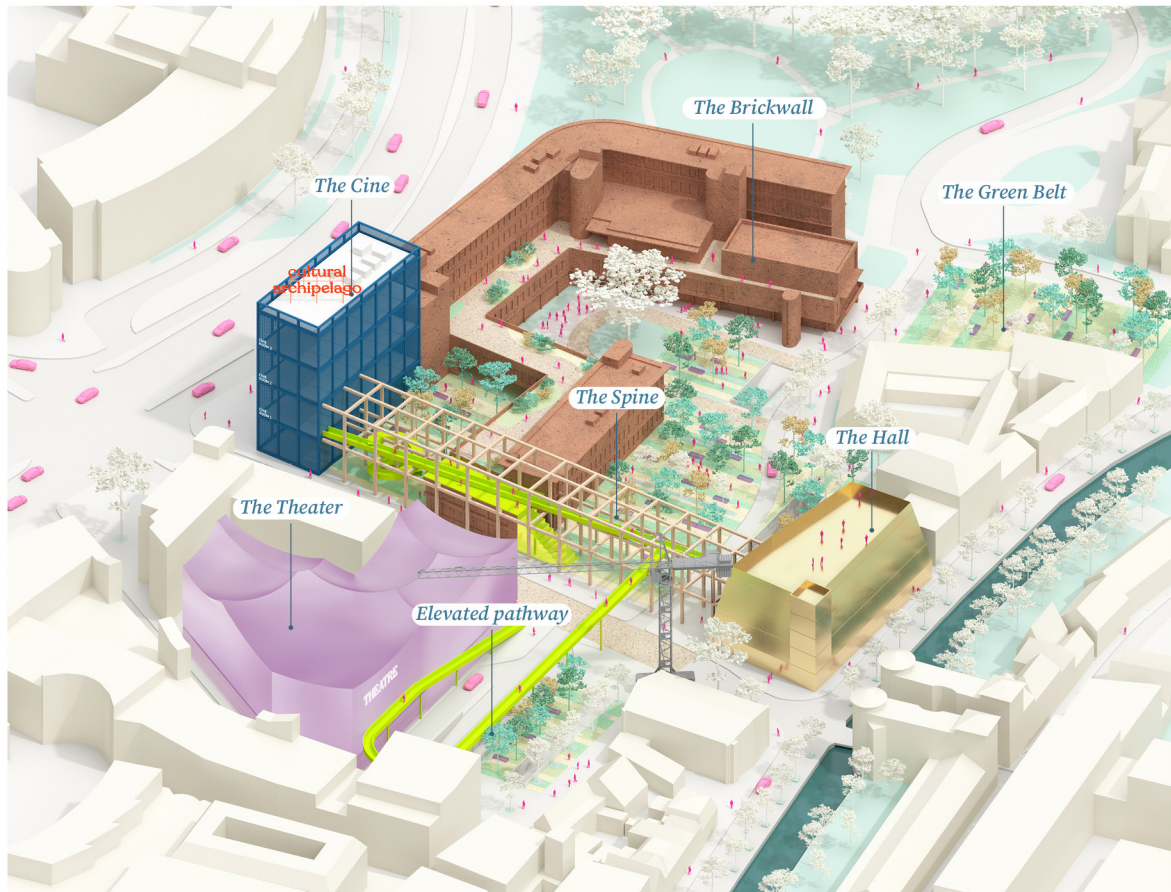


Cultural Archipelago

Reactivating the Existing, Reconfiguring Memory, Remaking Culture



Cultural Archipelago envisions Amersfoort's new cultural district as a *diffused network of urban islands*—each rooted in the transformation of existing buildings and linked by a walkable cultural pathway. This constellation of spaces promotes urban vitality, enables inclusive participation, and strengthens relationships with the surrounding context. Rather than concentrating all functions into a single massive structure and erasing the past, the project proposes a distributed model that embraces heterogeneity encouraging interaction, fosters synergies, and activates the city at multiple scales.

