In the Villaverde district of southern Madrid, a new social housing project was commissioned by the Empresa Municipal de la Vivienda (Municipal Housing Company). Located on a prominent boulevard on a site previously occupied by a factory, the project was part of a wider regeneration scheme for the area. The brief for the building was clearly defined: a U-shaped block fifteen metres deep, eight storeys high and capped with a pitched roof, all within a 2,000 square-metre footprint. The resulting block comprises 176 one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments.

In contrast to some of the neighbouring building projects, which adopted symmetrical, double-pitched roofs, the intention here was to create a design in which the façade and roof are brought into a more discreet dialogue and seem to merge together. A low, single pitch spans the majority of the block, while small secondary pitches bevel the building’s front edges, creating asymmetrical volumes that gently break with the traditional orthogonal cuboid. The reduced roof volume results in an increased habitable internal area.

The façades are fabricated in concrete ranging in tone from earthy pink to rusts and ochres, creating a lightly variegated pattern across the surface of the building. Vertical windows punctuate the exterior with a rhythmic yet complex distribution: the spacing between different floors is consistent, while the horizontal spacing between windows on each floor appears more random. The uniform size and shape of every window means that there is no distinction between windows for living rooms, bedrooms and kitchens, and vertical circulation within the building is not evident from the outside. Similarly, it is not immediately apparent from the elevation as to which apartments have one bedroom, and which have two or three. Every window is set back into the façade and reaches to the floor, creating a small balcony with a simple balustrade for each. A slate-blue concrete portico, accompanied by small areas of soft landscaping, marks the entrance to the building.
Housing Villaverde