Rebalancing the city

Redistributing Urban Space in Amsterdam-Zuid Oost Through the 15-Minute City Concept



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Motivation

As a postman, I move daily through neighborhoods at walking and cycling speed, which makes it clear how often these road users are disadvantaged. Missing links, wide roads, and car-dominated junctions restrict their movement and safety.

In Amsterdam Zuid-Oost, this issue is very visible. The area clearly post-war modernist planning, built around the car with wide infrastructures, separated functions, and a suburban layout. What was once considered progressive now shows obstacles for active mobility and local life.

This stands in sharp contrast to the principles of the 15-minute city, which focuses on proximity, mixed use, and human scale. Zuid-Oost therefore forms an overlooked yet highly relevant case to explore how car-focused neighborhoods can be reimagined into more accessible and sustainable urban environments.

1.

Problematization & Theory

1.1 History: Roots of the issues
1.2 Problem field
1.3 Spatial justice
1.4 15 Minute city concept
1.5 Why connect the two
1.6 Problem statement

This chapter introduces the background and theoretical framework of the project. It begins by outlining the historical development of Amsterdam Zuid-Oost to show how past planning choices have shaped the neighborhood as it exists today. From there, it turns to the present situation, describing the main challenges in accessibility, mobility, and the quality of public space.

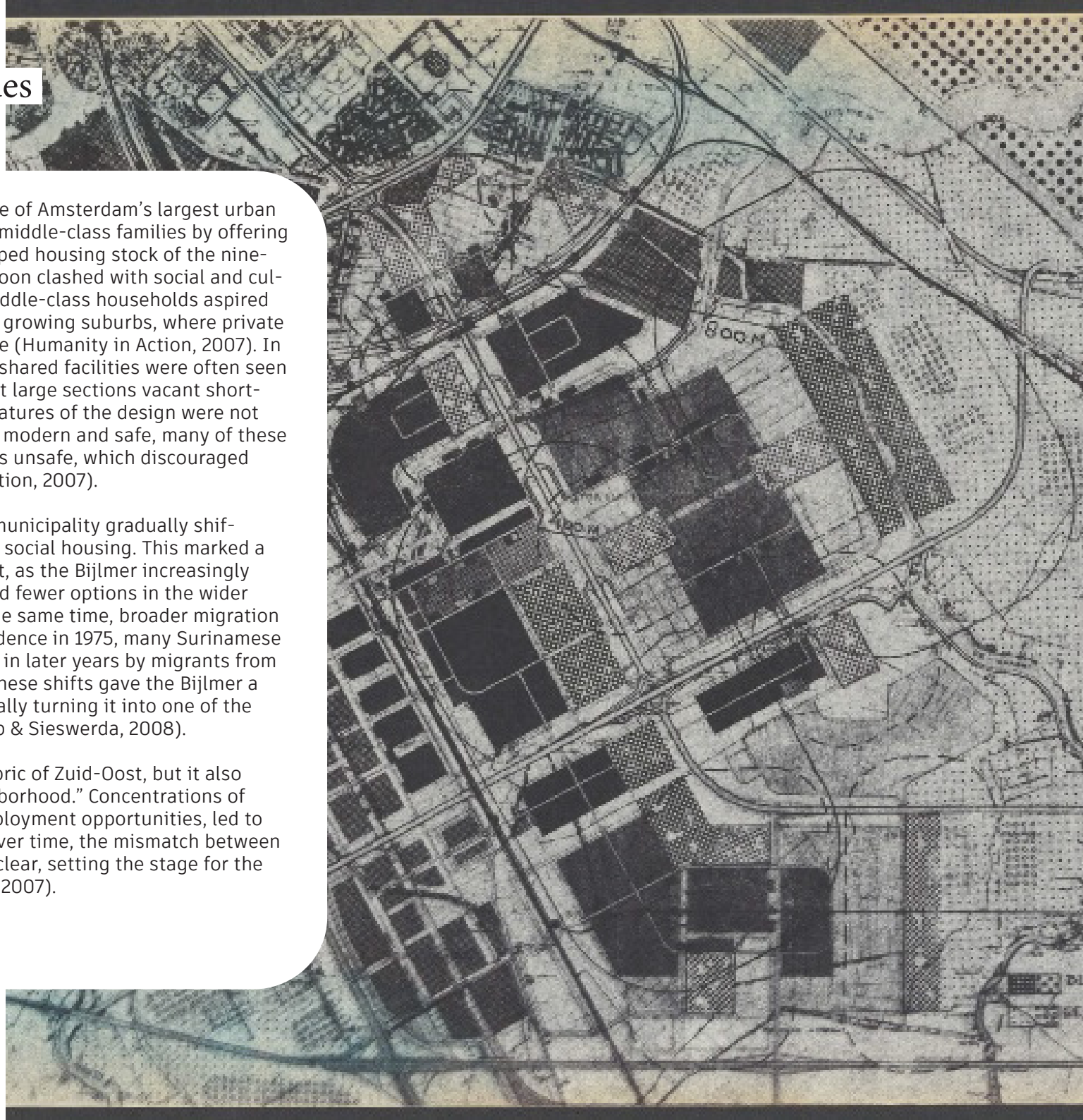
To frame these challenges, the chapter then introduces the theoretical concepts that guide the project. Spatial justice is presented as a way to understand fairness in the distribution of urban space, while the 15-minute city offers a practical model for organizing neighborhoods around proximity and accessibility. Together, these perspectives provide the basis for defining the central problem, which is formulated at the end of the chapter in the problem statement.

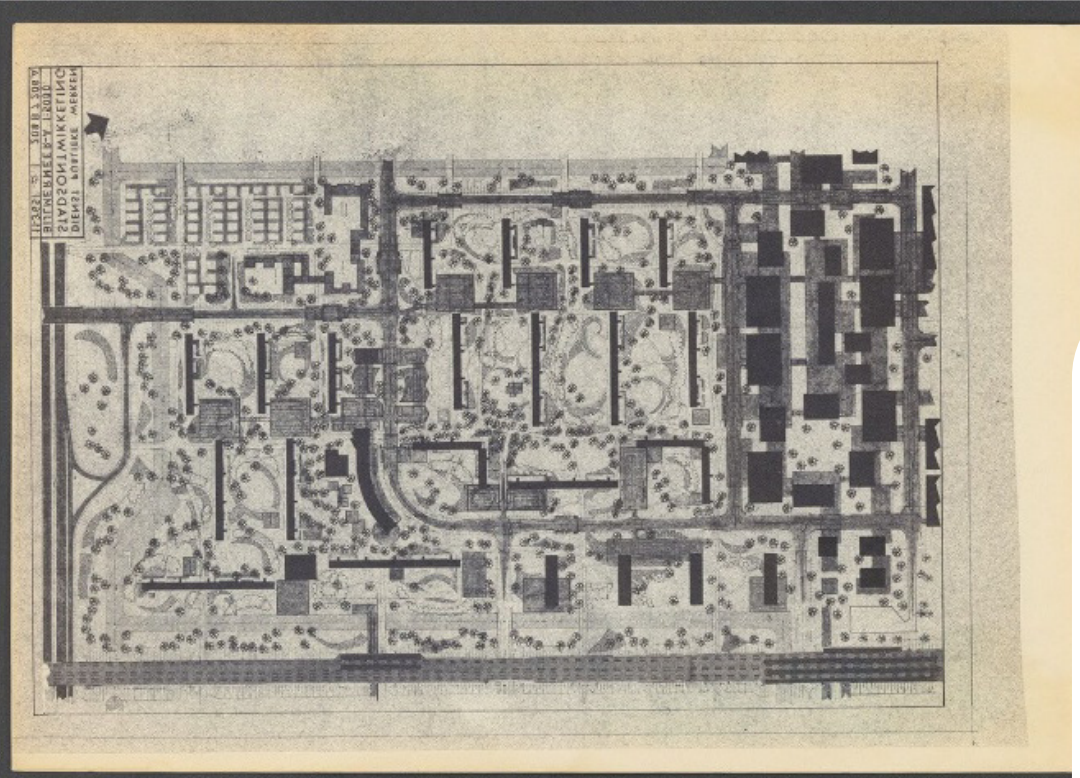
1.1 History: Roots of the issues

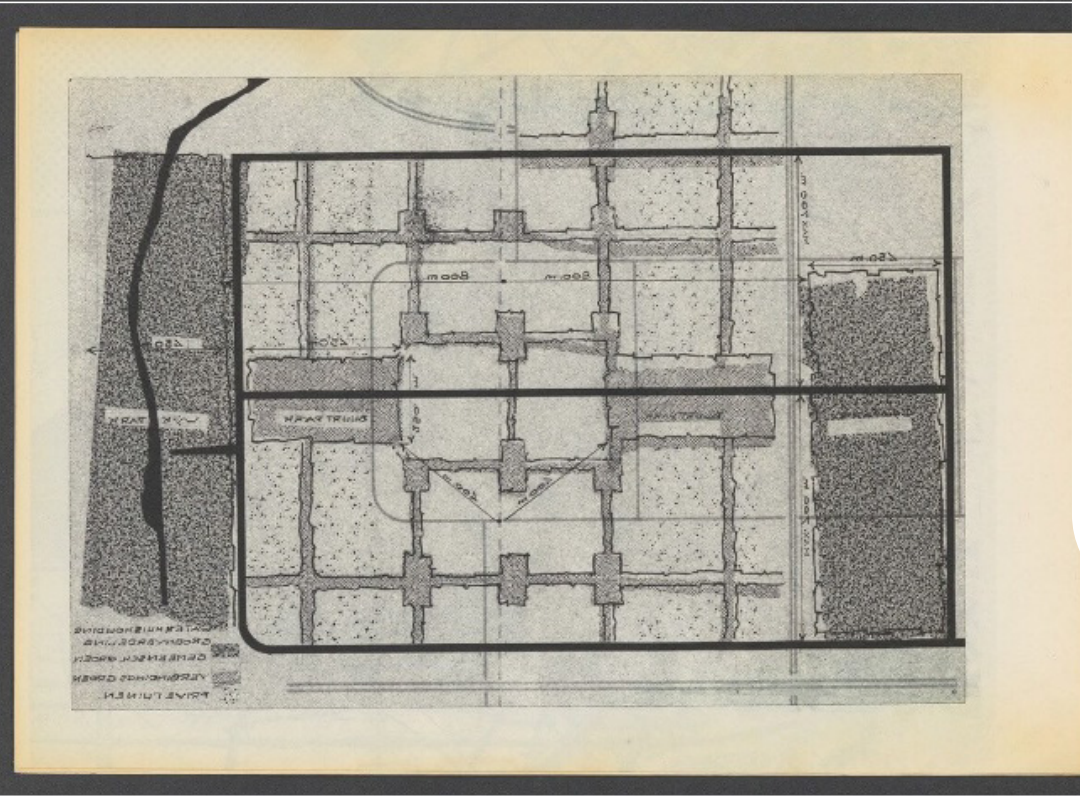
Zuid-Oost was built in the 1960s and 1970s as one of Amsterdam's largest urban expansion projects. The ambition was to attract middle-class families by offering them a spacious, modern alternative to the cramped housing stock of the nineteenth-century inner city. This vision, however, soon clashed with social and cultural housing preferences of the period. Many middle-class households aspired to move into low-rise single-family homes in the growing suburbs, where private gardens and more individual space were available (Humanity in Action, 2007). In contrast, the Bijlmer's high-rise apartments and shared facilities were often seen as impersonal. The overestimation of demand left large sections vacant shortly after completion. Moreover, the progressive features of the design were not always experienced positively. Instead of feeling modern and safe, many of these spaces appeared empty, anonymous, and at times unsafe, which discouraged potential residents even further (Humanity in Action, 2007).

To deal with the large number of vacancies, the municipality gradually shifted allocations from middle-class targets toward social housing. This marked a turning point in the neighborhood's development, as the Bijlmer increasingly became home to low-income households who had fewer options in the wider housing market (Humanity in Action, 2007). At the same time, broader migration flows shaped the area: after Suriname's independence in 1975, many Surinamese families found affordable housing here, followed in later years by migrants from Ghana, Nigeria, the Antilles, and other regions. These shifts gave the Bijlmer a new role as an entry point for newcomers, gradually turning it into one of the most diverse districts of Amsterdam (Oostendorp & Sieswerda, 2008).

This diversity enriched the social and cultural fabric of Zuid-Oost, but it also reinforced the area's stigma as a "problem neighborhood." Concentrations of poverty, combined with limited facilities and employment opportunities, led to associations with crime, neglect, and disorder. Over time, the mismatch between modernist ideals and everyday realities became clear, setting the stage for the large-scale renewal project (Humanity in Action, 2007).







The Bijlmermeer was developed under the influence of modernist urban planning principles. These principles sought to create urban environments that were functional, efficient, and rational, guided by the belief that large-scale design and technological progress could solve social problems. Modernist planning emphasized strict zoning, large infrastructures, and high-rise housing blocks set within expansive green areas (Helleman & Wassenberg, 2004)
Although the vision aimed to improve living conditions by offering light, air, and space in carefully structured neighborhoods, the outcome was more complex. The large scale and rigid separation of functions created environments that were often monotonous and disconnected from everyday urban life. Instead of fostering equality, these spatial arrangements contributed to new forms of social and spatial inequity, particularly as the housing stock shifted from middle-class aspirations to low-income allocations (Helleman & Wassenberg, 2004). The lack of small-scale, human-centered design elements—such as lively street fronts, accessible facilities, and informal meeting spaces—further reinforced a sense of isolation. Over time, the high-rise blocks became stigmatized, associated with poverty, crime, and neglect (Helleman & Wassenberg, 2004).

In this way, the Bijlmermeer illustrates both the ambition and the shortcomings of modernist planning. Its design reflected optimism about shaping society through architecture, yet it also exposed the limits of top-down, technocratic approaches when confronted with the realities of urban social life. The very ideals of order and efficiency that inspired the project ultimately clashed with the need for adaptability, diversity, and social embeddedness in everyday urban experience (Helleman & Wassenberg, 2004)

While the original modernist dream largely failed, the legacy of this planning experiment continues to define Zuid-Oost, making it a unique case for studying both the promises and shortcomings of post-war urban design.

1.2 Problem field

There is unequal access to daily amenities for active mobility users compared to car users.

In Zuid-Oost, urban space is disproportionately allocated to car infrastructure. Wide roads, oversized intersections, and large-scale parking facilities dominate the landscape, consuming valuable land that could otherwise serve local facilities or public space. This car-oriented design produces more than just visual and spatial dominance: it creates physical barriers in the daily lives of residents (Gehl, 2010). Pedestrians and cyclists often encounter long and unsafe crossing distances, detours around traffic arteries, or sudden interruptions in walking and cycling routes. What might seem efficient for drivers translates into fragmentation and inconvenience for those who rely on active mobility. As a result, moving on foot or by bike is not only less comfortable, but also less safe and less attractive than driving.

For residents without access to a car—often lower-income households, young people, and elderly residents—the consequences are even bigger (Martens, 2017). Daily activities such as grocery shopping, reaching schools, visiting healthcare facilities, or participating in community life require greater effort, longer travel times, and higher levels of personal risk. In practice, this means that those most dependent on local accessibility are the ones who face the greatest obstacles.

The outcome is a structural imbalance in accessibility: car users benefit from seamless connections, clear signage, and continuous routes, while pedestrians and cyclists are confronted with fragmented networks and physical barriers. This imbalance does not arise from individual choices but from planning decisions that prioritize car mobility over active forms of transport Harvey, 1992) . Moreover, the dominance of cars in streets and other public spaces undermines spatial quality. Rows of parked vehicles block sightlines, reduce the sense of openness, and limit possibilities for greenery, play areas, and social meeting places. Streets that could serve as safe and attractive environments for daily interaction are instead dominated by traffic and parking. In this way, car presence not only disadvantages active mobility but also lowers the livability and social potential of public space.

This unequal access and loss of spatial quality together represent a form of spatial injustice in the urban environment. Addressing the problem requires not only investing in continuous and safe infrastructure for walking and cycling, but also rebalancing the use of public space by reducing car dominance and prioritizing mobility and spaces that serve all residents.