This approach builds upon the existing city fabric and its memories, offering a new model of urban renewal focused on adaptability, diversity, sustainability and care. The district then becomes a dynamic cultural ecosystem, welcoming established institutions such as **Flint Theater**, **Theater De Lieve Vrouw**, **FLUOR**, and **KOSMIK**, while weaving them into a flexible framework that accommodates new uses and emerging actors.

The project evolves through three major phases—**RE-ACTIVATE**, **RE-CONFIGURE**, and **RE-MAKE**—each unlocking the latent potential of the site across time. These

phases compose a living system that accommodates growth, change, and overlapping programs.

Throughout these phases, **The Brickwall**, the former city hall by Antoon van Kranendonk, will maintain its civic role but it will also evolve into a **cultural hub**. Its generous volume will host public services, exhibitions, coworking spaces, and **activities open to citizens, along with spaces available for rent** to entrepreneurs, academies, and cultural producers—ensuring public management, long-term economical sustainability, and accessibility; at the same time it will attract new stakeholders together with the more established ones.

Buildings are not only preserved, they are transformed with intention. From the actual tower it will born **The Cine**, a new vertical hub for cinema and digital media; **The Hall**, the former corner building is restructured to house a 500-seat hall and creative production facilities; and **The Theater** is built with reclaimed materials from the building currently standing on Molenstraat, establishing a new home for the big theater hall of 1000 seats becoming a new landmark for Amersfoort's cultural future.

At the heart of the district, **The Spine** and its elevated pathway offers a cultural promenade that connects all buildings of the Archipelago. This linear structure opens new public and panoramic views, links rooftops and terraces, and hosts artistic and civic events—becoming a key infrastructure for movement, encounter, and shared experience.

At ground level, a renewed public landscape replaces impermeable surfaces with native vegetation, permeable paving, and pedestrian pathways. **Biodiversity and microclimates are enhanced**, enabling outdoor public activities while fostering humans and non-humans coexistence. This design reclaims the memory of the former green belt and promotes a more porous and livable urban ground.

Cultural Archipelago offers a district that evolves over time, welcomes urbanity, and reinforces identity. **It establishes a condition where architecture, landscape, heritage and culture are deeply intertwined**—generating a place that is open, sustainable, and grounded in the values of community and continuity while making city.



PHASE 1

RE-ACTIVATE

Adaptive Reuse of the existing building and public space
(Year 1-3)

The first phase of the project is rooted in the decision to preserve and re-activate **The Brickwall** into a cultural cornerstone while maintaining its historic civic role. The building's geometry and height directly reference Amersfoort's lost second medieval wall, transforming it into a modern ruin that anchors layers of urban memory. RE-ACTIVATE begins with the recognition of the building's historical and architectural value, and with the belief that, especially today, preserving and reusing existing

structures should be the priority, with the environmental urgency, the goal to reduce emissions, and the will of maintain heritage. So, as opposed to the vision of including temporary uses in this structure before its eventual demolition, RE-ACTIVATE is to **permanently adapt the building**, allowing it to host stable cultural, educational, and civic functions, reinforcing a sense of continuity and identity.

Interventions are primarily internal, designed to accommodate new programs while respecting the existing structure. **Interior layouts are reconfigured for flexibility and accessibility**, making room for a neighborhood library, congress halls, community offices, co-working spaces, temporary galleries, classrooms, small-scale theatres (300, 150, 100, and 100 seats), and small scale cinema rooms, **offering flexible environments for both public initiatives and private actors**. Managed publicly, these rentable spaces generate economic sustainability while supporting creativity and inclusion.

The transformation enhances the building's usability without compromising its architectural character and relation with the existing urban layout.

Simultaneously, the surrounding public space undergoes **ecological regeneration**: surface parking and impermeable paving are removed and replaced with permeable surfaces, local vegetation, and pedestrian-friendly paths. Even The Brickwall participates in this regeneration breathing new life into its large terrace, turning it into a green and public connection with the rest of the project. This landscape reintroduces the **memory of the green belt** that once was the area, reclaiming the site as a porous and livable public ground. Importantly, while surface parking is eliminated to create a more pedestrian-centered and ecological environment, the existing underground parking structure is preserved and remains in operation, ensuring functional continuity for mobility and accessibility needs of the city and the Archipelago.



