In Between.

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Amersfoort itself represents a city “in between”. Geographically, it is centrally located within the Netherlands, and historically it has served as a crucial link between major economic and commercial hubs such as Amsterdam and Utrecht, and more rural areas such as Gelderland and Overijssel. This centrality has established Amersfoort as an important and strategic railway hub within the country.

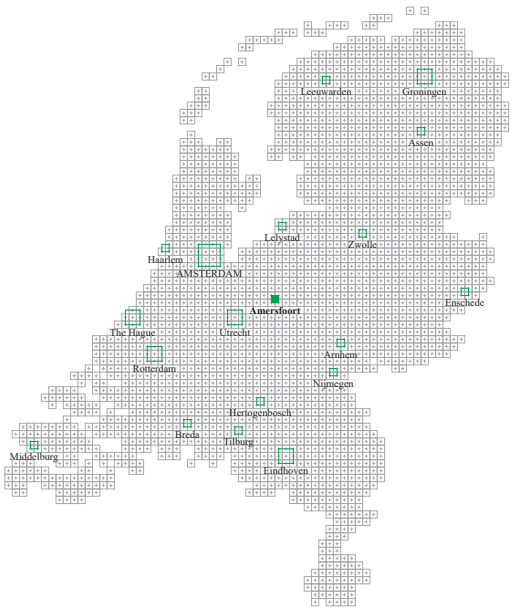
Kop van Isselt is a district currently under development, representing a new opportunity for central urban expansion. It is part of the broader series of expansions around the Nieuwe Stad and aims to become a socially inclusive neighbourhood, sustainably built and rooted in the area’s industrial past.

The Kop van Isselt project site sits precisely between the historical centre of Amersfoort—just fifteen minutes by bicycle—and a more peripheral zone, the future of which remains undefined in terms of urban development. Although numerous urban plans exist for the city (as cited in the documents received), Kop van Isselt marks the end point of a more peripheral reality and simultaneously the beginning of a system close to the historical city centre.

Once again, the project area is “in between” two major systems: the river and the green belt to the south of the site.

The project “In Between” aims to embrace the multiple dimensions of centrality found in both the city of Amersfoort and in the project site. It responds positively to the functional requirements, while promoting a sustainable process both socially and construction-wise.

Being in the middle allows for a clearer and more objective understanding of problems and demands; positioning oneself between multiple systems enhances connections with them, enabling the creation of synergies, and making flows and energies more efficient. This reduces wasted capital, rendering the approach more sustainable and concrete.



Amersfoort lies in a central and privileged position within the Netherlands territory.

Resourcing: Starting from What is Already There

Natural infrastructures once employed for productive purposes in European cities have, in contemporary contexts, been repurposed as leisure infrastructures, consequently increasing the value of surrounding spaces.

Recognising this new contemporary function of natural infrastructures does not mean fully unlocking or maximising their potential qualities. A proper landscape design and accurate urban scale must be implemented to sensibly increase their value, without generating speculative dynamics that would render them exclusive.

“Resourcing” refers to the potential for these two macro-systems to be revitalised and energised through mutual connection. By starting from existing qualities, the overall site can be significantly improved.

Interior view of the NeNaFa Building

Reconnect: 1 System + 1 System = 1 Bigger System

The urban hourglass: the project site connects two enormous systems via a very narrow passage. Like an hourglass, the passage reaches its thinnest point precisely at the location of the three factories to be redeveloped, and then widens again northward along the Eem river and southward towards the green belt running alongside Amsterdamseweg. The landscape project follows this physical and morphological logic, structuring a progression from densely vegetated areas near the river and northern park to increasingly built and mineral elements as one approaches the main square.

The objective is not to create three distinct systems, but rather to unite two existing ones into a stronger macro-system. This new configuration links Kop van Isselt to both the rural and natural context to the west and to the historic centre and newer developments like Nieuwe Stad to the east.

In Between.

Dunes, Islands, Water, a Square: Landscape Project
The landscape design is structured in layers. The riverfront is divided into four main bands, each with different functions and characteristics. The first is the River Shore, allowing close interaction with the water. The stepped seating is designed to counteract potential floods and to reconnect the river level with the city. The second is the movement-oriented band, which features a cycle path on one side and a series of functional islands on the other, equipped with sports structures, leisure amenities, water retention basins, or tree planting areas. These islands become smaller and less dense as they approach the main square, regaining density toward the project's outer edges. The paving in this band varies from reclaimed micro-filtering concrete for the cycle path, to mineral porous surfaces that reduce costs while enabling water filtration and accommodating trees. The final band consists of the dunes. These provide increased privacy between the ground floor residential units and the linear park. The dunes act as sponges, absorbing rainwater for later reuse, and as green hills supporting tree planting to mitigate urban heat islands. Tree planting, public lighting, and street furniture are considered an additional layer, carefully positioned in relation to the others.