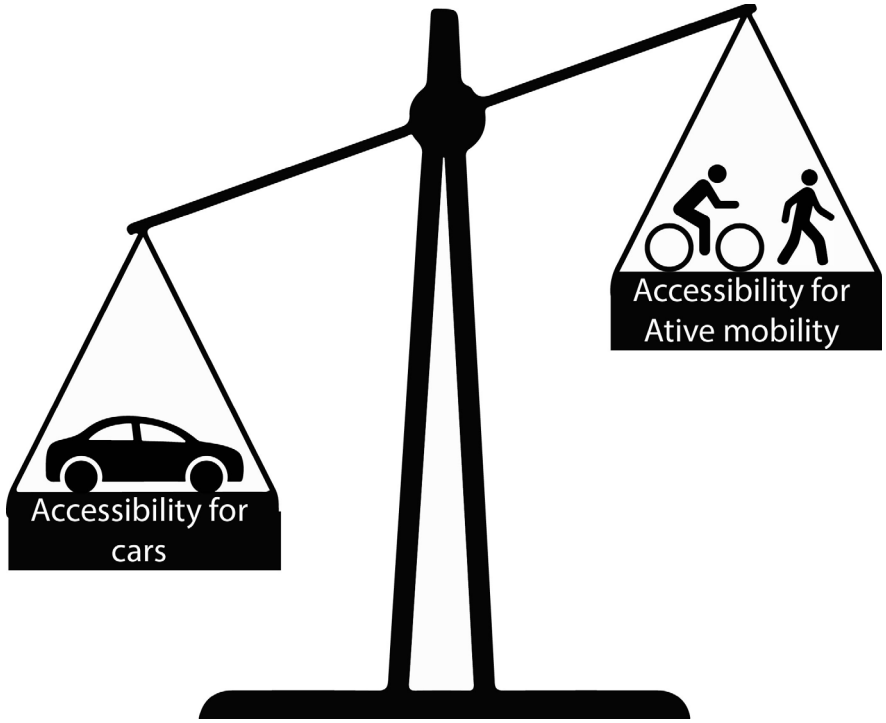


Image 1: Unequal distribution of accesability towards cars





Images retrieved from google earth

2.3 Spatial justice

David Harvey (1973, 1992) developed the idea of the urbanization of capital to explain that cities do not simply grow or change by themselves, but are actively shaped by money flows and political decisions. According to him, urban space becomes a tool for dealing with economic surpluses: investments in real estate, infrastructure, and large projects absorb capital while also reshaping the city to fit the needs of those who control these resources. In this way, the form of the city is never neutral—it reflects the interests of power and profit. Roads, housing, and zoning rules are therefore not just technical choices, but part of a system that often produces inequality. Seen from this perspective, problems like poor access, segregation, or unsafe spaces are not accidents but built into the very way the city has been planned and financed.

For my project, the most valuable insight from Harvey's theory is the recognition that if design has the power to create inequality, it also has the power to correct it. The very tools that were once used to privilege cars, profit-oriented development, or social segregation can instead be reoriented to support equity and inclusion. By consciously reshaping urban form—through redistributing space, prioritizing active mobility, and ensuring equitable access to amenities—design becomes a means of addressing and correcting spatial injustice.

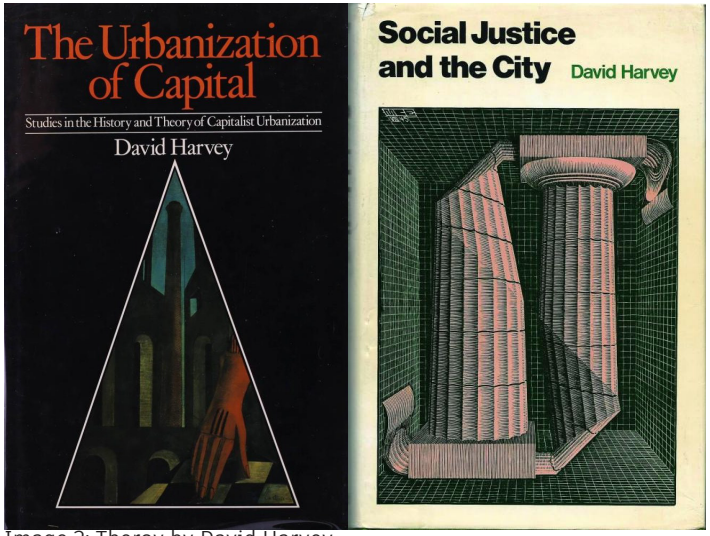


Image 2: Theroy by David Harvey

John Rawls (1971), in A Theory of Justice, developed the principle of justice as fairness. His starting point was the idea that a just society is one that people would choose if they did not know their own position within it—a thought experiment he called the "veil of ignorance." From this perspective, social and economic inequalities can only be justified if they improve the situation of those who are worst off. Justice therefore requires active redistribution: resources, opportunities, and even physical spaces should be organized in ways that strengthen the position of the least advantaged, rather than simply serving those who are already privileged.

For my project, the most valuable aspect of Rawls' theory is that it provides a clear ethical argument for reclaiming urban space from cars. Car-oriented planning disproportionately benefits people with the money and means to own and operate a vehicle, while disadvantaging residents who rely on walking, cycling, or public transport. These groups—often including children, elderly people, and low-income households—are among the least advantaged in urban mobility systems. By redistributing road space away from cars and toward active mobility and accessible public functions, design directly supports them. In this sense, reclaiming space from cars is not only a step toward sustainability and livability, but also an act of social justice that aligns with Rawls' vision of fairness.

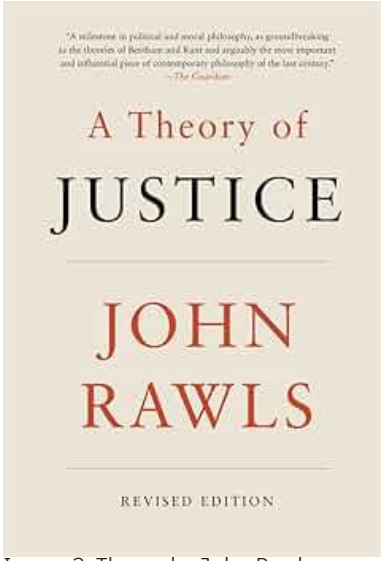


Image 3: Theroy by John Rawls

Edward Soja (2010), in Seeking Spatial Justice, developed the idea of spatial justice as a way of showing that justice is not only a social or political principle, but also something that is directly expressed in the geography of the city. For Soja, questions of equity are visible in how land is used, how infrastructures are distributed, and who gains or loses access to everyday urban opportunities. Spatial justice is therefore both an analytical lens and a practical concern: it can be measured in patterns of accessibility and inequality, and it can be acted upon through policies, planning, and design. This makes it more than a purely abstract or philosophical concept—spatial justice becomes a framework that links theory to tangible urban outcomes.

For my project, the most important contribution of Soja's theory is that it provides a way to bridge the gap between ideas and practice. By framing justice as something spatial, measurable, and actionable, Soja creates a pathway to turn normative principles into design strategies. This means that questions of fairness and redistribution—such as reclaiming space from cars, improving pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, or ensuring that amenities are evenly accessible—can be justified not only on ethical grounds but also on practical, spatial terms. In this way, Soja's concept supports an approach to urban design where justice is built directly into the form and function of the city.

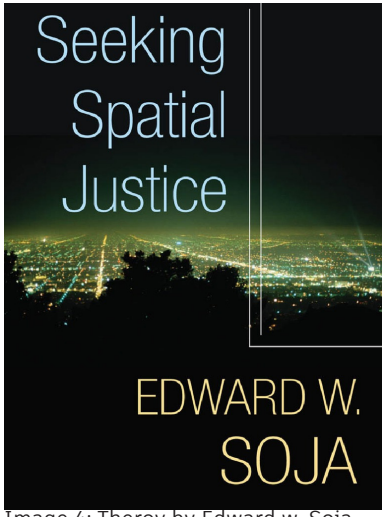


Image 4: Theroy by Edward w. Soja

My definition of spatial justice is the redistribution of urban space to correct existing imbalances. It acknowledges that needs are not the same as wants, and that a just future may require decisions that are unpopular but necessary. It also emphasizes that equity is not equality: fair urban design gives more to those who have historically received less, rather than giving the same to everyone. Finally, spatial justice should be actionable. By linking it to the concept of the 15-minute city, it becomes a practical framework for developing strategies that fairly redistribute urban resources and opportunities, supporting accessibility and livability for all.

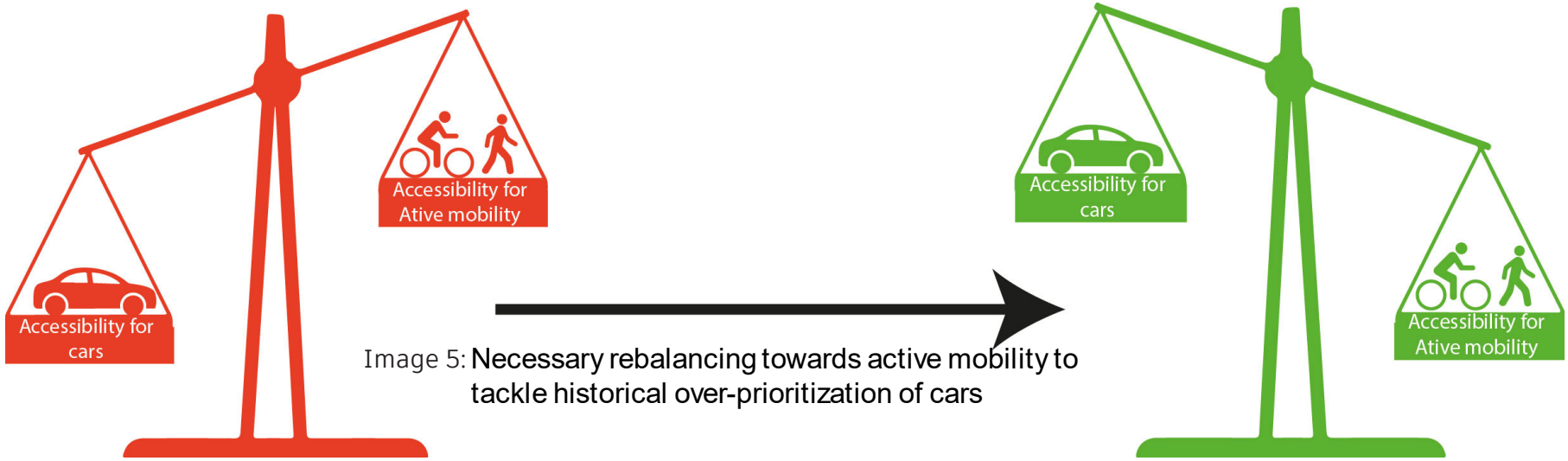


Image 5: Necessary rebalancing towards active mobility to tackle historical over-prioritization of cars

1.4 The 15 minute- city concept

The 15-minute city is an urban planning concept that aims to ensure that essential daily functions, like as housing, employment, education, healthcare, shops, green spaces, and leisure facilities—are accessible within approximately a 15-minute walk or bicycle ride from home. The central objective is to reduce car dependency by reorganising urban life around proximity and time, rather than long-distance, car-based travel, thereby supporting healthier, more sustainable, and socially cohesive neighbourhoods (Moreno et al., 2021; UCCRN, n.d.).

Rather than the mono-functional zoning and fragmented mobility systems characteristic of post-war modernist urbanism, the 15-minute city promotes compact, mixed-use, and human-scaled neighbourhoods. By bringing daily destinations closer together and prioritising active mobility, the concept seeks to rebalance urban space in favour of pedestrians and cyclists while strengthening local economies and community life (Pozoukidou & Chatziyiannaki, 2021).

Despite its widespread adoption, the literature shows no single, universally agreed set of core principles for the 15-minute city. In earlier formulations, Moreno emphasised principles such as ecology, proximity, solidarity, and participation, highlighting the environmental and social ambitions of the concept beyond purely spatial considerations (Steuteville, 2021). In later academic and policy-oriented work, the framework is more often described using the pillars proximity, density, diversity, and either ubiquity or digitalisation (Moreno et al., 2021; UCCRN, n.d.).

Originally, ubiquity referred to the idea that the benefits of the 15-minute city should be available to all residents and across all neighbourhoods, preventing selective implementation and spatial inequality. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalisation increasingly replaced ubiquity as the fourth pillar in some interpretations of the concept. This shift reflects the growing role of digital technologies—such as teleworking, e-health, online services, and smart mobility systems—in reducing the need for physical travel and enabling access to urban functions beyond immediate physical proximity (Moreno et al., 2021; UCCRN, n.d.).

However, these two concepts play different roles within the framework. While digitalisation functions more as an enabling mechanism, ubiquity is more like a normative ambition related to spatial justice and equal access. In this project, ubiquity is therefore retained as the fourth guiding principle, and is interpreted as an equity-oriented concept, emphasising that proximity, high-quality public space, and access to everyday facilities should be available to all residents regardless of income, background, physical ability, or location within the city. This interpretation aligns with broader discussions on spatial equity and just urbanism, and ensures that the 15-minute city is not applied selectively to already privileged neighbourhoods but contributes to a more inclusive redistribution of urban resources.

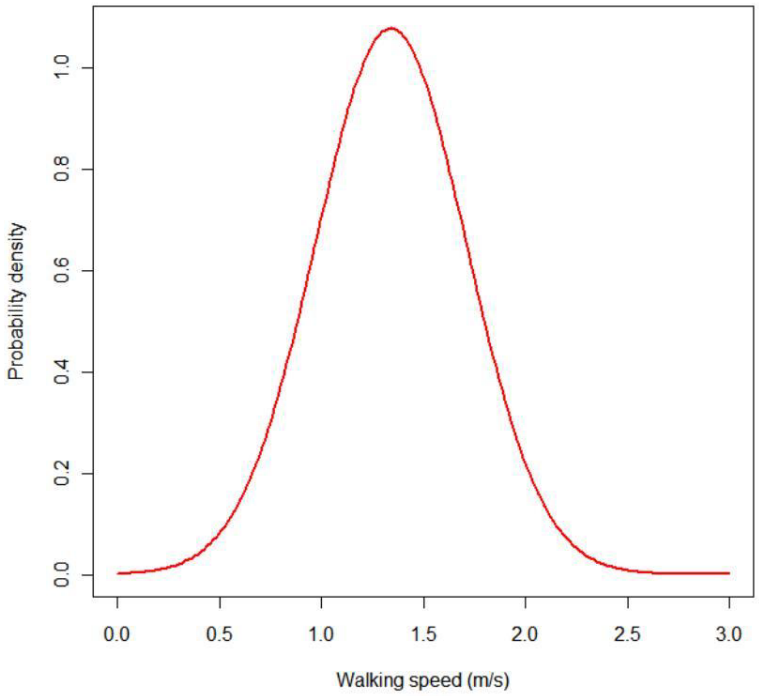
In this project, the 15-minute city forms the conceptual basis for both the analytical lens and the design strategy. It provides a clear direction—improving proximity, accessibility, and local everyday life—and the spatial logic—reshaping streets, public spaces, and facilities to support active mobility and reduce car dominance. The principles of proximity, diversity, density, and ebquity will directly guide the rebalancing of space within Amsterdam Zuidoost, making sure that design interventions do not only transform the physical environment, but also contribute to a fairer, more resilient, and more liveable neighbourhood.



Image 6: 15 Minute city concept (Moreno et al., 2021)

Despite its popularity, the 15-minute city concept has several critiques. One of the main concerns is that the idea of “15 minutes” is often ambiguous and vague. Without clear definitions, accessibility risks being misrepresented, since what is considered “close” can vary significantly depending on whether one measures by walking, cycling, or driving (Mouratidis, 2024). To address this, my approach takes the average walking speed as the baseline (image 8). Using walking speed as a benchmark ensures a more equal measure of accessibility, since it reflects the typical performance of most people, regardless of age, income, or ability. This approach provides a clearer picture of real local accessibility and strengthens the connection between the 15-minute city and spatial justice. At the same time, the project is inspired by the 15-minute concept but not fixed to the 15-minute threshold only; it uses the principle more flexible to guide design interventions. It also uses other time thresholds like 10 minutes and even 5 minutes to better reflext very local accesability.

A second critique is about the risk of environmental gentrification. Critics warn that implementing the 15-minute city could inadvertently push out lower-income residents, as improved amenities and greener spaces may drive up housing costs (Caprotti et al., 2024). My approach explicitly seeks to counter this dynamic by linking spatial changes to the provision of affordable housing and accessible public services. Furthermore, I involve residents directly in identifying barriers and priorities, ensuring that interventions are rooted in the needs of existing communities rather than imposed from above. This strengthens the social dimension of the 15-minute city, preventing exclusion and making sure that spatial improvements benefit those who need them most.



https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-walking-speed-of-pedestrians-is-distributed-normally-with-an-estimated-mean-of-134_fig4_286071735

Image 7: Average walking speed estimation



Image 9 : Risk of environmental gentrification

1.5 Why connect the two

The 15-minute city offers a practical, spatial tool for redistributing urban space. Rather than leaving justice as an abstract principle, it translates it into measurable changes in the everyday environment. By prioritizing proximity and accessibility, the model provides a way to correct spatial imbalances that have long favored car users over those who rely on walking, cycling, or public transport. In this way, it directly supports distributive justice by ensuring that urban resources are more fairly shared among different groups of residents (Moreno et al., 2021).

