



Activating Urban Commons in the Productive City
Transforming an Industrial Port Area into a Circular Urban Makers District

Merwe-Vierhavens, a port area in transition to Makers District

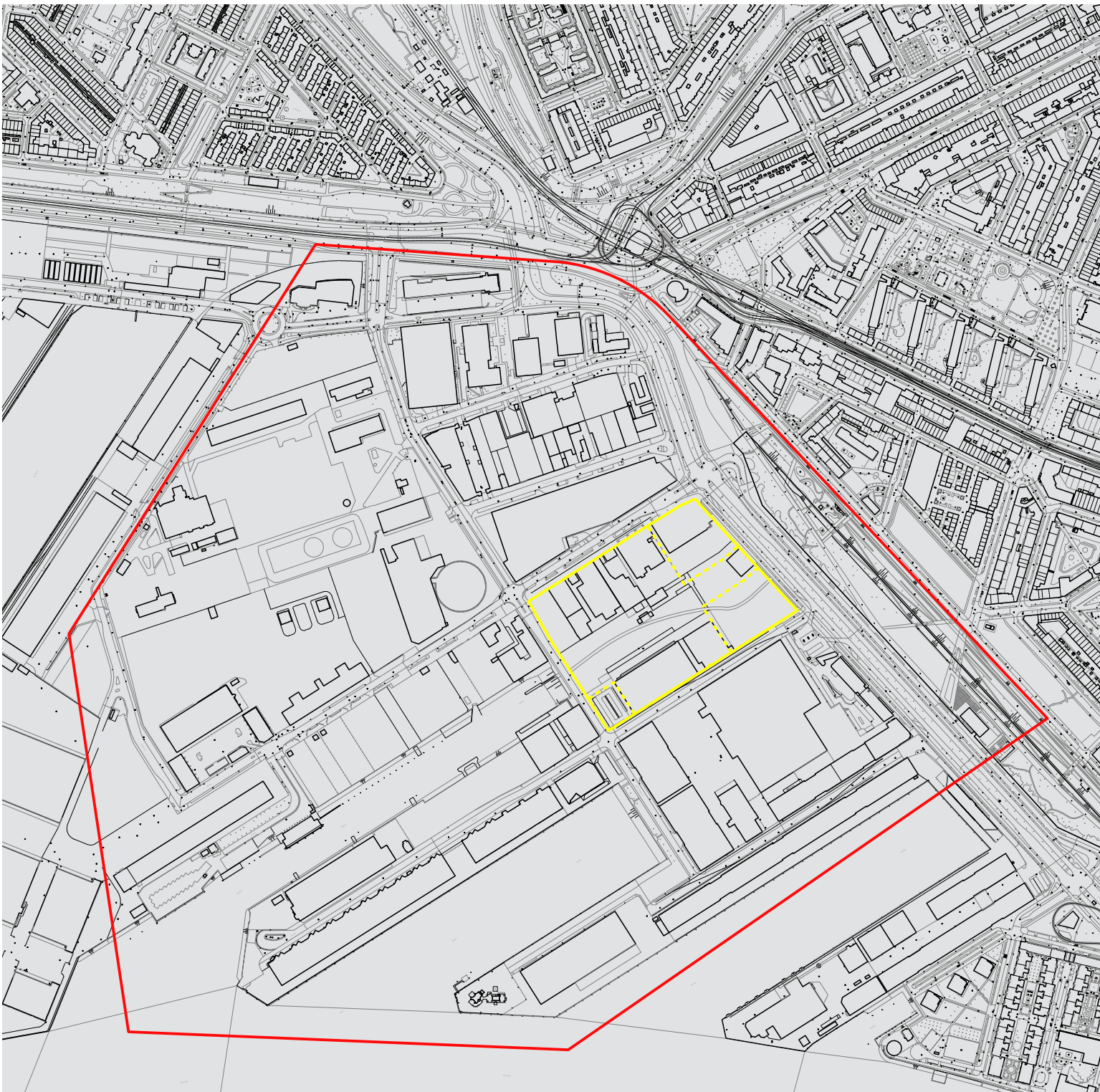
Photos by Frank Hanswijk

SCALES: L/S - urban + architecture / architecture + context
TEAM REPRESENTATIVE: architect / urbanist
SITE FAMILY: CHANGING METABOLISM – Multiplying and connecting agencies
LOCATION: Rotterdam , Merwe-Vierhavens, Vierhavensblok
POPULATION: 650,000 inhabitants (Rotterdam)
STRATEGIC SITE: 92.2 ha **PROJECT SITE:** 5.5 ha
SITE PROPOSED BY: Municipality of Rotterdam
ACTOR(S) INVOLVED: Municipality of Rotterdam, creative partners based on site
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? Creativity and entrepreneurship are interconnected and they are, as drivers of the next economy, given space to grow in Rotterdam, in particular in the city’s port area. Merwe-Vierhavens (M4H) will be transformed as part of the larger Makers District, mixing new manufacturing industry, urban facilities, housing, culture and a circular economy. This combination of functions lays the foundation for innovative interaction milieus, attracting and retaining the people needed to shape the productive city and port of the future.

