

## In Search of Suburban Productive Landscapes

Vitalizing to the Core of the Garden City of the Twenty-First Century



The project site next to the central area at the core of post-war neighbourhood Groot IJsselmonde

Photos by Frank Hanswijk

**SCALES:** L/S - urban + architecture / architecture + context

**TEAM REPRESENTATIVE:** architect / urbanist / landscaper

**SITE FAMILY:** IMPLANTING - Productive uses

**LOCATION:** Rotterdam, Groot IJsselmonde

**POPULATION:** 650,000 inhabitants (Rotterdam)

**STRATEGIC SITE:** 125 ha **PROJECT SITE:** 6.7 ha

**SITE PROPOSED BY:** Municipality of Rotterdam

**ACTOR(S) INVOLVED:** Municipality of Rotterdam

**OWNER(S) OF THE SITE:** Mix of public and private ownership

**COMMISSION AFTER COMPETITION:** Design (or research-by-design) assignment on implementation at the project site (or a site with similar characteristics) commissioned by the municipality of Rotterdam

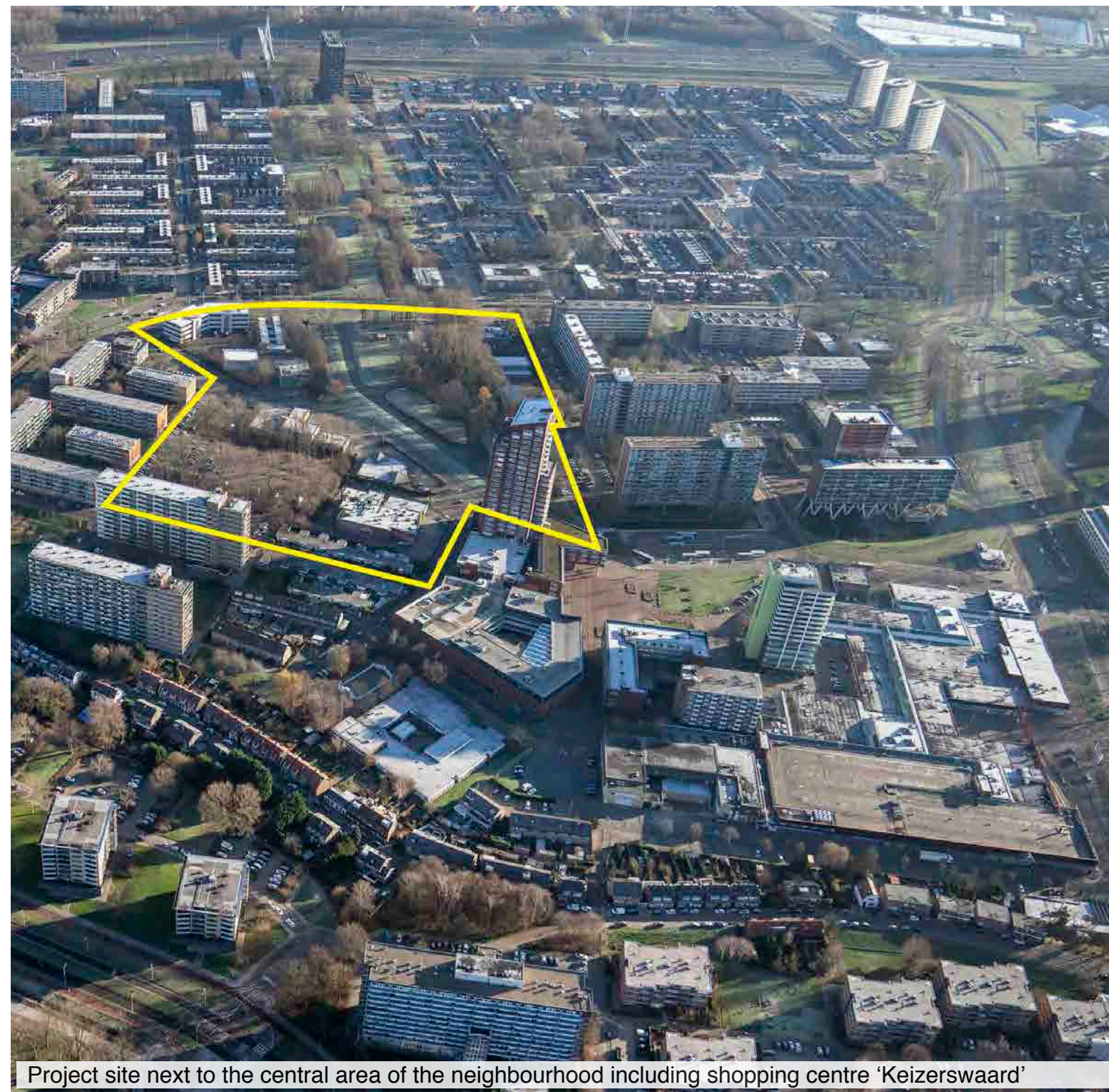
and/or private partners

**HOW CAN THE SITE CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRODUCTIVE CITY?** Urban dynamics in peripheral post-war neighbourhoods are relatively low due to their monofunctional setup and the lack of new spatial developments. Support for communal services is under pressure because of the ageing population and the decrease in the number of inhabitants per house. However, these common places could become a strong asset to making them 21<sup>st</sup> century proof. In the original set up, Groot IJsselmonde had to provide a quiet counterbalance to the modern, complex society, allowing a growing child to gradually find its way in life and the workers to find peace and quietness after long days at work. The dominant green landscape formed an important backbone of these

social intentions. Building on this anthroposophical view on spatial planning, the aim is to transform the central area into an easily accessible healthy work-learn-and-live environment, attracting and fostering young generations as drivers of new economic activities.

**CITY STRATEGY** The City of Rotterdam seeks opportunities in the combination of accommodating its growth and reactivating urban life in peripheral post-war neighbourhoods. The aim is to attract and retain residents, in particular young generations, to improve the socioeconomic status, to diversify the composition of population and to stimulate healthy and productive suburban living. Density is part of the city's strategy, but to make Groot IJsselmonde 21<sup>st</sup> century proof a new mix of functions is crucial to spark productive interaction milieus and to create social





Project site next to the central area of the neighbourhood including shopping centre 'Keizerswaard'

anchors for the next economy. The City of Rotterdam believes that the resurgence of the central area is key to setting this transition in motion.