This approach connects directly to my definition of spatial justice. Justice is not about giving the same to everyone, but about allocating more to those who have historically received less—highlighting the distinction between equity and equality (Rawls, 1971). It also requires a clear differentiation between needs and wants: ensuring access to healthcare, education, and daily goods should take priority over the convenience of private car mobility. Furthermore, spatial justice must be actionable. Soja (2010) emphasizes that justice should be understood as something measurable and operational within planning practice, rather than merely as a theoretical principle. Linking spatial justice to the 15-minute city achieves this by grounding fairness in concrete design strategies, such as reclaiming public space, improving walkability, and ensuring daily services are within close reach. As Harvey (1973, 1992) argues, spatial design can produce inequality; however, this also means that design has the capacity to correct it. In this way, the 15-minute city bridges theory and practice, making justice visible and tangible in the urban environment.

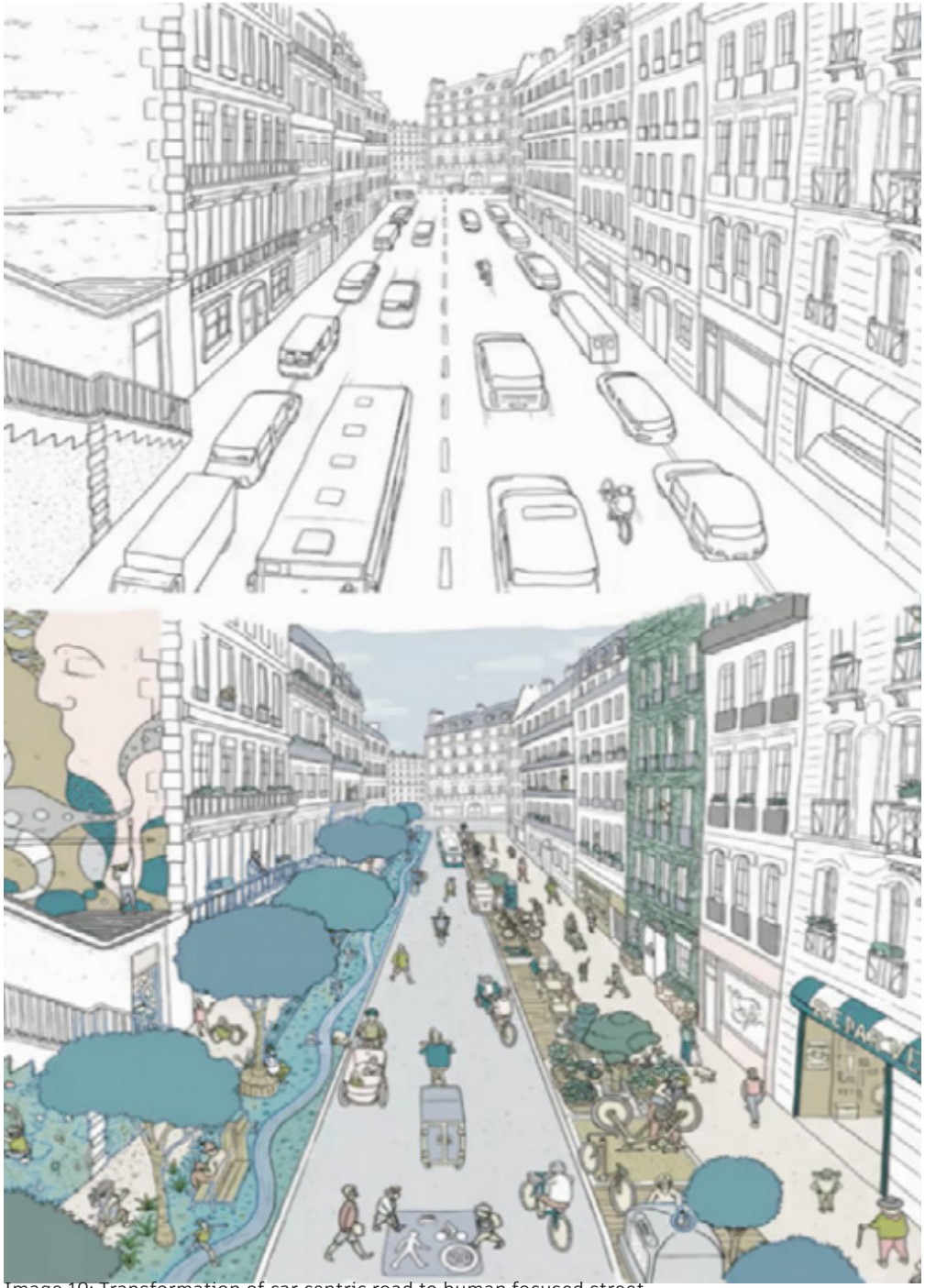


Image 10: Transformation of car centric road to human focused street

1.6 Problem statement

Amsterdam Zuid-Oost is shaped by a history of modernist planning and decades of car-oriented development. Wide roads, oversized intersections, and extensive parking areas dominate the urban area, creating barriers for pedestrians and cyclists and undermining the quality of public space. As a result, access to daily amenities is unequal: car users enjoy seamless connections and an abundance of space for parking, while residents who rely on active mobility—often children, elderly people, and low-income households—face fragmented routes, greater risks, and longer travel times. At the same time, the environments around many essential facilities—schools, shops, healthcare, and public transport—tend to be degraded by noise, uglieness, and car-dominated layouts. This means that the very places people depend on for daily life are often some of the least pleasant or safe parts of the neighbourhood.

This imbalance is not accidental but rooted in broader dynamics of urban development, where design and planning have historically privileged efficiency, profit, and car mobility over equity and inclusion (Harvey, 1973, 1992). From a justice perspective, this means that the least advantaged residents bear the greatest costs of the current spatial structure (Rawls, 1971). As Soja (2010) emphasizes, questions of fairness are embedded in the geography of the city and must be addressed through concrete spatial strategies.

To correct these imbalances, this project adopts spatial justice as its guiding principle, defining it as the redistribution of urban space to meet essential needs rather than individual preferences. Linking this principle to the 15-minute city provides a practical framework: by prioritizing proximity, accessibility, and equity, it offers design strategies that make justice tangible in the built environment.

2.
Methodology

2.1 Project aim
2.2 Research questions
2.3 Project overview
2.4 Methods
2.5 Working with AI

This chapter explains how the project is structured and carried out. It outlines the overall aim of the research and design, and formulates the central and supporting research questions that guide the process. The chapter then provides an overview of the project, describing how the different phases build on one another to move from analysis to design. Finally, it introduces the methods used to collect and interpret information, ranging from spatial and proximity analyses to observations and interviews. Together, these elements define the approach taken to understand the challenges in Amsterdam Zuid-Oost and to develop a redesign that responds to them.

2.1 Project aim

The aim of this project is to shift Amsterdam Zuidoost from a car-centric neighborhood towards an urban environment where active mobility forms the primary way to go in daily life. To achieve this, the project applies principles of spatial justice as a framework for redistributing public space, rebalancing mobility priorities, and focusing on equitable access to everyday facilities.

The project focuses on designing safe, continuous, and attractive routes for walking, cycling, and micro-mobility, while clustering and improving local centers so daily needs can be met without relying on a car. By upgrading public spaces, creating attractive local destinations and reducing car dominance, the interventions aim to create a more livable and sustainable urban environment.

These spatial changes are designed to generate a ripple effect: improvements made in the key pilot area gradually influence adjacent streets, centres, and neighborhoods, building towards a larger shift in livability, accessibility, and urban quality.



2.2 Research questions

Main Research Question

“How can Amsterdam Zuidoost be redeveloped to redistribute urban space from cars towards active mobility, guided by the 15-minute city concept, in order to improve access to everyday facilities and increase the livability?”

Sub-Research Questions

What are the spatial characteristics and root causes of inequality in Amsterdam-Zuid Oost according to the literature and existing data?

What spatial barriers and mobility obstacles do residents encounter in their daily lives?

What spatial interventions are needed to overcome barriers and improve access to daily amenities for active mobility users?

How can the 15-minute city concept be adapted to the local context of Amsterdam-Zuid Oost to address physical inequalities?

What additional meassures can support the design proposal while enhancing the overall quality of public space?

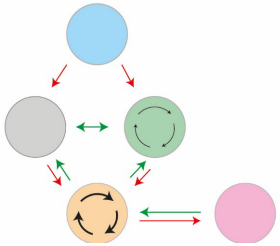
What implementation strategies are required to realize the design proposal and promote spatial justice in Amsterdam-Zuid Oost?

2.3 Project overview

The project overview diagram shows how the different components of the research and design process are connected. It begins with the project definition, where the motivation, problem field, and theoretical framework are combined into a main research question with several sub-questions. From here, the process moves toward case study analysis, which looks itno the local conditions in Amsterdam Zuid-Oost, and to program actions, where the central themes of mobility, program, and quality are translated into guiding principles.

These elements feed into the design process, which is organized around the cycle of Analysis (A), Design (D), and Present (P). The arrows in the diagram show that the components do not follow one another in a linear order. Instead, they influence each other continuously. Findings from the analysis provide feedback on the program actions and design decisions, while design experiments raises new questions that send the process back to analysis or require adjustments in the program. This creates feedback loops, ensuring that each step is tested, refined, and strengthened by the others.

In this way, the project overview shows that the process is iterative rather than linear: progress is made by moving back and forth between components, allowing ideas to be developed, tested, and improved. The outcome of this process is a set of final outputs—a plan, strategies, detailed local designs, and an implementation plan—that together demonstrate how redistributing urban space in favor of active mobility can address historical imbalances and improve access to daily amenities in Zuid-Oost and increase livability throughout theneigborhood.



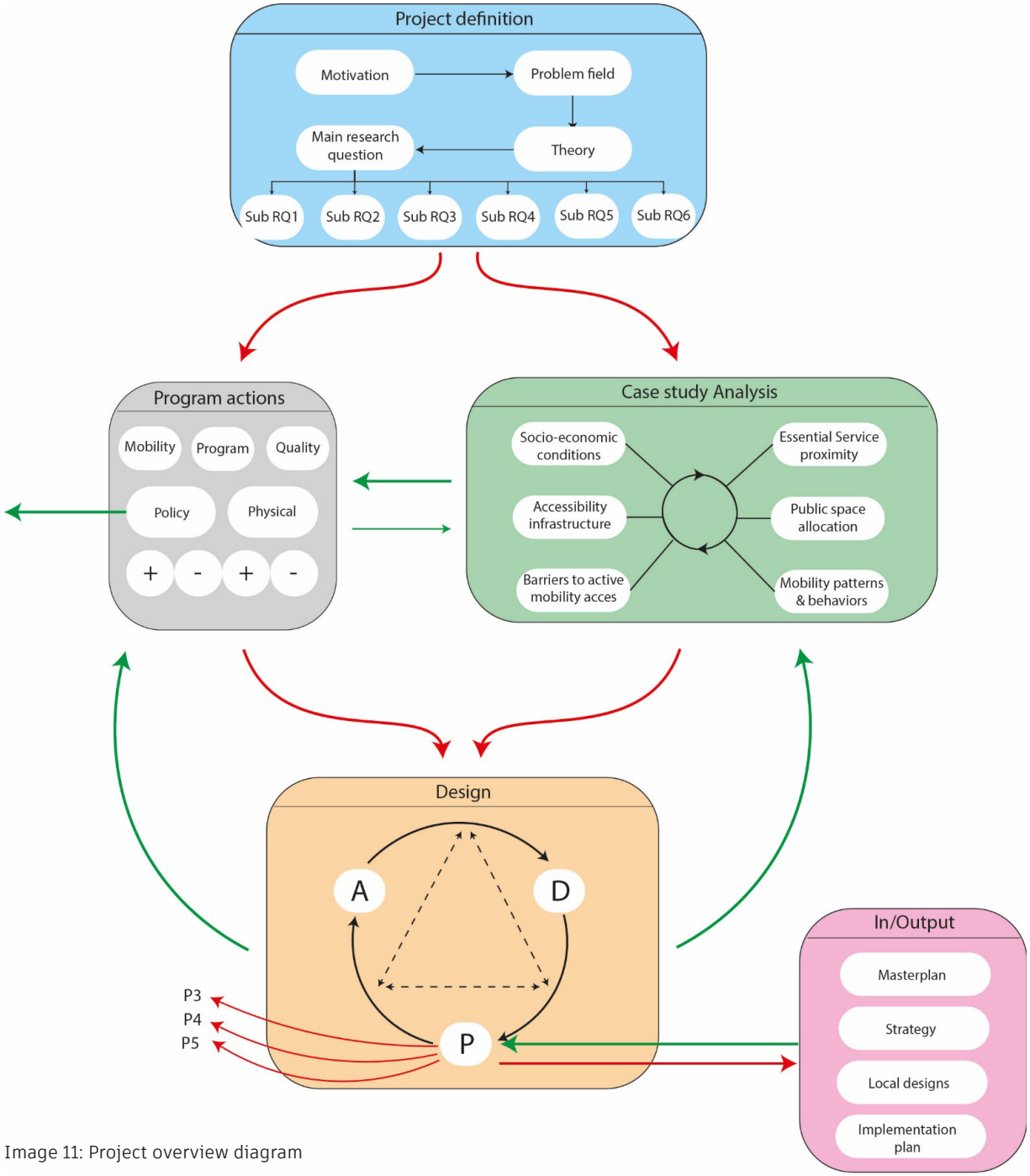


Image 11: Project overview diagram

2.4 Methods



Literature and theory review

I studied key theories on spatial justice and the 15-minute city to give the project a solid academic foundation. These concepts directly shaped my guiding and design principles and the overall framing of the mobility transition in Zuid-oost.



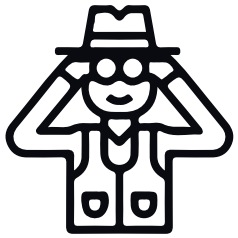
Spatial analysis

Using QGIS, I mapped routes, barriers, parking surfaces, and proximity to facilities to understand the current spatial structure. These analyses revealed fragmentation and inequalities that guided the selection of interventions.



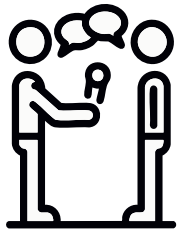
Quantitative data analysis

Socio-economic and demographic data were examined to identify which groups experience limited accessibility and mobility disadvantages. This helped justify why redistributing space away from cars is both needed and equitable.



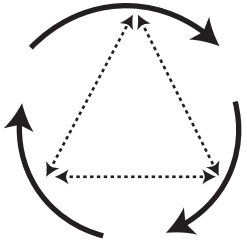
Field observations

On-site visits were used to observe real mobility behaviour, barriers, and the condition of public space. These insights clarified where the network fails in practice and where improvements would have the strongest impact.



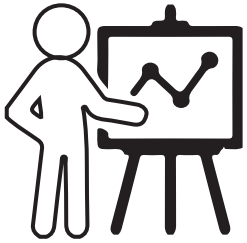
Interviews

Informal conversations with residents provided firsthand perspectives on mobility challenges, safety concerns, and daily routines. These experiences helped refine priorities and highlight issues not visible in maps or statistics.



Design iterations

Design ideas were repeatedly tested and refined through sketches, feedback rounds, and adjustments across scales. This iterative process ensured that the final interventions align with the project's goals and fit the local context.



Project synthesis

All findings were combined into a coherent plan, thematic maps, and local zoom-ins that show a clear mobility transformation strategy. This synthesis connected the pilot area to the wider urban fabric and long-term implementation.

2.5 Working with AI

Throughout my design process and report writing, I made extensive use of AI tools to support visualization, reflection, and writing. For the visual part, I mainly used AI to create before-and-after renderings that help communicate spatial transformation. I started by providing an existing image as input and describing in detail what was not working in the current situation – for example, spaces that felt unsafe, inactive, or poorly maintained. Then, I wrote a very detailed prompt explaining exactly how I wanted the transformed image to look: what should change, which materials and elements should appear, how the light should fall, and what kind of atmosphere the new space should create.

This process required descriptive writng and many iterations. The first generated images were usually far from what I had in mind, which meant I had to provide specific feedback after every attempt. I often repeated this process around many times, each round refining details like the overal design of the public space, vegetation, the placement of street furniture , people, or the general sense of realism. Over time, the images started to align more closely with my intended design idea. The final renders were included in my report because they visually convey the qualities of space – the lived experiece, light, openness, safety, and liveliness – in a way that drawings or plans alone cannot. These AI-generated visuals are not just illustrations; they act as narrative tools that help communicate how a space feels.