RE-ACTIVATE therefore operates on both architecture and soil, articulating a **new balance between the built and the natural**. It is an intentional gesture—a rejection of obsolescence and an affirmation of adaptation. In doing so, it positions permanence not as stagnation, but as a future-oriented act of care, putting the first phase as the foundation of the Cultural Archipelago, anchoring the site's memory while initiating its transformation.

visibility.

The Hall is entirely restructured to house a new 500-seat theatre with a new skin and improved openings, activating its ground floor and creating a stronger dialogue with the urban context. Together, these three volumes join forces with The Brickwall to form a small cultural city based on the previous, heterogeneous, layout—a dense, multi-layered node where movement, events, and daily life coexist.

The second phase also serves to establish a new architectural threshold for the city. The redefined façades are designed to form a recognizable identity — a contemporary gateway to Amersfoort's historic core. This architectural composition, while preserving the footprint and urban memory of the existing complex, introduces a new civic frontage. It embodies a visual landmark, one that symbolically frames the passage from the outer city into the cultural archipelago and then into the historic city. The public realm is finalized through the completion of the urban park and the complete removal of surface parking, replaced by green infrastructure and slow mobility paths.

RE-CONFIGURE is thus an act of urban rewriting. It embraces complexity and stratification instead of erasing them. By shifting thresholds, exposing structures, and enhancing existing relationships, the intervention reframes these buildings as active contributors to the city's cultural ecosystem. It proposes a model of transformation that is both economical and poetic: one that challenges the tabula rasa approach and instead fosters a richer, more interconnected urban condition intertwined with memory' stratification.

PHASE 2

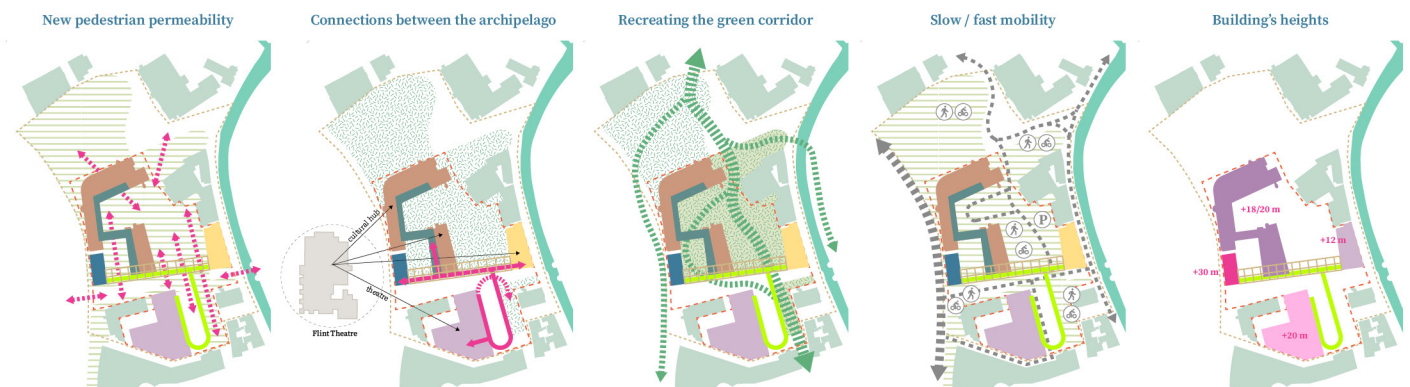
RE-CONFIGURE

Structural Reuse with transformation of the envelopes and spatial identity

(Year 3-6)

The second phase focuses on the transformation of the Molenstraat street profile. This ensemble consists of three distinct yet connected volumes: **The Spine** (the bridge building), **The Cine** (the tower), and **The Hall** (the corner building). The approach is to preserve the existing volumes and radically reconfigure their meaning, functions, and interaction with the city.

