



A + 299

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Special Edition: Quality Matters



Big master plan, small gestures

Emmanuel van der Beek

With the *Groen Lint* or Green Ribbon, Ostend is giving its green south side a new appearance. The master plan strings together the most diverse landscapes. Both for the master plan and its elaboration, the city turned to the Flemish Government Architect. 'The Green Ribbon should trigger a new urban culture', says Eli Devriendt, who is leading the project.

→ With the Green Ribbon, the city of Ostend is investing in its lesser-known green fringes to the south, away from the coastline in the north: this ambitious urban project will transform the area into a second front.

© Nick Deconhel





A green polder landscape as far as the eye can see. It's an image you don't immediately associate with Ostend. The Belgian coastal city is famous for its beaches and its compact city centre, with a park and galleries dating from the time of Leopold II. A modernist casino and a dyke lined with grey apartment buildings recall the dreams of the twentieth century.

With the Green Ribbon, the city is investing in its lesser-known south side. Residents and tourists could already discover the Green Ribbon as a 35 km cycle route, along the coastline in the north and the green fringes in the south. But the Green Ribbon is more than that. Under the Green Ribbon banner, the city has been working in recent years on a comprehensive urban planning project to transform the southern edge into a second front.

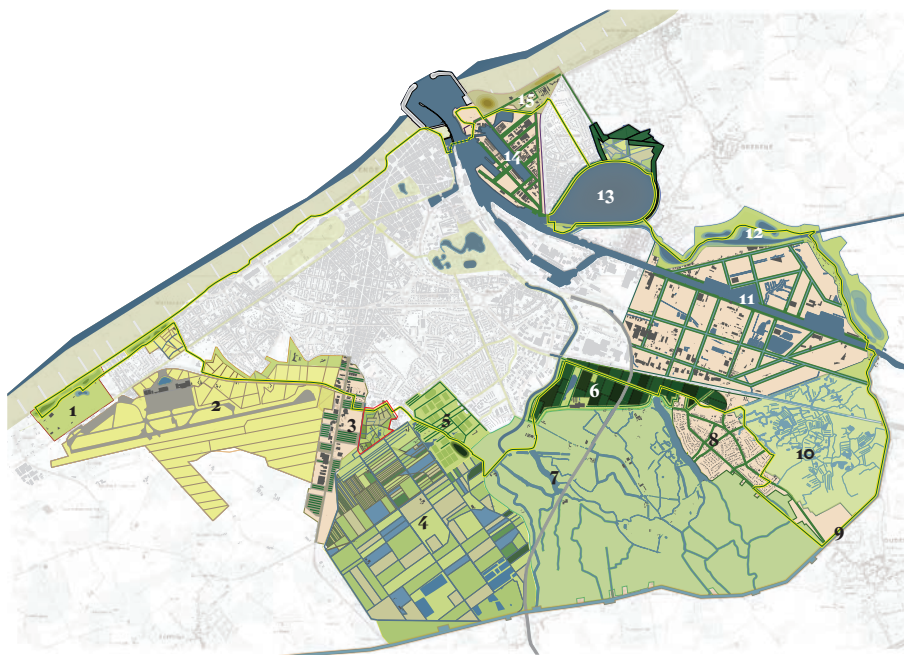
'The Green Ribbon will be a succession of contemporary parks, although that is not a good term', says Eli Devriendt, a landscape architect working for the city of Ostend. Devriendt has been at the helm of the project for years. 'The Green Ribbon consists of diverse green and blue spaces that do not immediately bring to mind a nineteenth-century park: polders, dunes, arable lands, woods and expanses of water. Yet we refer to them as parks because we consider their public function important. The Green Ribbon should trigger a new urban culture.'

The project is part of the European Interreg project 21st Century Parks. In 2011 the city started looking for a design team that could draw up a master plan. Ostend used the Open Call for this purpose, a competition supervised by the Flemish Government Architect. 'The city was looking for an innovative vision on questions concerning energy, water, mobility and nature development. Concrete programmes also had to be given a place, such as an observatory, a residential care centre and an events site.'