I believe this method represents an important shift in how designers can visualize ideas. Instead of relying solely on manual rendering techniques, AI allows for rapid testing and iteration of different spatial moods and configurations. It also enables more people – including non-designers – to understand the intended atmosphere of a place. In this sense, I see AI as a complementary design instrument that will only grow in relevance and use in the coming years.

AI also played a valuable role in the written parts of my report. I usually begin by drafting a rough version of a text in which I explain everything I want to include – the key arguments, reasoning, and observations – without focusing too much on the speficfic wording grammar and spelling. Then, I use ChatGPT to refine the text into a coherent, fluent, and professional narrative that matches the tone I have in mind. The ideas and content remain entirely mine, but the phrasing becomes smoother and more structured. This collaborative process between writer and AI significantly improves readability and consistency across the report.

All literature research, references and citations are always done manually by me and carefully checked against the original sources. This ensures that every reference is accurate and that no form of plagiarism can occur. AI is only used for language support, never for sourcing or generating information or citations.

In my experience, using AI in this way has shown me that it can be a very practical partner in the design process. It doesn't take over the creative part – it helps express it better. With images, it allows me to quickly show how a space could look and feel. With writing, it helps me say what I want to say in a clear and natural way. It makes the process faster and more focused on the ideas themselves instead of on technical details. I think this kind of cooperation between people and AI will become normal in the future, because it makes it easier to turn complex thoughts and designs into something that others can really understand and connect with.

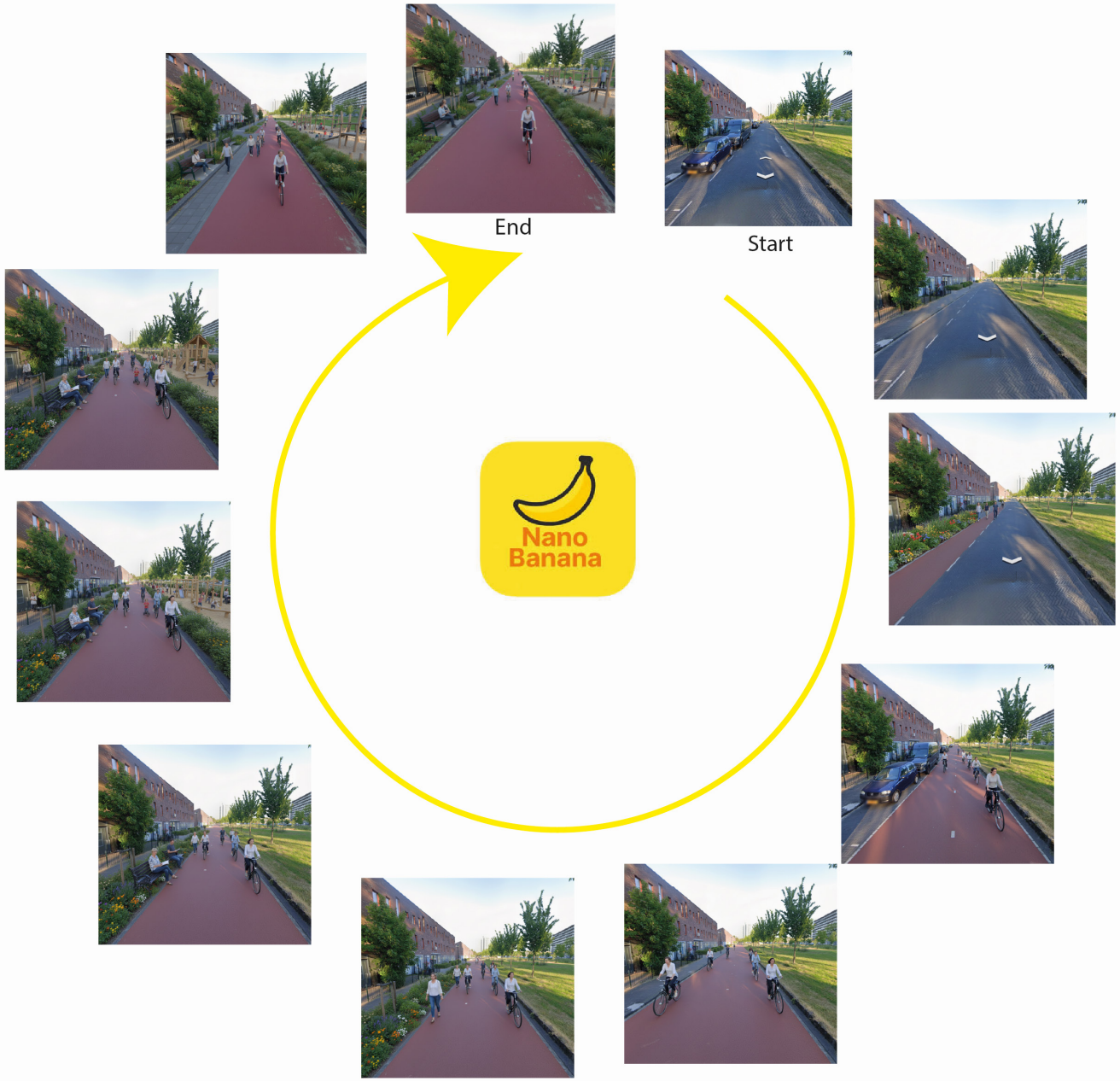


Image 12: AI image iteration example

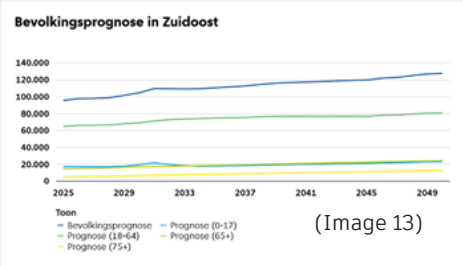
3.
Case study Amsterdam Zuid Oost

4.1 Socio- economic analysis
4.2 Spatial analysis
4.3 Proximity analysis
4.4 SWOT
4.5 Motivation for selected focus area

This chapter presents the case study analysis of Amsterdam Zuid-Oost and forms the foundation for the design phase of the project. It begins with a socio-economic analysis to understand the broader demographic and social context of the area, followed by a spatial analysis that examines Zuid-Oost through different layers to reveal key spatial patterns and challenges. A proximity analysis then identifies where access to daily amenities overlaps, with two major areas emerging as potential focus points. These two overlap areas are compared through a SWOT analysis, which highlights their respective strengths and weaknesses. The chapter concludes with the motivation for selecting one focus area that will be developed further in the design process.

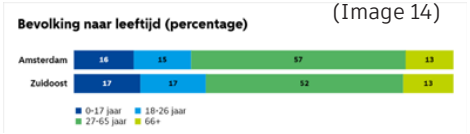
3.1 Socio- economic analysis

Amsterdam Zuidoost is a diverse and growing neighborhood, currently home to around 96,000 residents, with projections predicting an increase to 125,000 in the future (Image 13). The age distribution is similar to that of Amsterdam overall, with no major over- or underrepresentation of any age group (Image 14). The district stands out for its cultural diversity, as many residents have a migration background, particularly of Surinamese origin (Image 15).

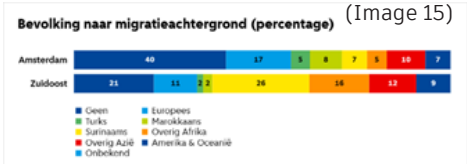


(Image 13)

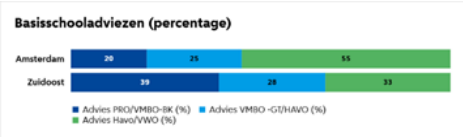
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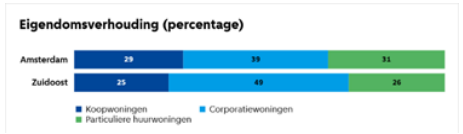
(Image 15)



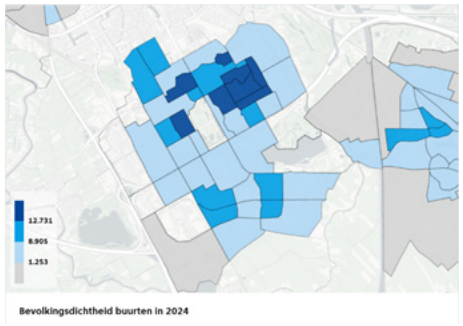
Challenges are visible in multiple domains. Educational outcomes are below the city average, with lower primary school recommendations (Image 16). Housing is dominated by the social rental sector, as a large share of homes are owned by housing corporations (Image 17). Densities are comparable to or higher than the Amsterdam average, reflecting a more urban character despite the area's suburban origins (Image 18).



(Image 16)

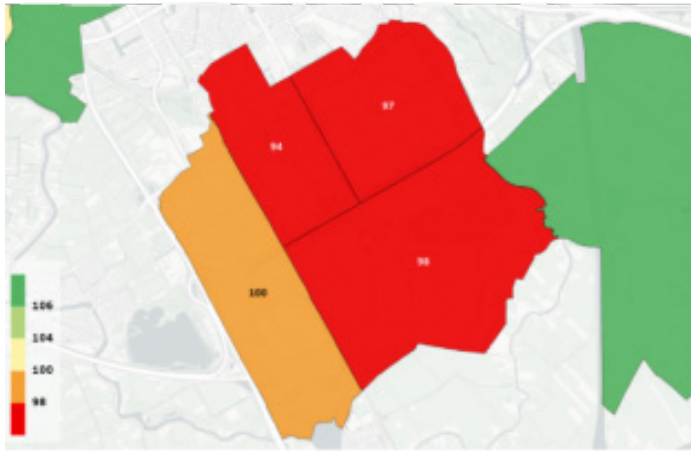


(Image 17)



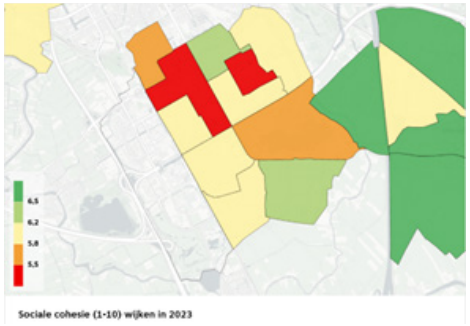
(Image 18)

The Standard of Living Index shows poor living conditions across multiple dimensions (Image 19). These dimenstions are: Physical environment, Housing stock, Amenities, Social cohesion and Nuisance and insecurity. Together they form the The Standard of Living Index.

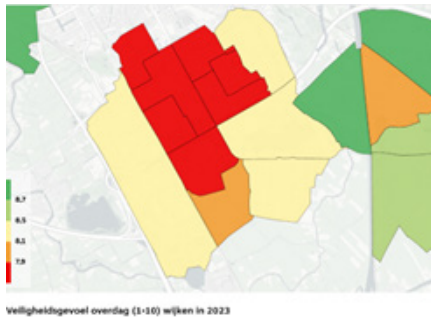


(Image 19)

Social dynamics further shows these issues: social cohesion is low in many parts of the district (Image 20), and many residents report feeling unsafe even during the day (Image 21).

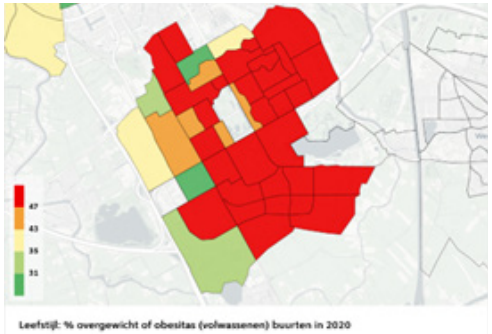


(Image 20)

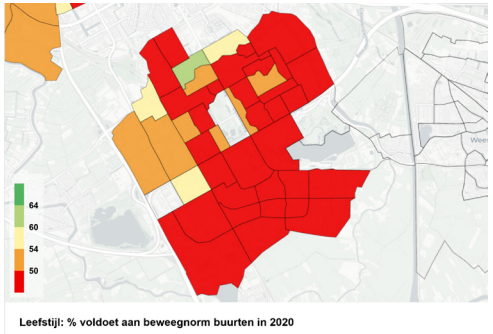


(Image 21)

Health outcomes show high rates of overweight and obesity Image 22), linked to insufficient physical activity (Image 23).

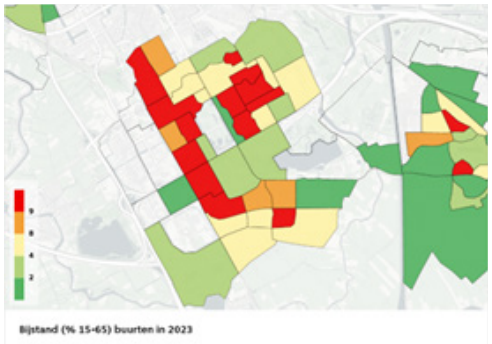


(Image 22)



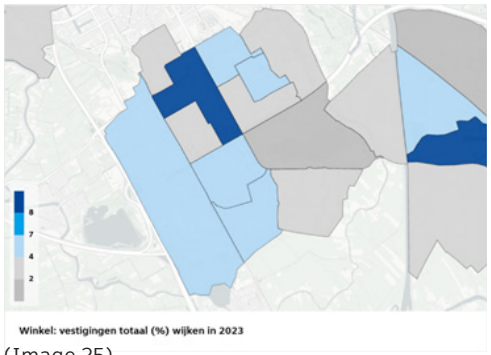
(Image 23)

Economically, a relatively large share of residents depends on social welfare benefits (Image 24).

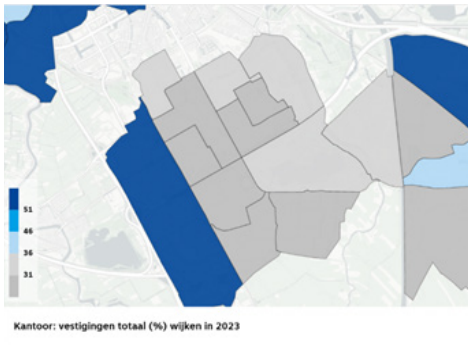


(Image 24)

Employment opportunities within the district are limited, as shown by the low number of workplaces and offices (Image 25). Access to shops is also restricted outside of the Amsterdamse Poort area, where retail activity is concentrated (Image 26).



(Image 25)



(Image 26)

In summary, Zuidoost is a growing and culturally diverse neighborhood with strong emphasis on social housing, but also faces broader educational inequalities, low living standards, weak social cohesion, safety concerns, health problems, economic vulnerability, and limited access to local jobs and amenities. The figures and maps highlight the urgent need for thoughtful and inclusive urban planning to improve quality of life and local opportunities.

All data in this chapter is retrieved from:Onderzoek en Statistiek. (z.d.). Dashboard kerncijfers

3.2 Spaial analysis



Image 27: Green blue infrastructure)

Green blue infrastructure

Amsterdam-Zuidoost has a strong green-blue network, especially in the north and east, supporting biodiversity and climate resilience. Nelson Mandela Park and the former highway zone provide large green areas, but their grass-dominated design limits ecological and recreational value. While the neighborhood is generally green, missing links reduce connectivity between spaces. Strengthening these connections and improving existing areas could create a more cohesive and resilient environment for both people and nature.



Image 28: Automobile infrastructure

Automobile infrastructure

Car infrastructure in Amsterdam-Zuidoost clearly shows modernist planning, with large roads, highways, and extensive parking dominating the area. While the road hierarchy is clear, highways and wide roads act as barriers that fragment neighborhoods and reinforce separation. This car-centric design supports traffic flow but undermines walkability, accessibility, and social cohesion. We should prioritize pedestrian and cycling routes to create a more integrated and connected urban environment.



Image 29: Public transport network

Public transport network

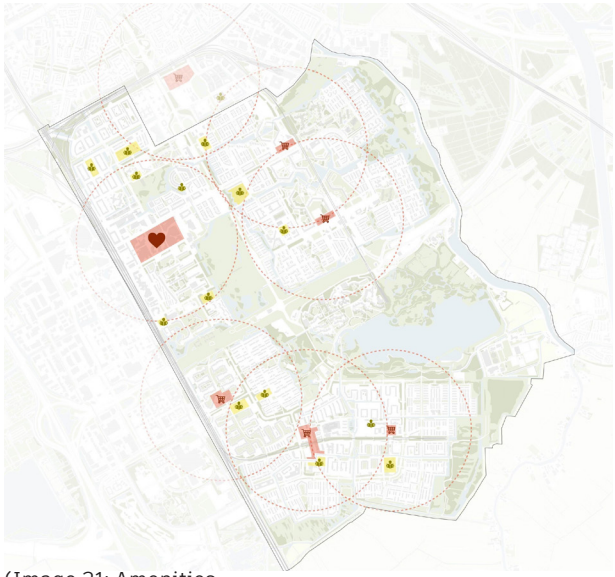
Amsterdam-Zuidoost has a well-developed public transport network, with metro lines providing fast connections to the city center and beyond. This backbone is complemented by bus lines that keep residential and commercial areas connected, ensuring accessibility even where metro stations are absent. Stations are generally well spaced, covering most key areas, though some neighborhoods remain less directly connected. Addressing these gaps would further improve the efficiency and inclusivity of the network. But overall the public transport network in the area is very good and wont be needing much attention in this project.