The Spine, once an architectural and urban barrier, is completely hollowed out. Its load-bearing structure is preserved and repurposed as an open public infrastructure — a permeable urban connector that visually and physically reopens the site. The Cine is transformed into a vertical cultural landmark: it houses cinema halls, public terraces, and event spaces. Its floors are restructured, and the envelope is renewed to enhance performance and



PHASE 3

RE-MAKE

Material Reuse through circular demolition and rebuilding

(Year 6-9)

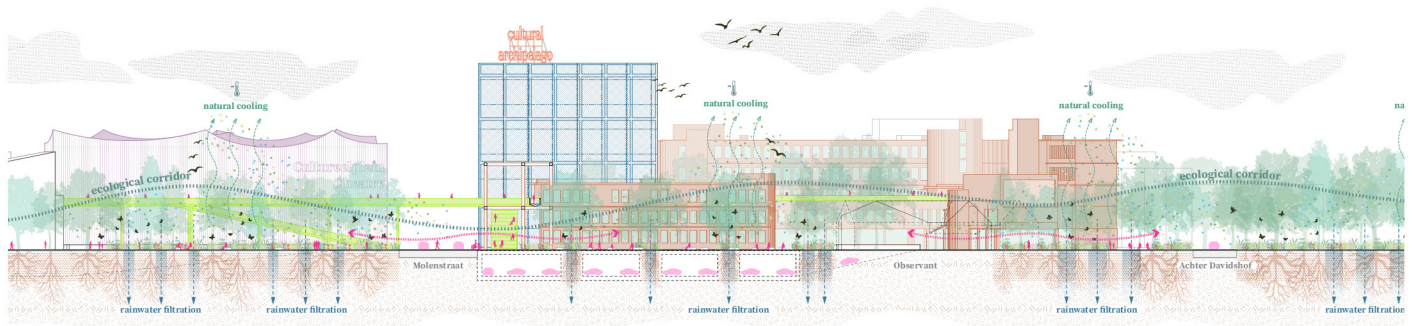
The third and final main phase of the project centers on the transformation of **The Theatre**, the building currently designated for immediate demolition. It is proposed to recycle it as the structural and material base for the new Theater to activate a circular reuse. This move **reverses the narrative of obsolescence** and embraces reuse as an architectural opportunity and cultural act.

The existing building is **selectively deconstructed**, then expanded through a system of new additions made of lightweight structures—steel frames, laminated timber, prefabricated panels—that articulate **a new architectural language**. These additions wrap and sit atop the base of the existing volume, creating new space to hosts a 1000-seat theater hall with a ceiling height of 25 m which allow for a generous main theatre space, the stage tower and technical installations and systems.

The materials recovered from selective demolition are reintegrated into the new design: reused as cladding, outdoor furniture, scenographic features, and tactile surfaces that preserve traces of the site's past. This **circular strategy** reveals the project's constructive history, transforming residual matter into narrative architecture, while reducing CO2 consumption.

A key feature of this phase is the construction of an **elevated pathway** that enhances the structural skeleton of The Spine. This pathway becomes a new urban device, **a bridge between the past, the present and the future**: it integrates ramps, platforms, gardens, and public seating, transforming a former barrier into a connective infrastructure. **It links all four buildings** of the Cultural Archipelago, creating a walkable and continuous **cultural and panoramic promenade**. Furthermore, the elevated path connects directly to the public terrace of The Brickwall, extends across the adjacent street, and lands on The Theatre, forming a soft bridge over existing infrastructural complexities. This strategic gesture addresses the fragmented condition of Hellestraat square while bypassing the costly and disruptive relocation of existing private underground parking ramps. By elevating circulation above them, it preserves critical access for deliveries and visitors, **avoiding major economic losses and enabling urban revitalization with minimal conflict**. The elevated path thus offers a refined and economical solution to a complex urban context, **prioritizing continuity over rupture**.

RE-MAKE, ultimately, is both a poetic and political act. **To remake is to regenerate and to transition**. It is about transforming architectural remnants into carriers of new meaning—where matter is not wasted but reimagined, and where architecture becomes a medium for memory, sustainability, and future cultural life.



View of the new gateway to Amersfoort's historic core from the Stadsring