Near the factories, the landscape becomes more urban. The paving—entirely salvaged from the former ROVA site—consists of square concrete tiles whose regularity is disrupted by green islands that lower temperatures and reduce heat island effects. The square north of the new building serves as one of the two façades for the Van der Meiden factory and is envisioned as an outdoor extension of the refurbished building. The large roof under the tower signifies an expansion for both factories. Its coverage enables use even on rainy days and offers shade during hot ones. The green islands continue beneath this roof and support lower vegetation. From here, users can access both factories, the Art Incubator, and the residential core via the tower's vertical circulation. This roofed space also functions as a pedestrian and cycle path connecting the northern and southern parts of the site.
To the south, Van der Meiden features an additional outdoor space serving as an extension. Heading further south, greenery regains control of the terrain, forming a small urban forest in front of the New Block.
Unlike the linking structure near the factories, the New Block does not allow the landscape to pass beneath it, as it fulfills a different urban role—acting as a container and boundary for the park.
This completes the landscape strategy by linking to the green belt near Amsterdamseweg.

Reduce: Volumes Placement.
We believe constructing two new volumes atop the two factories is not effective. From a technical perspective, the construction of such volumes—particularly the tower—is highly impractical (would it require partial demolition of the factory?), very costly (what kind of special foundations would be needed to avoid demolishing the heritage structures?), damaging to the existing historical buildings we aim to preserve, and would create unclear ground-floor spaces (how to manage resident access and ground-floor uses?). Furthermore, this would complicate ownership questions (where do property boundaries begin and end?) and covering a shed would be counterintuitive.
Urban planning decisions were heavily influenced by the presence of a new masterplan. Essentially, our context is still to be built, forcing us to design in an unconventional manner without responding to any existing physical elements on the site.
Given that we had to follow the masterplan strictly, the areas adjacent to the factories could not accommodate such large volumes due to distance constraints. We were also concerned that the space between the two factories would become a public space lacking the strength to connect two significant volumes. From the beginning, we saw this space as critical—not only for facilitating movement between the two parks but also for creating synergy between the two factories.
Thus:We demolished as little as possible, aiming to preserve the factories largely intact. This allowed us to retain as much grey energy as possible and to free up key areas of the project site.
Our chosen solution—building a single volume between the two factories—best resolved issues of distance, public space quality and connectivity, construction practicality, and respect for the industrial identity embodied by these structures. The new building functions as an urban infrastructure: the roofed ground floor becomes a vast public space linking the two newly repurposed factories, enhancing possibilities for synergy and interaction. The main connection between the site's northern and southern parts passes beneath this large building, making it part of a much larger system. Landscape and urban scales merge in a constructive element as simple as a roof. Point-like buildings such as towers rarely establish urban relations due to their limited footprint. By placing this volume between two highly characterful buildings and enhancing its urban presence with a large roof, we believe it can successfully host a vibrant public space usable at various times of day.
Opting for a single building reduces organisational and construction complexities.
Positioning the new tower across from the one foreseen in the masterplan helps form a gateway to Amersfoort's historic city along Nijverheidsweg-Noord.
This location also allows the factory volumes to remain entirely unobstructed, making them more visible and better preserving Kop van Isselt's industrial heritage. It gives the district a stronger identity.
The New Block has been conceived to best enclose the green space south of the factories. It functions as a containing wall that shields this park from outside views. A point-like volume as suggested in the brief would have lacked the strength and clarity to define this park. The New Block's volume is extremely simple, yet houses a complex mix of residential typologies, offering an efficient and diverse housing mix. To remain coherent with the masterplan volumes, its height matches that of the neighbouring structure.
The tower presents a "stepped" volumetry. One side is set back from the main square to avoid clashing with the tower planned in the masterplan; this recess creates a terrace overlooking the northern park. On the southern side, a similar step reduces the

tower's impact on the southern park, aligns it with masterplan buildings, and provides another public terrace facing the park.

Reinvent: Factories Reuse Program.

Sustainability also means recognising the value of the built heritage. We are interested in reusing and capitalising on the grey energy stored within existing buildings and in imagining new uses for them.

The decision not to build new volumes atop the factories also allowed us to freely reuse the three factories provided in the brief with clear, coherent programmes.