Image 30: Active mobility infrastructure

Active mobility infrastructure

Amsterdam-Zuidoost has improved its cycling network, creating a more connected system of bike paths. Yet bike use remains low, partly due to the car-oriented layout with wide roads and ample parking, as well as missing links in fast or direct cycling connections. Limited bike-friendly features—such as safe parking and links to facilities—further discourage use, while concerns about safety, both in traffic and in public space, also play a role. Promoting cycling will require improving accessibility, integrating bike-friendly design into public spaces, and addressing safety concerns, encouraging healthier and more sustainable mobility.



(Image 31: Amenities

Amenities

Amenities in Amsterdam-Zuidoost are well distributed, with Amsterdamse Poort as the main center and smaller sub-centers providing daily needs. Yet many sub-centers are car-oriented and lack inviting public spaces, which limits their use as multi-functional hubs.

Although the area resembles a 15-minute city in theory, active mobility remains low and car use high. This suggests that design quality, accessibility, and public space play a key role in shaping travel behavior. Improving sub-centers could strengthen local accessibility and reduce car dependency.



Image 32: All layers combined

All layers combined

The combined map of Amsterdam-Zuidoost shows strong assets—green-blue networks, extensive public transport, and a comprehensive cycling system—but also major challenges. Highways and wide roads fragment the area and reinforce car dominance, while cycling remains underused and sub-centers lack diversity, leaving Amsterdamse Poort as the main hub.

Although the district has the potential of a 15-minute city, fragmentation and car dependency limit its practicality. Strengthening sub-centers, improving connectivity, and promoting active mobility are key to making Zuidoost more accessible, liveable and sustainable.

3.3 Proximity analysis

To understand how daily amenities are distributed in Amsterdam Zuid-Oost, a proximity analysis was done using a 10-minute walking radius. The choice for 10 minutes is done because it provided a good measure of local accessibility, as it relates to the distance most people are willing to walk to reach everyday destinations (Gehl, 2010). While the 15-minute city framework is often used as a reference, narrowing this to 10 minutes provides a more precise and more practical picture of accessibility on the neighborhood scale. Walking was chosen as the baseline because it is the most inclusive mode of travel: unlike cycling or driving, it requires no vehicle, infrastructure, or financial resources, and can be used by people of all ages and backgrounds. Using walking as a benchmark therefore provides the most equal and realitic image of local accessibility, since it shows where facilities are really within reach for most people without relying on a car.

The analysis focused specifically on supermarkets, primary schools, and general practitioners. Together, these three types of facilities represent the most important basic daily amenities for most residents, covering food provision, education, and healthcare.

This proximity analysis makes it possible to identify which areas of Zuid-Oost have good access to basic daily amenities within a short walking distance, and which areas remain underserved. These findings help reveal where interventions are most urgently needed to strengthen local accessibility.

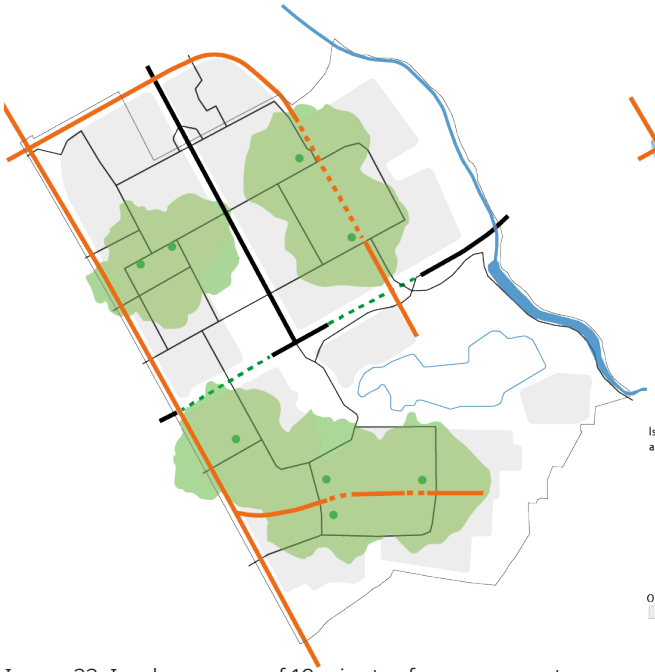


Image 33: Isochrone map of 10 minutes from grocery store

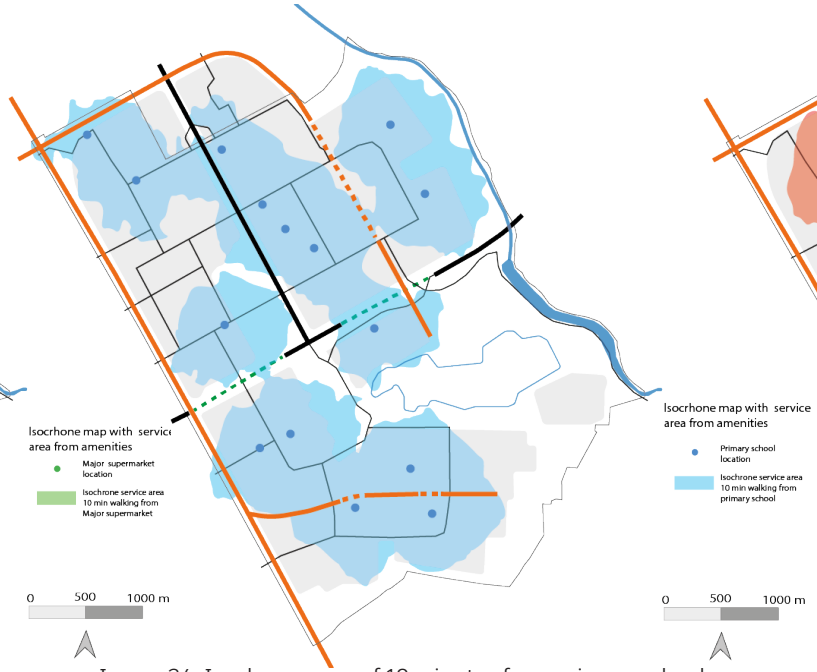


Image 34: Isochrone map of 10 minutes from primary school

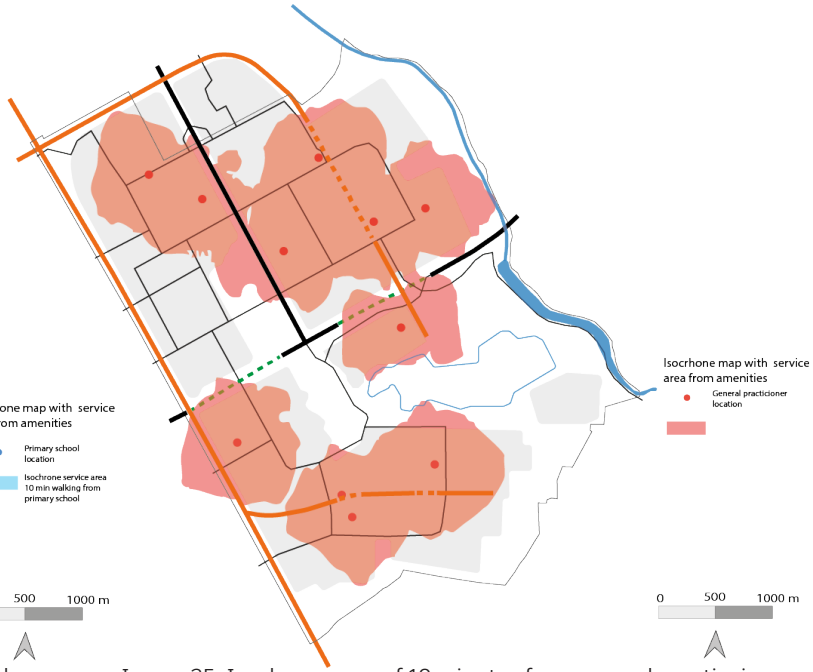


Image 35: Isochrone map of 10 minutes from general practiocioner

All combined

The combined proximity map shows that in Amsterdam-Zuidoost only a few locations fall within a 10-minute walk of all 3 key amenities. These overlap zones are essential: they act as strategic leverage points for changing mobility behavior and supporting a shift toward sustainable mobility. While the physical conditions—proximity to services, facilities, and networks—are present, proximity alone does not result in that people walk or cycle. Car use still dominates despite the spatial potential for active mobility.

This gap shows the need for targeted design interventions. Small changes in these leverage areas can deliver big impacts. By making active mobility more attractive and reducing the convenience of car use, these areas can become showcases of behavioral change. Here, urban design can show that spatial justice is actionable: correcting imbalances, reallocating space, and supporting those without cars.

Concentrating on these zones maximizes efficiency and creates ripple effects across the wider neighborhood. If walking and cycling become the default here, they can set new cultural and practical norms for mobility in Zuidoost. The combined proximity map thus highlights the starting points for building a fairer, healthier, and more sustainable urban future.

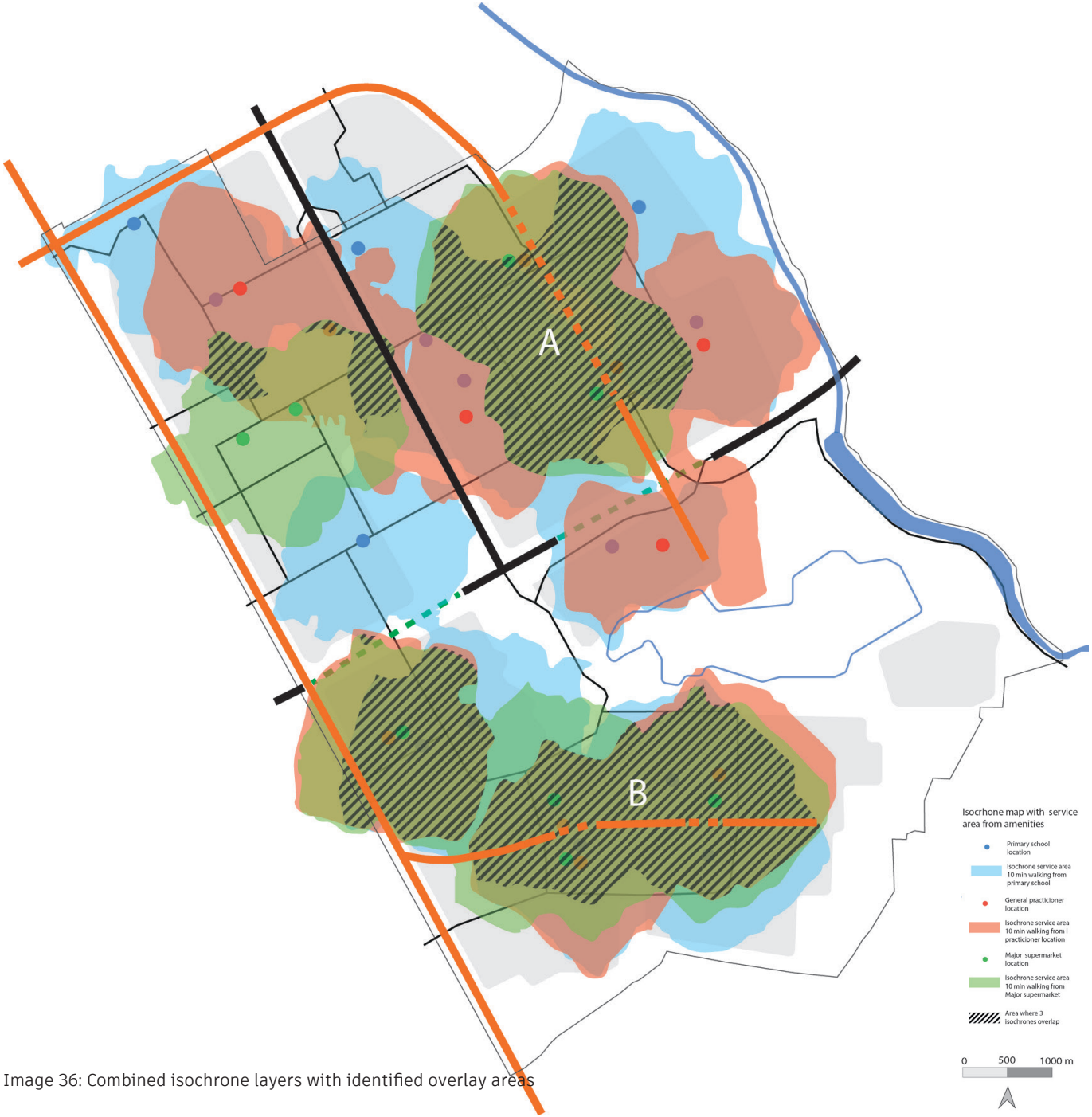


Image 36: Combined isochrone layers with identified overlay areas

4.4 SWOT

A SWOT analysis was done for the two areas in Amsterdam Zuid-Oost where the 10-minute walking areas of all three basic amenities—supermarket, primary school, and general practitioner—overlap. By comparing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of these two locations, it was possible to evaluate their potential for improvement and identify which area offers the strongest basis for further design. This comparison ultimately informed the selection of the focus area for the next stage of the project.

Area A

S
- High population density ->every intervention has greater impact per m².
- Good physical proximity to amenities (within 10-minute walking distance).
- Relatively better social cohesion and informal networks -> higher chance of community support and long-term use.
- Strong justice argument -> redistribution of space helps structurally disadvantaged groups.

W
- Physical barriers like wide roads disrupt internal connectivity.
- Underutilized public spaces and squares -> currently lack livability or cohesion.
- Monofunctional public space design -> limited flexibility or adaptive use.
- Lack of attractive and diverse social cores or meeting places -> fewer social anchors in the neighborhood.

O
- Behavioral change through youth -> safe routes to school or sports can reinforce new habits.
- Redesign of streets and squares can break down barriers and create spaces with higher usage value.
- Promoting active mobility aligns with the reality of residents with limited car budgets -> relatively quick effect and high necessity.
- Spatial synergy with sustainability and climate adaptation -> greening and cooling can enhance the impact of redesign.

T
- Cultural resistance to cycling among some groups may limit infrastructure use.
- Car use remains necessary for certain groups -> limits the extent of spatial redistribution.
- Major infrastructural interventions required -> potentially expensive and long-term.
- Traffic pressure on main roads may shift with spatial redistribution if not accompanied by supportive policies.

Image 37: Swot analysis of overlap area A

Area B

S
- More physical space per household -> greater design freedom, lower chance of tension during spatial redistribution.
- Better cycling network and fewer physical barriers -> active mobility is already well-supported.
- Good access to amenities by walking/cycling -> proximity is already being utilized.
- Relatively higher average income residents have more mobility options and less reliance on active mobility.

W
- Lower population density -> spatial interventions have less effect per investment or m².
- Inefficient land use -> relatively large amount of space reserved for parking per household.
- Lower social cohesion -> fewer spontaneous interactions and possibly less use of public space.
- Weaker justice argument -> spatial redistribution is less urgent or necessary from a social perspective.

O
- Improve spatial quality with minimal displacement -> extra space allows for less conflicting redesign.
- Further development of existing cycling infrastructure -> easy to upgrade into a high-quality network.
- Opportunities for senior-friendly design -> more elderly residents create both the need and the chance for accessible places and walking routes.

T
- Strong attachment to parking ->residents accustomed to abundant parking may resist reductions.
- Limited support for interventions -> lower urgency may lead to less involvement or backing.
- Low density complicates clustering -> less suitable for compact, multifunctional hubs or public spaces.

Image 38: Swot analysis of overlap area B

4.5 Motivation for selected focus area

From the SWOT analysis of the focus area, Area A emerged as the most suitable location for this project. Several factors make this area more compelling.

First, the area's high population density ensures a greater impact per square meter, meaning that interventions here can directly benefit more residents than in other parts of the district. This also strengthens the spatial justice argument, as improvements in such a dense setting redistribute urban resources where they are needed most.

