



YOUNG LEADER



Søren Smidt-Jensen

# Smart and Green First-Movers

**Søren Smidt-Jensen** is Head of Urban Development and Landscape at the City of Frederikssund, Denmark. In an interview with CLC's Nicole Chew, he shares how Denmark's largest urban development project, Vinge, is revealing a new generation of urban dwellers who value both nature and technology.



The World Cities Summit Young Leaders is a select group of change-makers from diverse sectors who shape the global urban agenda at the annual World Cities Summit Young Leaders Symposium.

## Søren Smidt-Jensen on...

### 🗨️ His New ‘Vinge’ City

Vinge is the largest urban development project in Denmark currently. It’s the last area that can be developed at such a scale, and will be constructed on a greenfield site with its own train station. It will have about 20,000 people living there, hopefully in 10 to 15 years, with about 4,000 jobs in the area. “Vinge” means “wing.” So the 370 hectares are in the shape of a wing; in the middle is the green heart. A green belt runs from the green heart and splits into several corridors, moving out into the business districts and the housing areas. It will be a purely electrified and smart grid-ready city.

### 🗨️ Letting Nature Solve Problems

We want to create a town where nature and biodiversity thrive. The aim is to see the diversity of the species living here and to interact with it. You can use it for recreational use, but it’s actually the nature that has priority.

Vinge is located in an area where several species, such as certain frogs, are protected. So we needed to plan around the areas where the frogs are. Some areas also fall under European Union protection. So the architects considered how to work around these areas. It’s not just a flat green field; the topography includes small hills and natural basins, and is complicated to work on. Vinge also includes a wet, low-lying area, so there’s really a need for innovative landscaping to work with the rain. The way that that green area is planned and is being used is very innovative.

It’s not through changing nature, but really through planning the city, the buildings and the roads and the various other activities in the city around nature.

Some of the green areas will look a little bit wild, and that’s the whole idea—it should look very much a living nature. Also, this means the maintenance can be greatly

reduced. We let nature solve it by itself. For instance, you only need to cut it once every year compared to more than 20 times if you want it to look like a golf course.

### 🗨️ Leveraging Smart Technology

The digital platform can be used by the community to constantly monitor energy consumption, rainfall, humidity and whatever is relevant for them. We are also trying to create a very good social environment, through various digital platforms, to make it attractive even before the city is built. In fact, this has been mobilised by those who have already bought a place here—they are extremely active and innovative in creating the future city. I think this is part of a strong tendency where citizens expect to be co-creators of the city they live in.

### 🗨️ “Tesla” and “Yoga” Residents

We began selling the first 59 plots in September 2015 and by early December they were sold out. What struck me was that the average age of the people who put up a bid was 36 years old. More than half live in Copenhagen 40 kilometres away, and the rest is from the city here. We actually succeeded in attracting people to this new way of living, especially the younger generation from the mid-80s onwards, who typically aren’t interested in moving out from the big city, but are now interested in this unique combination of nature and smart city. We have the “Tesla-segment” interested in the high-tech version of living green, as well as the “Yoga-segment” concerned with deep ecology and collective living. Both groups—and those in between—think this is a great place. The pioneers have a very strong vision about Vinge, and we are working closely with them to see how we can achieve their ideas.

When you decide to move to Vinge, you are moving to an area where the nature as well as the technological solutions is special. You’re part of a pioneer culture. ○