The soul of the place

A consortium made up of Georges Descombes and Tractebel Engineering (at the time, Technum), with Bart Van Gassen as project manager, won the competition. Devriendt sat on the jury. 'The designers convinced us with a proposal that stood out thanks to its simplicity. For instance, they suggested building large terraces, platforms where you can enjoy the landscape. If it's good, it doesn't stand out: that was their starting point. Today, one of those terraces is close to a school. Pupils gather there for lunch and parents meet there too ... That kind of multiple use is what we were looking for. The Open Call allowed us to attract international expertise. We would never have been able to do that on our own.'

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- | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1 Raversijde | 5 sports park | 9 Passendale – | 12 Noord-Ede |
| 2 airport | De Schorre | Nieuwpoort | wetlands |
| landscape | 6 Geuzenbos | Canal | 13 Spuikom |
| 3 retail landscape | 7 Ostend | 10 Zwaanhoek | 14 Oostoever |
| 4 Les Hortillonnages | Krekengebied | 11 Ghent–Ostend | port area |
| Gardens of Stene | 8 Zandvoorde | Canal | 15 Oostoever |
| | | | dune landscape |

Architect
Tractebel – Georges
Descombes – ADR – Maat –
Jan Willem Van der Schans

Website
tractebel-engie.be –
maatontwerpers.be

Official project name
Tuinen van Stene

Location
Stene, Ostend

Programme
Agricultural park (part
of the Green Ribbon master
plan), consisting of an
organic pick-your-own
garden, a meadow water
landscape, farmlands and
a food platform

Procedure
Pilot Projects Productive
Landscape (Flemish
Government Architect)

Client
City of Ostend

Lead contractor
Mahieu nv

Engineering
Tractebel

Completion
November 2019

Total floor area
35 ha

Budget
€ 2,500,000
(excl. VAT and fees)

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→
**Catherine Pyck, Park
 Nieuwe Koers: a public
 park connecting the
 new residential care
 centre, allotment
 garden, events meadow
 and observatory**

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Architect
Catherine Pyck
 Project name
Park Nieuwe Koers
 Location
Ostend

Programme
Public park
 Procedure
**Meesterproef
 (Flemish Government
 Architect)**

Client
**City of Ostend –
 vzw Sint-Monica**
 Execution architect
Arcadis
 Lead contractor
Verhelst

Completion
2019
 Total floor area
130,000 m²
 Budget
**€ 3,726,982
 (excl. VAT and fees)**

Asked about the importance of the Open Call, Devriendt also points to the beginning of the process. 'The Team Flemish Government Architect helped us to formulate the project definition more sharply. The importance of that first step is often underestimated, including by architects. Only when you ask a good question can you get a good answer. While writing the assignment, we noticed that we needed a sparring partner.'

It was also decided to elaborate an art commission, also under the guidance of the Government Architect. 'The fifteen sub-areas of the Green Ribbon have their own character. We didn't want the architects to do their own thing there, because the landscapes were particularly powerful in themselves already. To include the soul of the places in the design assignment, we asked Katrien Vermeire to take a photo of each place and Peter Verhelst to write a text. The images and texts then also played an important role in the communication with regard to the general public.'

Rammstein

A crucial link in the Green Ribbon is Park Nieuwe Koers, which was completed in 2019. The master plan for the park was drawn up within the framework of a *Meesterproef*, a competition procedure through which the Flemish Government Architect gives young architects the chance to develop a public project.

For Park Nieuwe Koers, Catherine Pyck created a clear plan with three zones. The northern section houses the Sint-Monica residential care centre and is designed according to the 'house-terrace-garden-pavilion' sequence. While drawing the master plan, the idea arose to issue a separate Open Call for the residential care centre. Bovenbouw Architecten won the competition with a smartly designed volume that the Green Ribbon runs through. The Green Ribbon thus connects street and garden, city and nature, and young and old in a single movement.

The events site forms the heart of the park. A concrete terrace serves as a stage or gathering place. The site is designed to accommodate large groups of visitors. This summer, more than 100,000 Rammstein fans descended on the park over the course of two days. Whereas tourists used to be drawn only to the city centre and the sea, today the green fringes of the city are also the subject of their attention.