Second, Area A offers a higher likelihood of community support, as local residents are already engaged and affected by the issues addressed in this project. The youth population plays a key role here: young people can act as catalysts for cultural and behavioral change, especially in shifting mobility habits toward walking and cycling.

Finally, the area contains large open leftover spaces with high potential. With thoughtful redesign, these spaces can evolve into multifunctional environments that support active mobility, recreation, and social life.

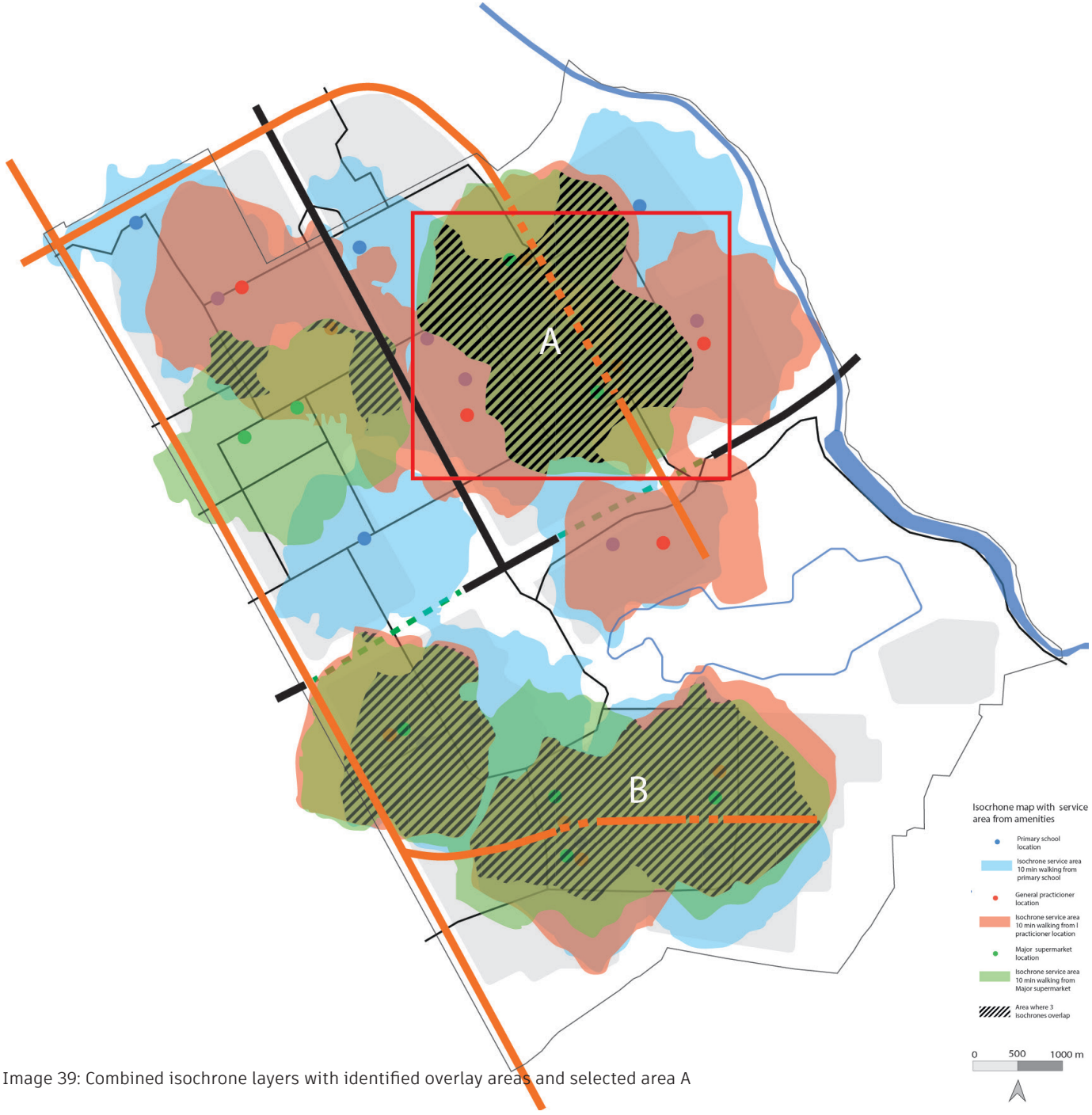


Image 39: Combined isochrone layers with identified overlay areas and selected area A

4.
Case study zoom in area

4.1 Spatial analysis
4.2 Proximity analysis
4.3 Observations and interview
4.4 Barriers to active mobility

This chapter changes the scale of the analysis from Amsterdam Zuid-Oost as a whole to the selected focus area. By zooming in, it becomes possible to study the neighborhood in greater detail and understand how spatial conditions are experienced at the local scale. The chapter begins with a spatial analysis that examines the physical structure of the area, followed by a proximity analysis that evaluates the accessibility of daily amenities within walking distance. To complement these analytical layers, observations and interviews provide insights into how residents use and perceive the area in their everyday lives. The chapter concludes with an overview of the main barriers to active mobility, highlighting the challenges that the design will seek to address.

4.1 Spatial analysis



Image 41: Buildings and parking areas

The first layer shows two building typologies: high-rise blocks with green space and large parking areas in between, and low-rise buildings with private gardens and street parking. The first creates openness but fragmentation, while the second forms a denser, more continuous street pattern.

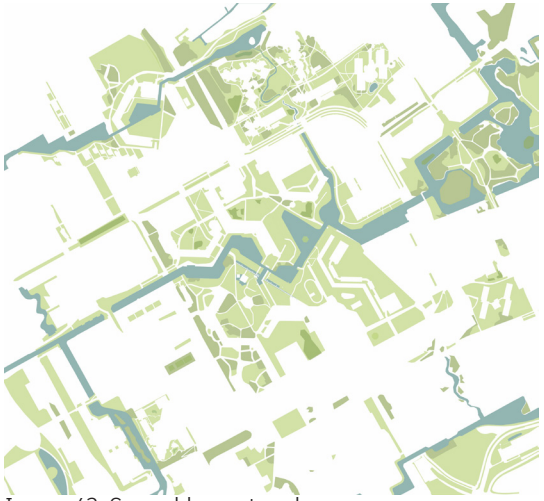


Image 42: Green blue network

The third layer shows that the area has plenty of green space, especially in the center of the neighborhood. However, these spaces often empty grass fields and are poorly connected, making the green structure feel fragmented and empthy rather than continuous and full of life.



Image 43: Car roads and railway

This spatial layer shows the dominance of car infrastructure in the area. Wide roads, intersections, and extensive parking take up a large share of space, leaving less room for other uses. Instead of connecting the neighborhood, these elements often act as barriers, making walking and cycling less direct, less safe, and less attractive.

It also shows the very good public transport infrastructure with a central metro line crossing the area and buslines all around the dominant square shape structure.

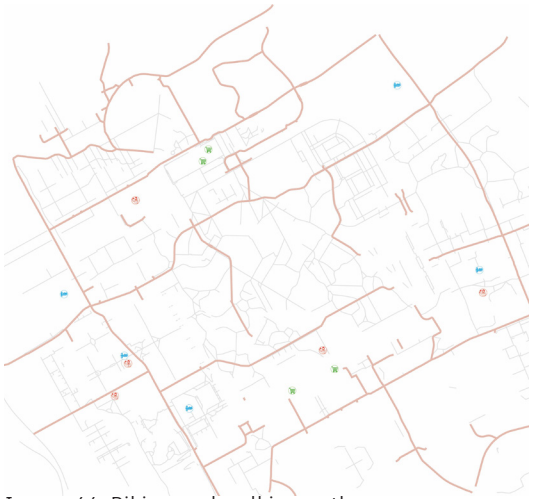


Image 44: Biking and walking paths

Cycling in Amsterdam Zuid-Oost is fragmented and often secondary to car traffic. Arterial roads cut routes, paths connect poorly, and conditions feel unsafe, especially for children and the elderly. As a result, the car is the easier choice, even for short daily trips.

All together

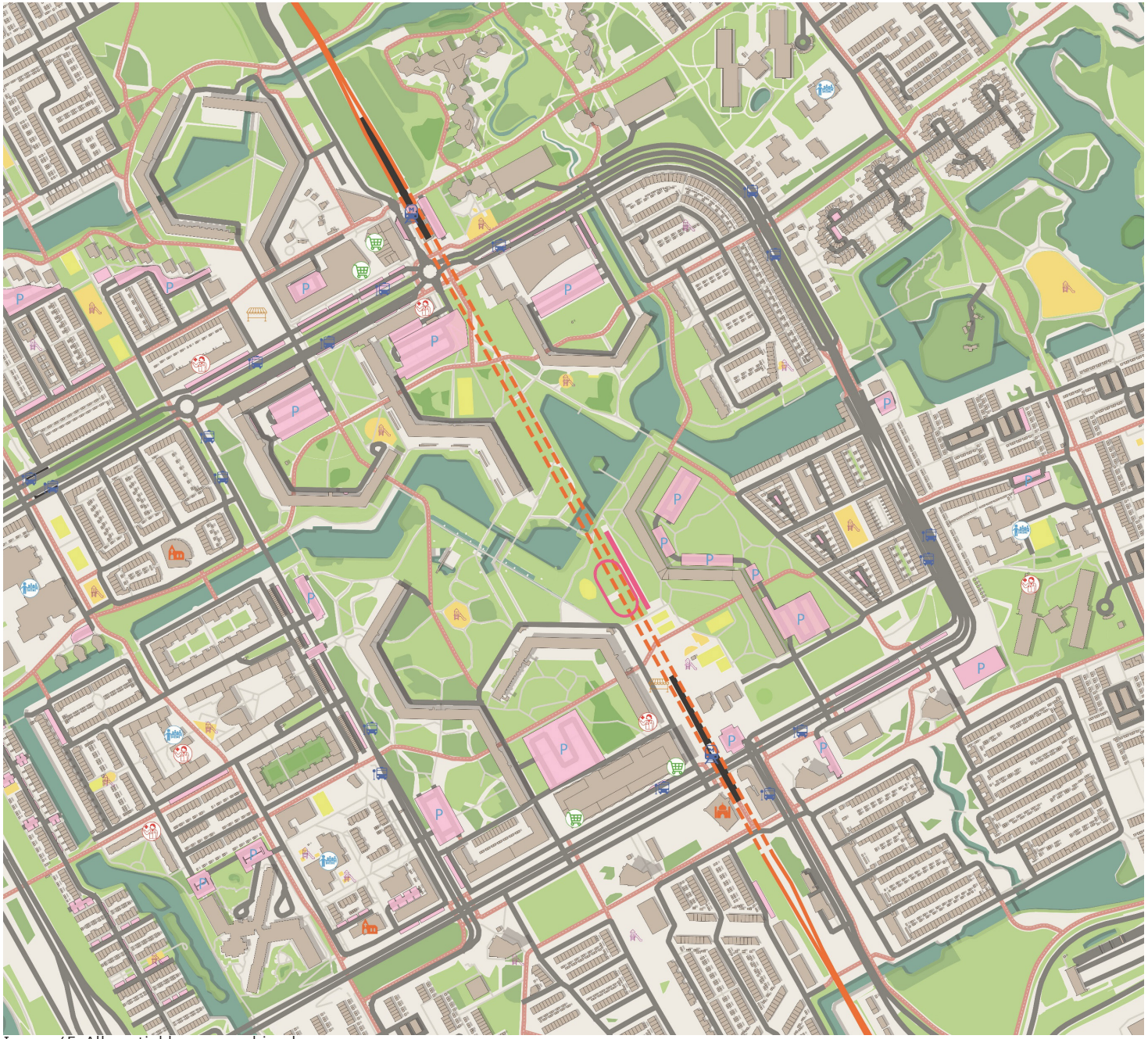


Image 45: All spatial layers combined

When the different spatial layers are combined into a single map, the interrelations between them become clear. The map shows that accessibility for active mobility is heavily influenced by major car infrastructures, which often run close to important amenities. These roads create barriers that make reaching daily services on foot or by bike less direct and less safe. At the same time, the combined view shows the presence of a large amount of green space within the neighborhood, which offers strong potential for improving livability. Yet, this green is empthy, poorly connected and often fragmented by infrastructure, while many leftover spaces remain undefined or underused.

The integrated perspective shows that the challenges in Zuid-Oost are not isolated but interlinked: car dominance shapes the lack in continuity of active mobility, disconnected green reduces the usability of open space, and leftover areas weaken the coherence of the urban fabric. At the same time, it also reveals opportunities—such as the large supply of green and the concentration of amenities—that can be restructured to create a more connected, accessible, and inclusive neighborhood.

4.2 Proximity analysis

For the zoom-in area, a proximity analysis was done by using a 5-minute walking range, to get a view of real close proximity. The map shows that there are two main shopping areas that serve the entire neighborhood. Both of these are located directly along the major car roads, which makes them visible and accessible by car, but less convenient for pedestrians who must cross busy traffic routes to reach them.

The distribution of general practitioners in the area appears well-balanced, ensuring that healthcare services are relatively easy to access for most residents. However, the situation is different for primary schools. All four schools are located outside the central square of the focus area. This means that residents living within the square always need to walk further and, more imporantly, must cross one of the major car road barriers in order to reach a school.

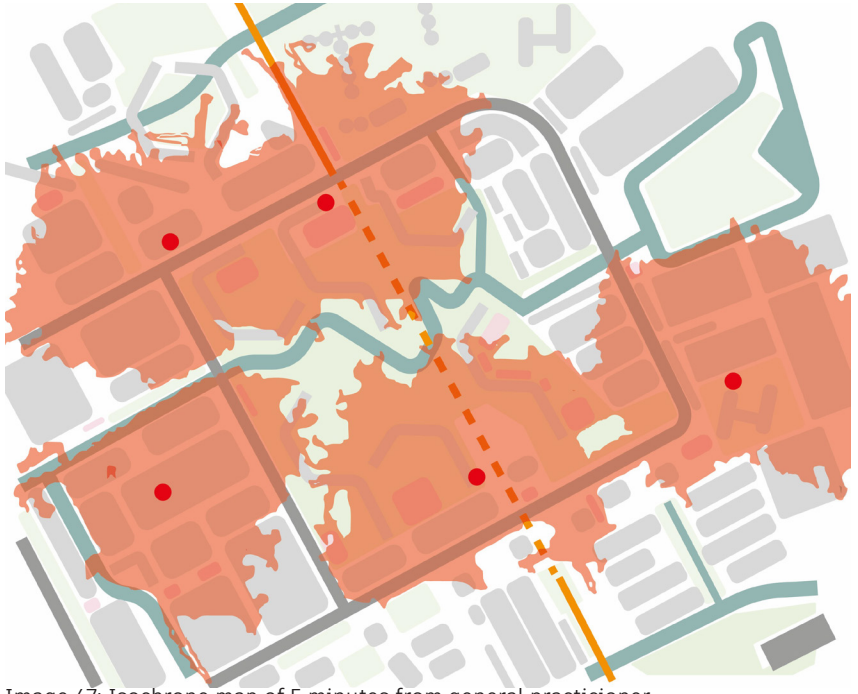


Image 47: Isochrone map of 5 minutes from general practicioner



Image 46: Isochrone map of 5 minutes from grocery store

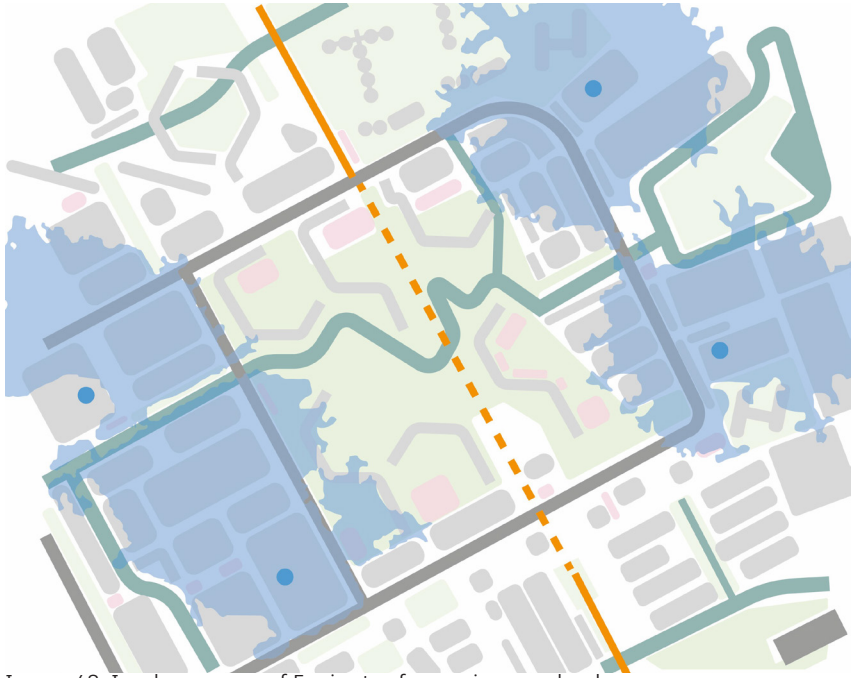


Image 48: Isochrone map of 5 minutes from primary school

4.3 Observations and interviews

To gain insight into the everyday mobility challenges experienced by residents and users of the area, I conducted qualitative fieldwork in the defined focus area. This fieldwork consisted of a combination of systematic observations and semi-structured interviews, allowing both the actual use of space and lived experiences of movement to be examined.

