Goodpattern in Riga, where he works mainly on public, office and residential projects.

How many years have you been working with HAGBERG?

I have been collaborating with HAGBERG for a long time. It all started about seven years ago with the design of the HAGBERG logo and website. Since then, we have worked together on large-scale projects, including the HAGBERG office building and residential building in Marupe, the HAGBERG Learning Centre, and the Dzilnupes rental housing development. But none of this would have been possible without the Goodpattern team and the engineers they brought to the project.

What are the main lifestyle values that are reflected to the Dzilnupes?

Dzilnupes is geographically located in a very good location - between Riga and Jurmala, close to Airport Riga. This means, you can reach both the beach and the centre of Riga within about 15 minutes, and it's always easy to catch a flight.

Dzilnupes is definitely a place for active people who value exercise and relaxation in equal measure.

The houses are located in a quiet pine forest close to the Božu reservoir, golf courses and sauna complexes. At the heart of the renovation project, we wanted to create an environment for residents to rejuvenate and "recharge their batteries". That's why the finishes and materials of the houses have been chosen to look less like a dynamic metropolis and more like a calming, harmonious small-town dwelling.

What was the biggest challenge in planning and executing the redevelopment of Dzilnupes?

The biggest challenge was redesigning the existing structures and the site so that the houses would meet the requirements of modern housing, energy efficiency and be an equally economically viable investment for both the developer and the residents.

The original design did not include outdoor terraces. We have now created a large private green area for each apartment. Parking spaces were originally supposed to be next to the windows, but now they are located further away from the houses in areas with fewer trees. There was no landscaping on the site itself - just a forest with a driveway. We have created a large children's playground and paths for walking. In the future, we also plan to improve the public space on the waterfront, which will be accessible only to the residents.



Describe the look & feel of Dzilnupes.

As it is a redevelopment project, we had to take into account the structures of existing building. There was a minimal room for manoeuvre with the geometry and layout of the building. However, despite the constraints, we made significant changes and improvements that overall made the homes more appealing to their future residents. Each apartment got its own private green area with a spacious terrace. On the second floor, instead of two, there are three full bedrooms now. On the first floor, we enlarged the windows and created an area for sofas and a TV in the brightest space. In addition, we provided a spacious open-plan kitchen with all the necessary appliances.

The parking spaces in the village are located further away from the windows and are equipped with surveillance cameras and electric car chargers. The woods between the buildings are designed as a communal park with paths connecting the houses to the children's playground, car parks and waste sorting sheds.



What are the materials and tones used in the facade and interior of the homes?

We have achieved a sense of suburban living in the interior through the textures of the materials. They are not as perfect as they would be in a metropolis – the plaster is not sterile smooth, but textured; the concrete ceilings instead of plasterboard; the walls are finished with plaster render, which serves its purpose but is not perfectly polished. Natural wood and earth tones predominate. With the textures and tones of the finishing materials, we wanted to create an easy transition between everyday life in a modern city office and the harmonious relaxation of returning home.

Phase 1 of Dzilnupes is currently being finalised with six residential buildings, having four two-story rental apartments in each. Can you outline what is planned for the future?

We are currently working on Phase 2 of the project, which involves the redevelopment and improvement of the Dzilnupe riverside area. Five residential houses and communal picnic areas are planned there. All the phases will be connected and the residents will be able to use the area as one big forest park.

What do you think makes Dzilnupes different from other similar villages?

There are several reasons. Firstly, it is a very good geographical location, with a wide range of leisure and entertainment services available nearby. Secondly, it is the building itself, with its own private outdoor space, which is energy-efficient and allows for privacy.

We have created the feeling of a complete private home, while living in an apartment.

Find out more about Dzilnupes: www.dzilnupes.lv

Contact: www.dzilnupes.lv/kontakti/