At the southern tip of the park, space was made for Astropolis, an observatory. For this project, too, the city appointed an architect through a *Meesterproef*. The winning design by Pieter-Jan Peeters is not tucked away in the landscape, but connects to the airport further along with a strong formal idiom. →

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Bovenbouw designed a smartly conceived volume which the Green Ribbon runs through. The Green

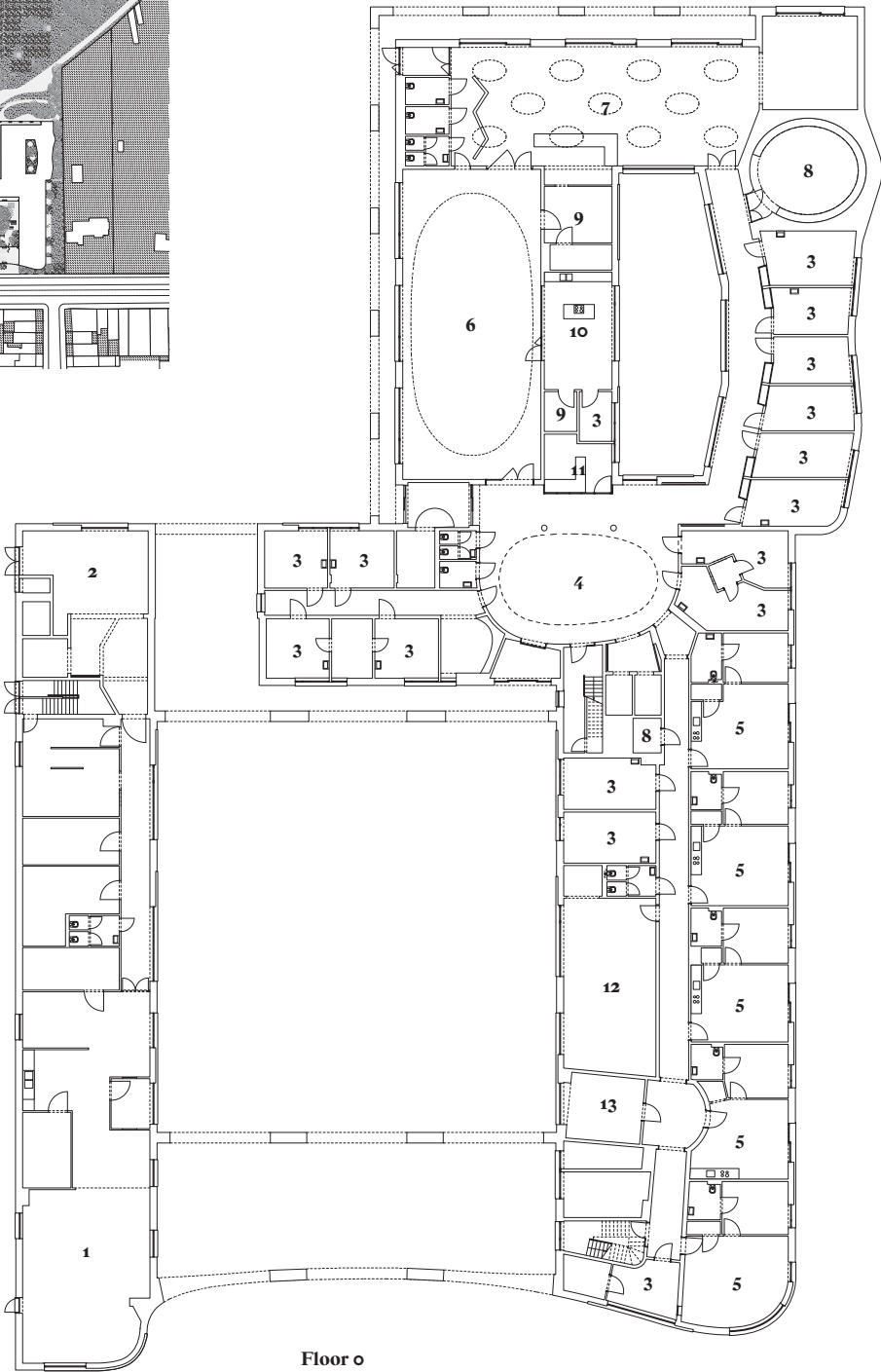
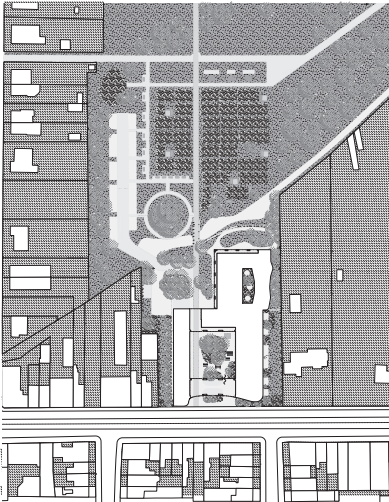
Ribbon connects in a single movement street and garden, city and nature, young and old