Observations

Over the course of one week, observations were conducted at four representative locations within the focus area. These locations were selected to reflect different spatial conditions and mobility contexts. To ensure consistency and comparability between locations, a structured observation form was developed in advance. This observation form, included in Appendix 1, contains both qualitative and quantitative indicators related to movement patterns, spatial use, and perceived barriers to walking and cycling.

During each observation session, the form was completed on site by the researcher. Quantitative aspects included, for example, the presence and intensity of pedestrian and cyclist movement, while qualitative aspects focused on behavior, interactions with the environment, informal route choices, and visible difficulties or conflicts in the public space. The full documentation of these observations is provided in Appendix 1. This structured approach ensured that observations were conducted in a systematic manner rather than as ad hoc impressions.



Image 49: Locations of observations and interviews

Interviews

At the same four locations, a total of 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents and users of the public space. Prior to the fieldwork, an interview guide was prepared, consisting of predefined questions addressing experienced mobility barriers, perceptions of safety and comfort, and factors that influence the choice to walk or cycle. The full interview guide is included in the appendix.

While each interview was started using this predefined structure, conversations were intentionally allowed to develop in a more open way when relevant themes emerged. This resulted in interviews that combined focused questions with more exploratory discussion, so participants could explain more about personal experiences, routines, and perceptions that could not always be captured through fixed questioning alone.

Notes were taken during the interviews for questions addressing concrete and directly observable issues. More reflective or open-ended discussion points were documented immediately after each interview to minimize recall bias. Each interview was documented individually, and all interview notes are included in appendix 2.

4.4 Spatial barriers

The maps below show the physical barriers to active mobility identified during the fieldwork. These barriers represent spatial obstacles that can be directly observed and mapped, such as discontinuities in walking and cycling networks, unsafe crossings, poor connectivity, and infrastructural constraints. By translating these barriers into a spatial representation, the maps show where the built environment limits comfortable and safe movement through the area and provide a basis for targeted design interventions.

Area 1







Image 50: Spatial barriers area

Area 2

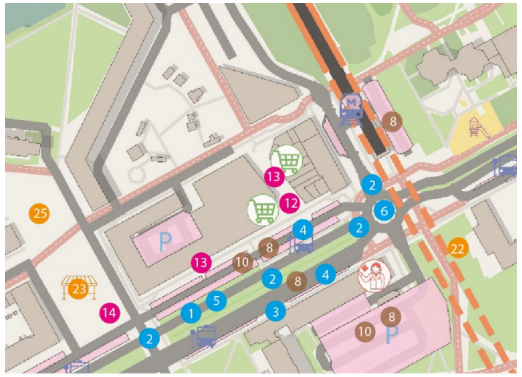




Image 51: Spatial barriers area 2

Area 3





Image 52: Spatial barriers area 3

Area 4

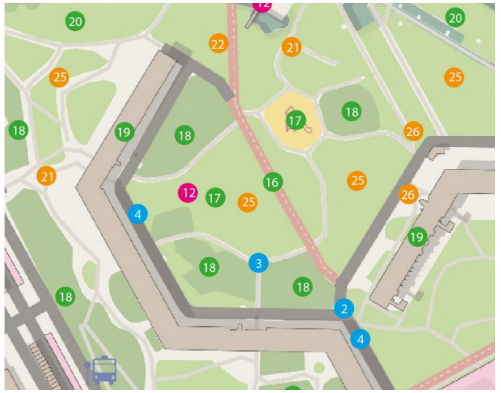




Image 53: Spatial barriers area

Spatial barriers

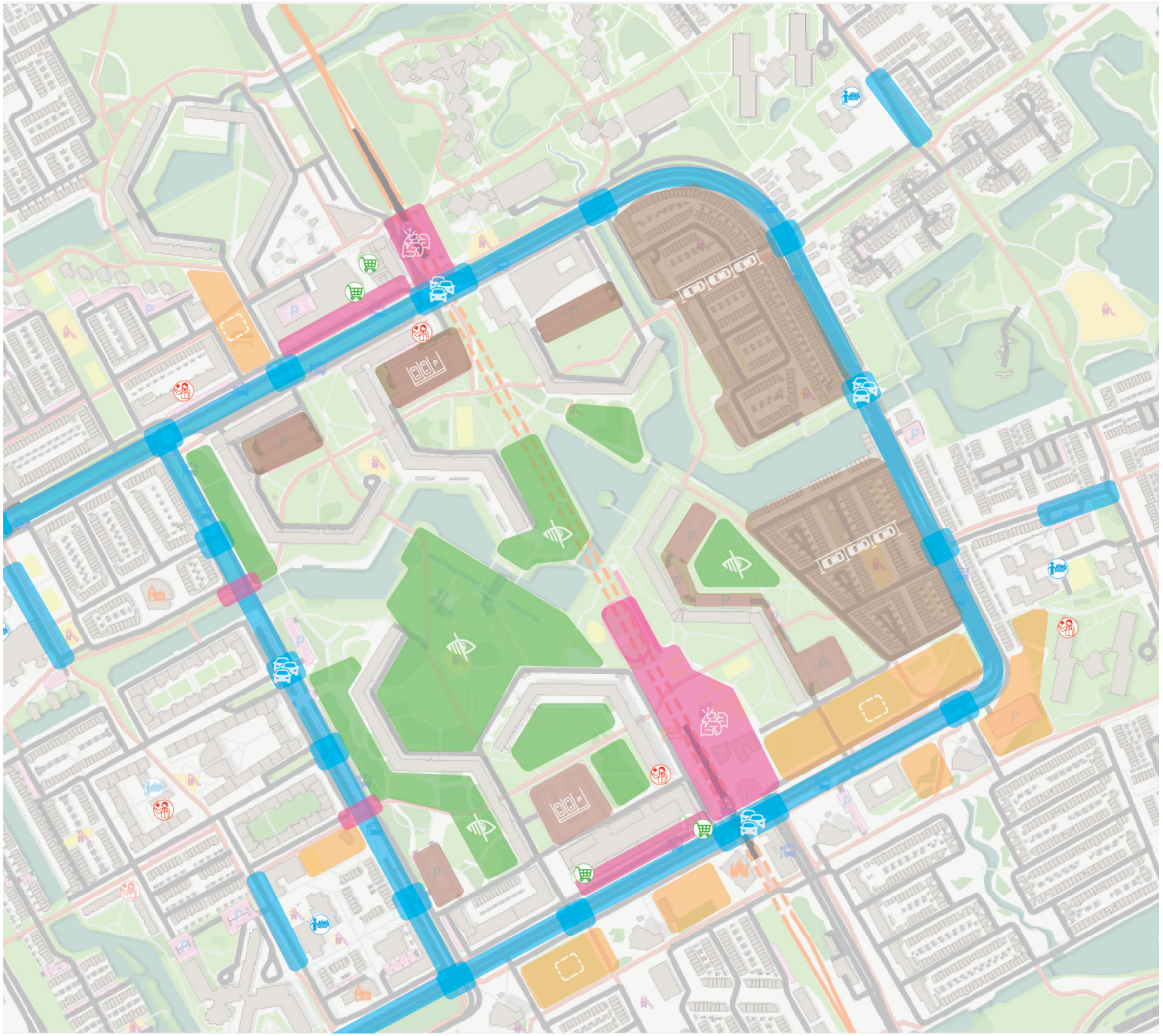
1. Heavy car traffic and high speeds
2. Unsafe pedestrian crossings
3. Sidewalks blocked or unsafe (narrow, obstacles)
4. No or inadequate separated cycling infrastructure
5. Infrastructure acting as a barrier (e.g. roads, rail, water)
6. Dangerous intersections with unclear right-of-way situations
7. Dominance of parking spaces and car infrastructure
8. Parking directly in front of the door makes car use attractive
9. Social nuisance or presence of hanging groups
10. Rushed, functional atmosphere with no invitation to stay
11. Lack of socially appealing public spaces for lingering
12. Lack of lighting along routes and in green areas
13. Lack of social surveillance in quiet neighborhood sections
14. Dense vegetation or poorly visible green zones
15. Blank facades or disorienting building layouts along routes
16. No “eyes on the street”
17. Poorly maintained walking routes
18. Few or no resting places (benches) along routes
19. Lack of shade, greenery, or appealing elements along the way
20. Empty plots without function or social meaning
21. Lack of good bicycle parking facilities
22. Long walking/cycling distances due to disconnected routes
23. Missing safe crossings between green areas or amenities
24. Poor wayfinding and unclear orientation for pedestrians/cyclists
25. General feeling of insecurity, especially at night
26. Cultural habits and preferences reinforcing car use

- Infrastructure & Traffic Safety
- Stay Comfort & Spatial Quality
- Perceived Social Safety
- Dominance of the Car as the Norm
- Route Comfort & Public Space Functionality

The map of all spatial barriers in the area provides an overall view of the main challenges for active mobility in Amsterdam-Zuidoost. This map was created by translating the patterns found in interviews and observations to the entire area (see page to the left), revealing which themes are structurally present in the area.

The analysis shows that car traffic and infrastructure make walking and cycling unsafe, and that car dominance disrupts the continuity of routes for active mobility. In addition, the low staying quality around centers discourages the use of public space, while feelings of social insecurity prevent many people from visiting certain places. Finally, neglected and vacant spaces reduce the attractiveness of routes, putting both active mobility and the general use of public space under pressure.

This map demonstrates that these challenges are not isolated problems but form an interconnected pattern, calling for targeted and integrated design interventions.



(Image 53: Spatial barriers generalised and projected over whole area)

4.5 None-Spatial barriers

Not all barriers to active mobility are physical. Besides infrastructural issues, emotional, cultural, and social factors influence how people move through their neighborhood (Pearson et al., 2023). Interviews showed that many residents face practical and cultural barriers that limit their ability or willingness to cycle. In Zuidoost, several residents—especially those who migrated from countries where cycling is uncommon—never learned how to bike or do not feel confident doing so. Others do not own a bicycle, making cycling impossible regardless of distance or infrastructure. Daily routines also matter: carrying heavy groceries, travelling with several children, or feeling that cycling with kids is unsafe are strong reasons why many households continue to rely on the car.

Safety perceptions add another important layer. Residents described avoiding certain routes because they feel unsafe at night, lack lighting, or attract nuisance groups. Even when a route is technically available, the atmosphere can make it uncomfortable or intimidating, reducing the willingness to walk or cycle.

Together, these insights show that improving infrastructure alone is not enough. Cultural familiarity, confidence, practical feasibility, and perceived safety all shape mobility behavior. This is why the project later introduces supporting measures that complement the spatial interventions and help create the conditions for lasting behavioral change.

None spatial barriers

1. Children cannot move independently and safely on foot or by bicycle
2. Transporting heavy loads or children is difficult
3. Health issues or reduced mobility
4. The car is more practical for combining activities
5. Public transport costs are too high
6. No bicycle available (or poor bicycle condition)
7. Limited cycling experience or lack of confidence

"Because of my health and limited mobility, walking long distances or cycling is not always possible." (person 14)

"I would maybe let my kids walk or bike to school if it actually felt safe — but right now, I just can't take that risk." (Person 6)

"With school drop-offs, errands and work, the car is simply the most practical option." (Person 9)

"I don't even have a bike right now, so cycling isn't really an option for me." (person 4)

"Carrying kids or heavy groceries just isn't doable on foot or by bike — sometimes the car is the only real option."(person 12)

"Public transport is too expensive for short everyday trips."(person 7)

"I don't even have a bike right now, so cycling isn't really an option for me." (person 13)

4.6 Composition of the Interview Sample

To gain a broad and representative understanding of mobility-related barriers in the neighbourhood, the interviews were conducted with a deliberately diverse group of participants. Interviewees were selected to reflect variation in age, gender, mobility behaviour, and background. This diversity was considered important, as different groups experience the built environment in distinct ways and face different constraints in their daily mobility.

By including residents with varying levels of car dependency, different life situations (such as older residents, parents with children, and working-age adults), and diverse cultural backgrounds, the interviews provide insight into a wide range of perspectives. This approach strengthens the reliability of the findings and helps ensure that the conclusions drawn from the interviews reflect the experiences of multiple user groups rather than a single dominant perspective.

Overview of interviewed participants

Person	Gender	Age (indicative)	Background
1	Female	Older adult	Surinamese
2	Male	Older adult	Surinamese
3	Male	Middle-aged	Egyptian
4	Male	Young adult (~20 years)	Moroccan
5	Male	Older adult	Surinamese
6	Female	Middle-aged	Surinamese
7	Male	Middle-aged	African
8	Female	Middle-aged (~50 years)	Dutch
9	Female	Middle-aged (~50 years)	Surinamese
10	Female	Middle-aged (~40 years)	Surinamese
11	Female	Young / middle-aged (~30 years)	Surinamese
12	Female	Young adult (~25 years)	Surinamese
13	Male	Middle-aged (~55 years)	Dutch
14	Female	Older adult (65+)	Surinamese
15	Male	Middle-aged (~40 years)	Dutch
16	Female	Middle-aged (~35 years)	Moroccan

Image 54: Conposition of interview sample

5.
Vision & Principles

6.1 Manifest / Design Vision
6.2 Program of Actions
6.3 Derivation and selection of themes
6.4 Guiding principles per theme

This chapter translates the findings of the analysis into a guiding vision for the redesign of the neighborhood. It begins with a design manifest that outlines the overall ambition and desired future direction for Amsterdam Zuid-Oost. From there, a program of actions is developed, turning the identified challenges into concrete directions for change. The chapter also explains how the main themes of mobility, program, and quality were derived from the analysis. Finally, it sets out guiding principles for each theme, which serve as the foundation for the spatial interventions and design proposals in the following chapters.

5.1 Manifest / Design Vision

In 2050, Bijlmermeer revolves all around active mobility. Walking and cycling form the backbone of the neighborhood, and every aspect of its design supports this. The neighborhood is organized so that slow traffic sets the standard, making it natural to move on foot, by bike, or with public transport.

The route structure is clear and fine-grained. Cycling and walking paths run through the entire district and connect logically with each other. Wide, well-structured avenues link the neighborhoods and provide safe crossings. Routes converge in squares and hubs that not only act as connectors but also as places to pause, meet, or organize activities. Mobility and staying are no longer separated functions, but flow seamlessly into one another.

The car has taken on a strongly reduced role. Streets are designed as living spaces where slow traffic is central and where children can play freely. Parking is concentrated at the edges of the nieghborhood or underneath buildings, preventing public space from being fragmented and disturbed by stationary cars. This creates a coherent, continuous network of spaces for pedestrians and cyclists.

Amenities are located around attractive sub centers and along the central routes and near metro stations. This ensures that residents can easily reach their daily destinations—such as schools, sports facilities, shops, and healthcare—by walking or cycling. At the same time, the clustering of amenities near public transport reinforces the use of metro and train for longer journeys, keeping Bijlmermeer optimally connected to the rest of the city and region.

The routes themselves are attractive thanks to their landscape integration. They run through green avenues and along waterways, ensuring that movement is always combined with a pleasant experience. Variation in atmosphere—from quiet inner gardens to lively cultural squares—gives each route its own character and invites use regardless of weather or circumstances.

Densification takes place around sub-centers with amenities and public transport. Here, urban life is reinforced by clustering new housing, workplaces, and services. These areas attract people and create vibrancy around mobility hubs. The new housing built here is fully oriented toward a car-free lifestyle, with amenities within easy reach, direct access to cycling and walking networks, and excellent public transport connections. This not only makes life without a car possible, but also self-evident.

Social safety emerges from the continuous presence of people in public space. Because residents move through and spend time in the same places, there are always eyes on the street. Diversity is visible and tangible here, not as division but as strength. The presence of different groups and functions creates a natural form of social control and a lively street scene.

Thus, by 2050, Bijlmermeer has become a place where active mobility is the core principle. All other elements—green and water, amenities, densification, and social safety—reinforce this foundation. The result is a district where walking, cycling, and public transport are not only the most logical choices, but also the most pleasant ones. A neighborhood where mobility forms the basis of urban life, and where people feel both free and connected.