CITY STRATEGY The City of Rotterdam seeks opportunities in the combination of accommodating its growth, shaping the transition from traditional industry to the next economy, and creating a more sustainable, and thus circular, city. Building on a long tradition of architectural experiments and engineering the urban metabolism of the city and its port, it now calls on citizens to contribute collectively to smart circular solutions for innovative work-and-live environments, while contributing to the renewal of the port area. To guide this process, the City of Rotterdam developed eight leading principles for sustainable area developments. A recurring question is: What is the right scale for such circular infrastructures? In the case of this project site this question is reversed, asking for a prototype showing which circular infrastructures are suitable, both technically and financially, on the scale of this site.



SITE DEFINITION The project site, called Vierhavensblok, is located within the M4H area. It is characterized by a mix of solitary industrial buildings and halls, situated around a large open collective space. In the near future, new work-and-live typologies will be inserted that provide space for crafts and creative manufacturing businesses as well as high quality housing. Affordability of workspaces and collectivity as the basis for circularity are two important starting points for these new developments. The challenge is to densify the site with new circular building blocks where working and living meet; building blocks that are inextricably linked to the ‘flows’ and values present on site and embody the notion of a circular city, and that offer affordable spaces in which to work and with which to attract and maintain the (starting) creative and cultural entrepreneurs.

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. European15 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 European15 sites have been selected to implement this process, through research-by-design and its aim of implementing exemplary projects.

European 15 – Rotterdam (NL)





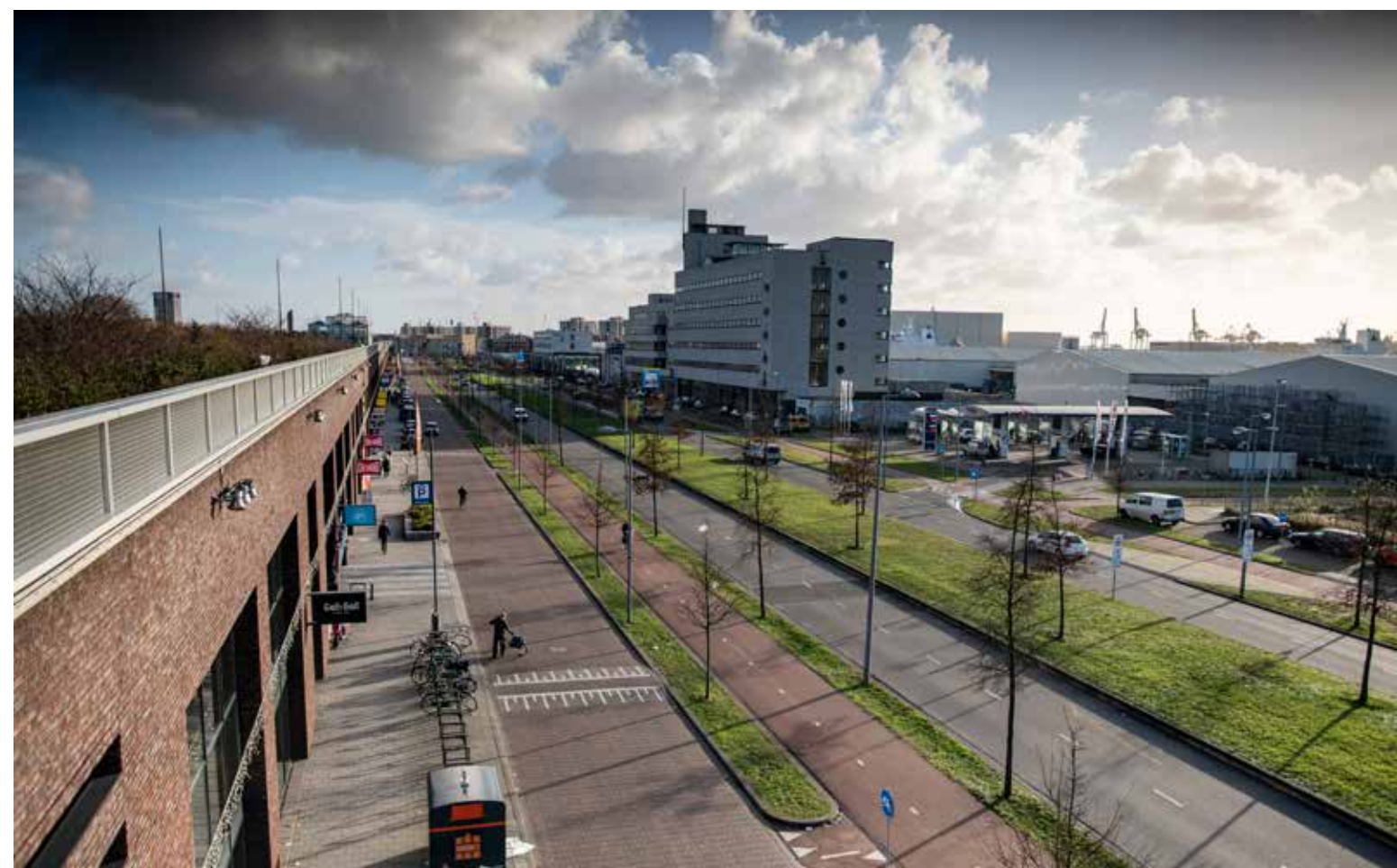
Large open shared space in the centre of the project site



Typical streetview on the borders of the project site



Perspective on the project site from the 'Dakpark'



Infrastructure inbetween the 'Strip' (left) and the Merwe-Vierhavens (right)