**SITE DEFINITION** Groot IJsselmonde in the south of Rotterdam is an archetype of a post-war neighbourhood built in the early 1960s. It is green, watery, spacious and easily accessible by car and public transport. The central area is typical in its paradoxical combination of low vitality, rather outdated communal services, and the presence of a well-connected but currently underused public transport hub. The project site is next to, and could become part of, the central area and consists of a large open green space and a couple of small-scale building blocks. The challenge is to develop a spatial strategy implementing a new mix of functions on site to revitalize the local economy, while rethin-

king the role of a suburban landscape, communal facilities in a central area, and other characteristics of the post-war neighbourhood philosophy in the perspective of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## HOW IS PRODUCTION CONSIDERED IN THE URBAN DIVERSITY PROGRAM?

Rotterdam is growing. The city aims to build 50,000 new homes in the next decade and to vigorously enhance the quality and energy performance of the existing built environment. Rotterdam is looking for 'good growth': building a compact, circular, productive, healthy and inclusive city with equal opportunities and high quality of living for everyone. It aims to be a vibrant and welcoming place for people of all walks of life, ages and beliefs, enabling them to prosper. Citizens of Rotterdam should be able to live productive lives by working,

learning, caring or in any other way contributing to the development of the city and its narratives. Therefore, it is important to remove barriers, to increase connectivity. Europaan15 focusses on sites that might catalyse opportunities on multiple levels, places of meaning that might enhance the city's social resiliency. These are some of the abstract notions rooted in the new Rotterdam vision and regulatory framework on spatial and socioeconomic developments, called the *Omgevingsvisie*. This framework is currently being drafted by the municipality. It should accelerate innovative spatial solutions and sustainable socioeconomic developments. It is supported by an extensive participatory process and an action research program. The Europaan15 sites have been selected to implement this process, through research-by-design and its aim of implementing exemplary projects.



# Europan 15 – Rotterdam (NL)







Typical closed ground floor of shopping centre 'Keizerswaard' in the central area of the neighbourhood



Perspective from the project site (right border) towards the central area of the neighbourhood



Next to shopping centre: public transport hub (metro and bus), post-war and award-winning architecture



Perspective from the project site (left border) towards the central area of the neighbourhood