These industrial buildings are still in excellent structural condition, highly flexible, and allow for a wide variety of uses. The zenithal light from the sheds provides uniform, high-quality illumination.

The competition brief asks for a relatively simple programme: 1,000 sqm for a health centre, 2,500 sqm for a Creative Incubator, and 16,500 sqm of housing.

We propose placing the health centre in the former Nefafa factory. This is the building with the least interaction with the open space linking the two parks, but it relates best to the future buildings of the urban masterplan. Access to the medical offices occurs mostly via an internal passage within the factory, while public functions such as the pharmacy have entrances from the exterior. The area slightly exceeds the required 1,000 sqm, as we retained almost the entire historical structure and included a small medical research lab facing Geldersestraat. All rooms meet requirements for natural lighting and ventilation.

The Van der Meiden factory, instead, will host a more public programme. Its main façades are highly visible from the two parks and naturally invite users to enter and make use of the space. We believe this space is ideal for various temporary (medium- and long-term) uses rooted in the creative or productive identity of Kop van Isselt. These range from markets, exhibition areas, co-working spaces, to showrooms or production areas for the Creative Incubator, located on the first two floors of the tower.

The goal is that with minimal investment in new structures, this space can remain adaptable and serve evolving public and creative needs over time, embodying the dynamic and inclusive spirit of the new neighbourhood. Its industrial identity is preserved while enabling multiple configurations within the open, flexible hall.

The third building, the former ROVA factory, is the most modest in size and lies slightly detached from the other two. We propose to convert it into a small collective housing cluster. Its scale and layout are ideal for cohousing: each unit has a private duplex layout, while the ground floor features shared services such as a laundry, workshop, and communal kitchen. The building's southern exposure and limited height make it highly suitable for this typology. A planted courtyard further enhances the quality of life and sense of community among residents.

This triple reuse strategy allows the three buildings to serve distinct yet complementary roles: care, culture, and living. Each maintains its architectural integrity and contributes actively to the new urban fabric, rather than becoming passive monuments. Their material authenticity and spatial generosity become assets for social integration and identity.

In doing so, we believe that "Reinvent" does not imply denial of the past, but rather an act of care—restoring dignity to forgotten structures while integrating them into the city's future. Through minimal intervention, maximum value is extracted—not only economically and environmentally, but culturally and socially.

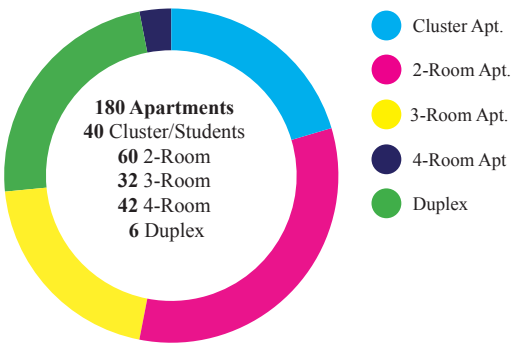
A Tower That Is Also a Public Space: Residential and Creative Incubator.

As previously mentioned, we decided not to build residential units on top of the existing factories. Instead, we distributed the required number of dwellings between a central tower positioned between the two factories and a "New Block" to the south.

For the tower, we developed a vertical stacking of diverse programmes. This strategy required a carefully designed core and a thorough consideration of emergency exits and circulation. The lower two floors accommodate the Creative Incubator, which occupies the bulk of the tower's footprint and faces the Van der Meiden factory. Should this factory be reused as a showroom or production space, its proximity would foster synergy between the two buildings. The generous floorplate allows for great flexibility, enabling various office arrangements and the inclusion of true laboratory spaces.

Gross Floor Area

	New Block	Tower	NeNaFa	Van der Meide	ROVA	Total
Multifunctional Hall [m²]	-	-	-	1.836	-	1.836
Housing [m²]	5.400	8.843	-	-	-	14.243
Creative incubator [m²]	-	1.300	-	-	-	1.300
Health centre [m²]	-	-	1.470	-	-	1.470
Commercial [m²]	900	-	-	-	-	900
Culture [m²]	-	-	-	-	690	690
Total	6.300	10.143	1.470	1.836	690	**20.439**