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Bovenbouw, De Drie Platanen, Ostend, 2019: a care home for elderly people with assistance residences, a cafeteria and a service centre, directly connected to the allotment garden of Park Nieuwe Koers

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- Floor 0**
- | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 industrial kitchen | 4 entrance hall | 8 silent room | 12 relaxation area for staff |
| 2 loading and unloading area | 5 assisted living | 9 storage | 13 meeting room |
| 3 offices | 6 multipurpose hall | 10 ergo kitchen | |
| | 7 restaurant | 11 reception | |



Architect
Bovenbouw Architectuur
Website
bovenbouw.be
Official project name
De Drie Platanen
Location
Ostend, Belgium

Programme
98 rooms for elderly people, 5 assistance residences, cafeteria, service centre
Procedure
Open Call (Flemish Government Architect)
Client
vzw Sint-Monica

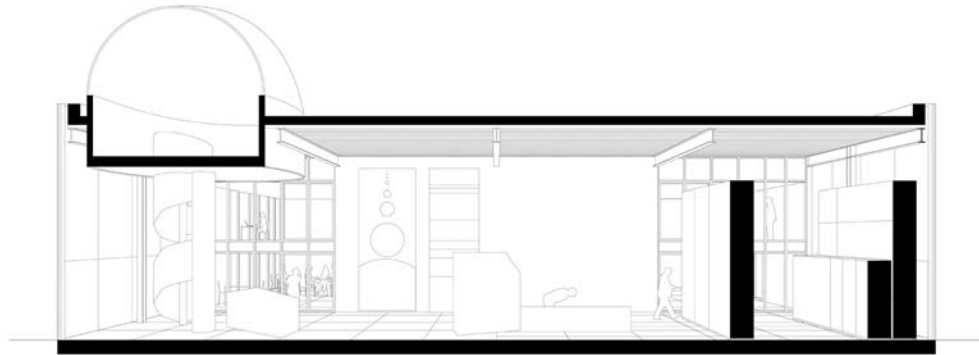
Lead contractor
BAM
Landscape architect
Landinzicht
Public realm
Mahieu
Structural engineering
Establis
Services engineering
Ingenium

Building physics
RaCo
Completion
February 2019
Total floor area
7,800 m²
Budget
€ 11,600,000 (excl. VAT and fees)

City and countryside

For the *Tuinen van Stene* or Gardens of Stene, 35 ha of polderland, Ostend applied for the Pilot Project Productive Landscape, again under the wings of the Government Architect. 'I think the idea of the Pilot Project is brilliant. Society is evolving at lightning speed and so we need new architecture. You can write about this, but you can also build. MAAT ontwerpers and Technum quickly translated our idea for a food park into a design. The Gardens will be a productive landscape, with cows and sheep, parcels of arable land, a forest garden ... Such places, where city and countryside meet, will become crucial in the coming decades.'

The Gardens of Stene are in the process of being developed. Local associations are looking for volunteers to plant a forest garden, and work is under way on an irrigation system that drains surface water from the nearby village and channels it through a reed bed, where it is purified and buffered. 'A project like the Green Ribbon is never finished. Right now, there are three projects on the drawing board that we will soon realize. And besides that, there are still so many dreams.' ▲ ■ ●



Section



→
Pieter-Jan Peeters,
Astropolis: a building
with a centre for
space travel and
astronomy, with a
terrace and cafeteria,
spaces for workshops
indoors and outdoors,
and a multipurpose
auditorium

Architect
Pieter-Jan Peeters
Project name
Astropolis
Location
Ostend, Belgium

Programme
Space Science Centre
Procedure
Meesterproef
(Flemish Government
Architect)
Client
City of Ostend

Structural engineering
Util Struktuurstudies
Services engineering
Arne Vangeenberghe
(Atelier T)
Building physics
Arne Vangeenberghe
(Atelier T)
Lead contractor
Himpe

Completion
2018
Total floor area
770 m²
Budget
€ 1,300,000
(excl. VAT and fees)