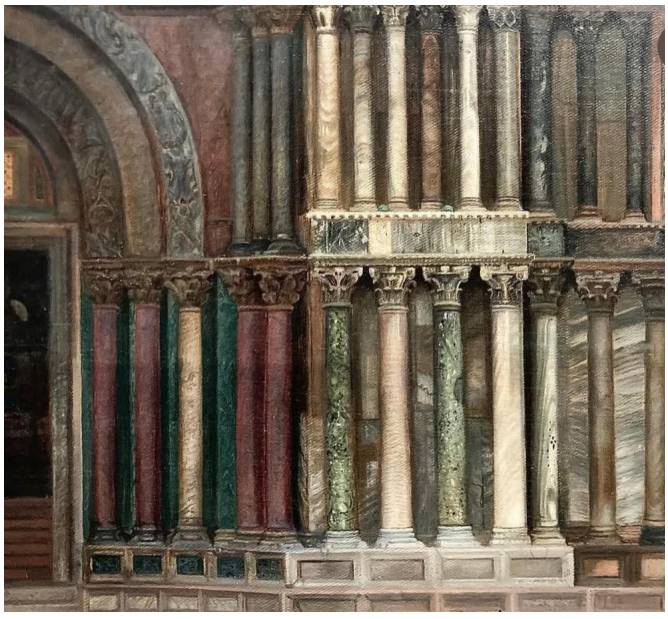
Above the Creative Incubator begins the residential section of the tower, conceived with maximum flexibility and diversity in mind. The repetitive structural system supports a highly adaptable apartment mix, prioritising the most requested types: two-room and three-room units. In the central part of the tower, we introduced cluster dwellings—shared flats that accommoda-

te up to twelve residents, each with private rooms and shared kitchens and amenities. This model is particularly suited to students and young professionals seeking affordable housing close to employment hubs like the Creative Incubator.

The presence of a wide range of housing typologies, including unconventional formats like clusters, promotes social diversity and long-term sustainability.
Integrating housing and the Creative Hub within the same building facilitates interaction between residents and creative professionals, encouraging community-building and networking opportunities.

"Cheaper, Happier, More Productive": Housing Construction and Residential Mix
One of the project's key goals is to enable affordable construction. This principle informed several design decisions, both for the tower and the New Block.
The first decision was to avoid building directly on top of the factories. Doing so would increase construction costs, complicate foundation works, and risk damaging the historic structures. Even the underground car parks, although located beneath the tower and the New Block, maintain a buffer distance from the factory walls. This strategy simplifies excavation and allows direct access from the parking areas to the Creative Incubator.
The second decision was to adopt a fully prefabricated construction system. This significantly reduces costs and construction time, while also making the building potentially demountable and reusable in the future.
To minimise structural spans, the tower is supported by a primary system of prefabricated concrete beams and columns, with floors of 7.2m x 8.1m repeating every two storeys. A secondary steel structure provides intermediate support every floor (3.6m x 4.05m), facilitating phased occupation and programmatic flexibility.
Both the tower and the New Block exclude timber construction for two main reasons. First, the current cost of timber structures in the Netherlands is too high to deliver affordable, inclusive housing for middle- and low-income groups. Second, for buildings over 20 metres, fire safety and structural codes make timber more challenging to implement. Resolving these issues would increase both costs and regulatory complexity, as well as result in thicker structural elements. Therefore, we opted for well-known, entirely prefabricated systems to streamline construction and control costs.

Beyond Recycling: Material Reuse.
In today's context, recycling—though a step toward sustainability—still requires energy. Whenever possible, we opted to reuse materials directly without transformation.
All public space pavements around the factories and the tower reuse approximately 9,000 sqm of 2x2 metre prefabricated concrete tiles sourced from the ROVA recycling centre. Urban furniture elements were created by repurposing concrete retaining walls from the same facility.
Cycle paths within the landscape design are made from recycled concrete, obtained by crushing materials from the demolished factory buildings in Kop van Isselt.
The dunes in the landscape serve as topographic features built using non-recyclable (but non-toxic) waste materials, reducing transport costs and energy consumption.
From the factory demolitions on and around our site, we salvaged profiled metal panels from five buildings. After repainting, these were used to clad the entire tower, generating a visually varied façade rhythm.
Due to the absence of an accurate, updated survey of the surrounding factories, we cannot confirm the exact availability of reusable materials. However, our ambition is to apply salvaged building components, including for interior partitions in the new developments.
This local resourcing approach reduces shipping and production costs, despite a possible increase in demolition and compliance-related expenses. Nonetheless, we strongly believe that reusing such components plays a vital role in establishing an economically, ecologically, and socially sustainable neighbourhood.



Facade detail of St. Mark Cathedral in Venice, which was partly built with reused columns or other decorative elements belonging to bizantine, egyptian or other buildings of the time.