Image 55: Visualisation of manifest

5.2 Program of ations

The program of actions structures the design process around three main themes: Mobility, Program, and Quality. Each theme is divided into subtopics that address both physical interventions and policy measures, with a focus on either positive actions (adding and encouraging) or negative actions (removing and discouraging). This framework provides a systematic way to translate the principles of spatial justice into concrete strategies.

Within this framework, six subthemes have been identified as priorities for the project: Active mobility, Car traffic & parking, Barriers & permeability, Public facilities & proximity, Social safety, and Stay & meeting space quality. These topics are marked in darker colors on the diagram and reflect the most urgent challenges for Amsterdam-Zuidoost. By concentrating on these six areas, the program of actions ensures that the design remains both focused and impactful, while still acknowledging the importance of the other supporting subthemes. The complete and fully elaborated list of actions and measures is provided in Appendix 3.

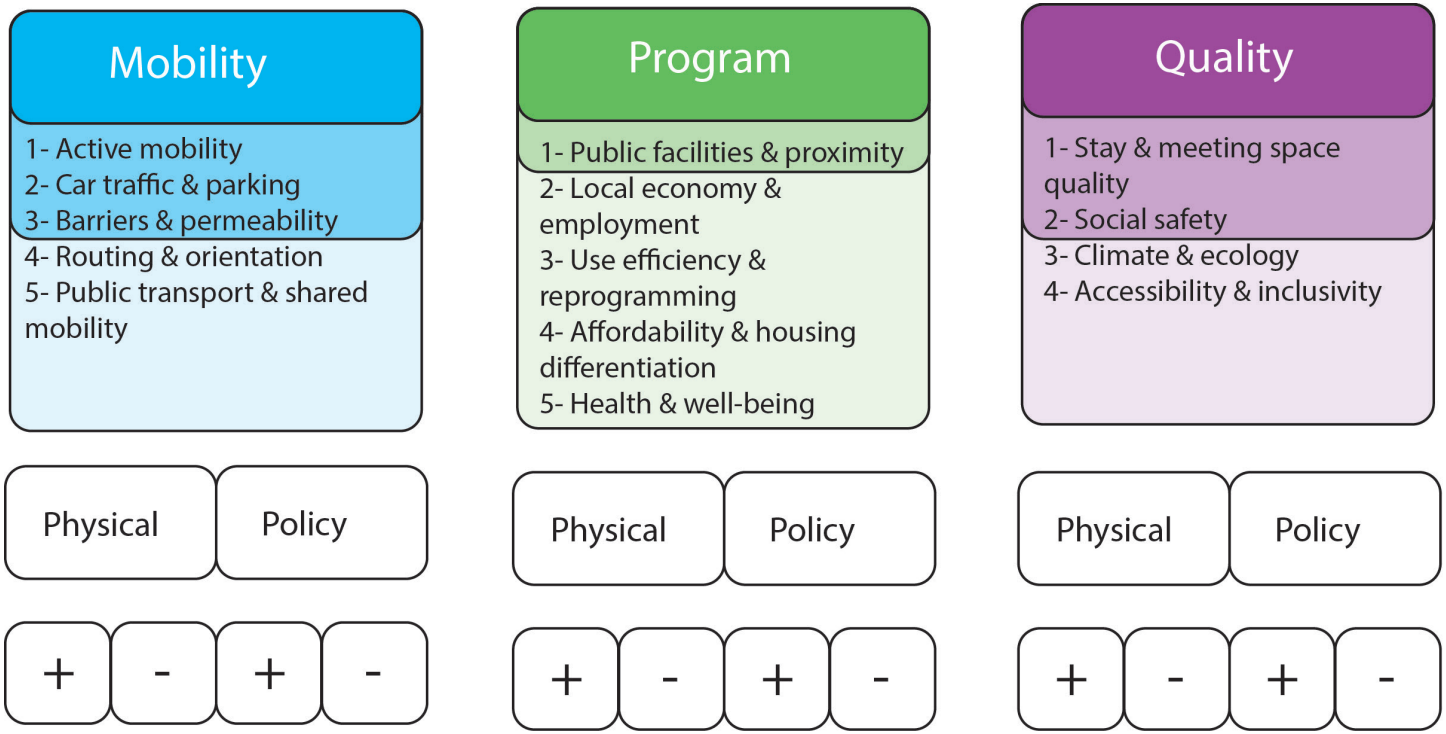


Image 56: Program of actions

5.3 Derivation and Selection of Themes

The themes used in this project are derived from the combination of analytical findings and the theoretical framework. The analysis of spatial and non-spatial barriers, supported by interviews, observations, and mapping, revealed challenges like as car dominance, weak social safety, and limited opportunities for active mobility. At the same time, theoretical concepts like spatial justice (Harvey, Rawls, Soja) and the 15-minute city (Moreno et al.) underline the importance of re-distribution, accessibility, and proximity. By bringing together these perspectives, three main theme groups were formulated: Mobility, Program, and Quality, each with sub-themes that directly translate observed challenges into designable components.

From this framework, six sub-themes were selected as focus themes: Active mobility, Car traffic & parking, Barriers & permeability, Public facilities & proximity, Social safety, and Stay & meeting space quality. These were prioritized because they represent the most urgent issues identified in the analysis and because interventions in these areas are expected to have the greatest impact on promoting spatial justice in this project. The remaining sub-themes remain relevant but serve mainly as supporting conditions.

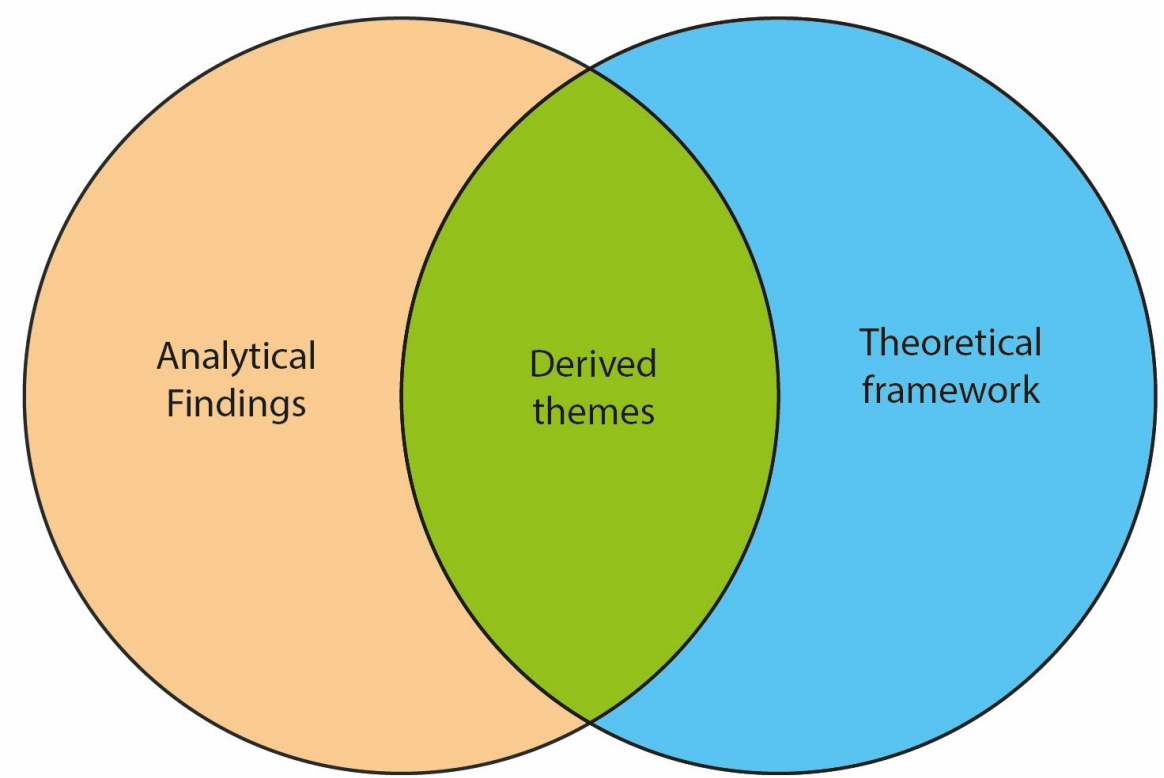
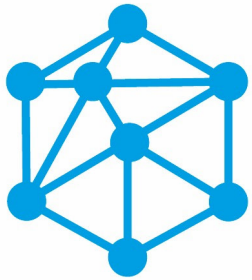


Image 57: Derived themes come from a combination of theoretical framework and analytical findings

5.4 Guiding principles per theme

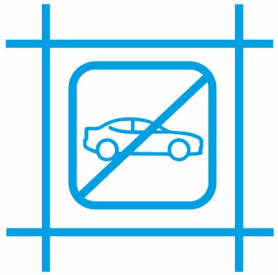
Active mobility- Seamless network



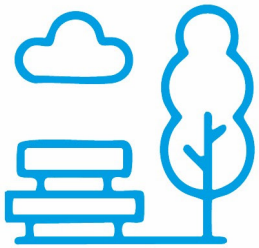
Active mobility- Accesible bike parking



Car traffic and parking- Car free cores



Car traffic and parking- Reclaim public space



Barriers and permeability- safe crossings



Barriers and permeability- Create new connections



Public facilities and proximity- Daily needs nearby



Public facilities and proximity- Densify around centres



Stay and meeting space quality- Public space as destination



Stay and meeting space quality- Lively everyday spaces



Social safety- Safe at all times



Social safety- Eyes on the street



Image 57: Guiding principles per theme

The guiding principles form the foundation of the design approach. They translate the main ambitions of the project into clear spatial directions that can guide choices throughout the process. Each theme contains two principles that together express what the design aims to achieve – whether it is improving movement, strengthening proximity, or creating safer and more inviting public spaces. By defining these principles, the project gains a clear framework that keeps the different layers of the design connected and consistent, from the overall structure of the neighbourhood to the small-scale interventions in public space. The principles are not fixed rules, but act as a compass during the design process: they help to evaluate decisions, inspire new ideas, and ensure that every step contributes to a neighbourhood that is more accessible, active, and pleasant to live in.

Seamless network: A continuous, safe, and attractive cycling and walking network that connects homes, facilities, and transit without interruptions.

Accessible bike parking: Provide visible, well-lit, and easy-to-reach bicycle parking located closer to entrances than car spaces to make cycling the natural choice.

Car-free interiors: Design residential interiors without through car traffic, giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists for comfort and safety.

Reclaim public space: Reallocate road and parking areas to green, social, and active mobility space, supporting interaction and sustainable movement.

Safe crossings: Create safe, well-lit, and clearly structured crossings and tunnels that make moving between areas comfortable for all.

Create new connections: Add new routes and links across barriers to connect fragmented areas and improve accessibility throughout the neighbourhood.

Daily needs nearby: Ensure everyday services such as shops, schools, and healthcare are within a 10-minute walking or cycling distance.

People nearby daily needs: Densify around existing centres to bring more residents and activity close to daily amenities and strengthen local vitality.

Public space as destination: Transform public spaces into attractive places to stay and meet, inviting people to spend time and interact.

Activated urban spaces: Revitalize empty or underused spaces into lively and meaningful areas that support social life and identity.

Safe at all times: Ensure routes and public spaces feel safe day and night through lighting, visibility, and continuous presence of people.

Eyes on the street: Create active and transparent ground floors that provide natural surveillance and increase social trust in public space.

6.
Thematic Interventions

6.1 Active mobility
6.2 Car traffic & parking
6.3 Barriers & permeability
6.4 Public facilities & proximity
6.5 Stay & meeting space quality
6.6 Social safety
6.7 Thematic vision

This chapter works out the design themes into concrete spatial interventions. Each subchapter begins with a map of the before situation, showing the current state of the neighborhood, followed by a thematic map of the after situation where the proposed interventions are visualized. These maps make it possible to see the overall spatial impact of the interventions on this scale.

To complement this, each intervention is further illustrated through zoomed-in details. These show how the interventions are designed to look and function in practice, providing a closer view of the spatial changes and their intended effects. In this way, the chapter translates the guiding principles into tangible strategies for improving mobility, program, and quality within the neighborhood.

6.1 Active mobility

Current Situation

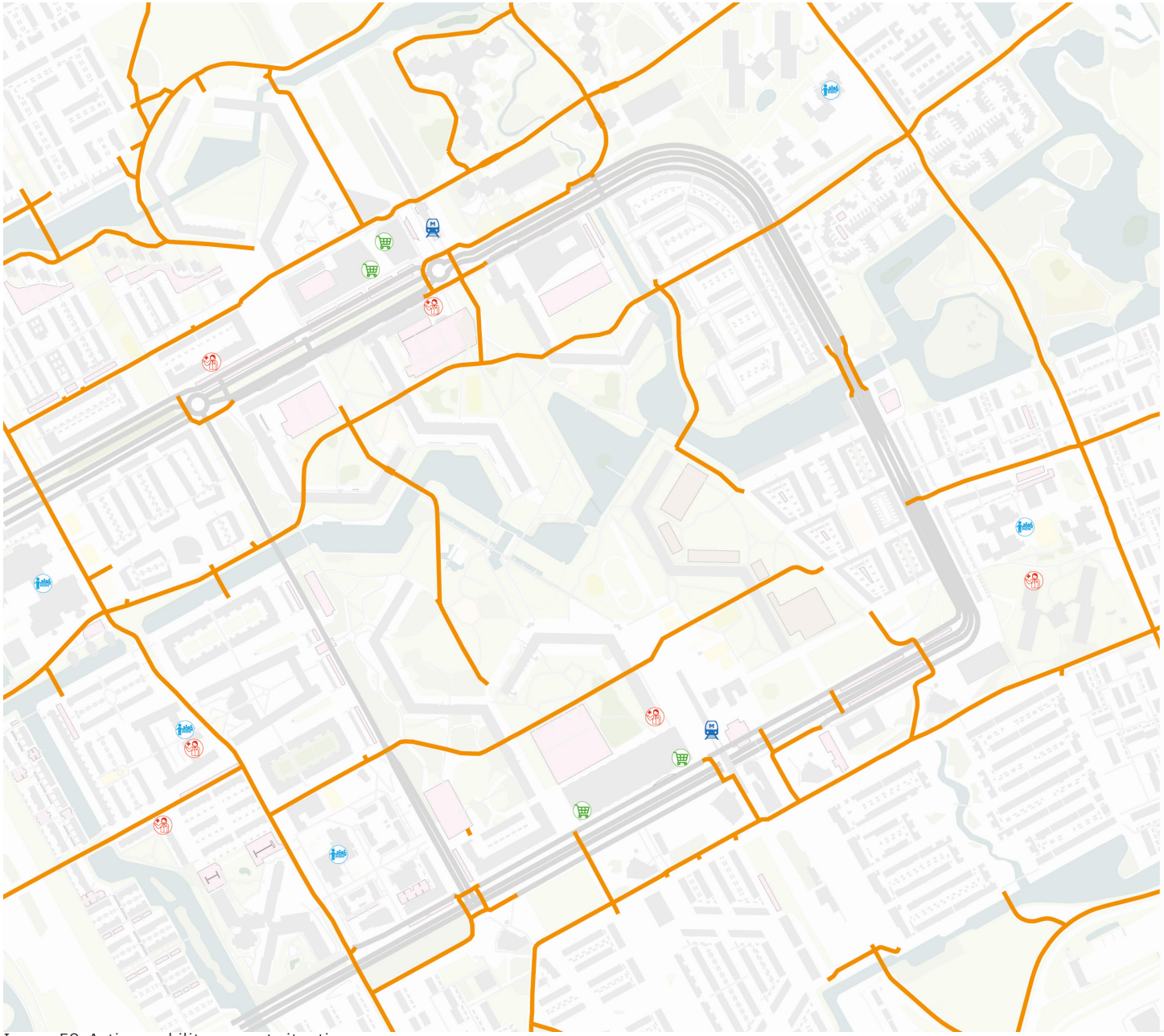


Image 58: Active mobility current situation

Fragmented Network

Cycling in Amsterdam Zuidoost is currently fragmented and often feels secondary to car traffic. Large arterial roads cut through the neighborhood and force cyclists to stop, detour, or merge with car-dominated streets. Many cycle paths simply end or connect poorly, creating unsafe and inconvenient conditions, especially for children or elderly residents who want to move independently. As a result, the car becomes the easy and default choice, even for short trips to school, local shops, or sports facilities. Cycling is possible, but it is rarely pleasant or logical, and this keeps the overall usage low.

Future Situation

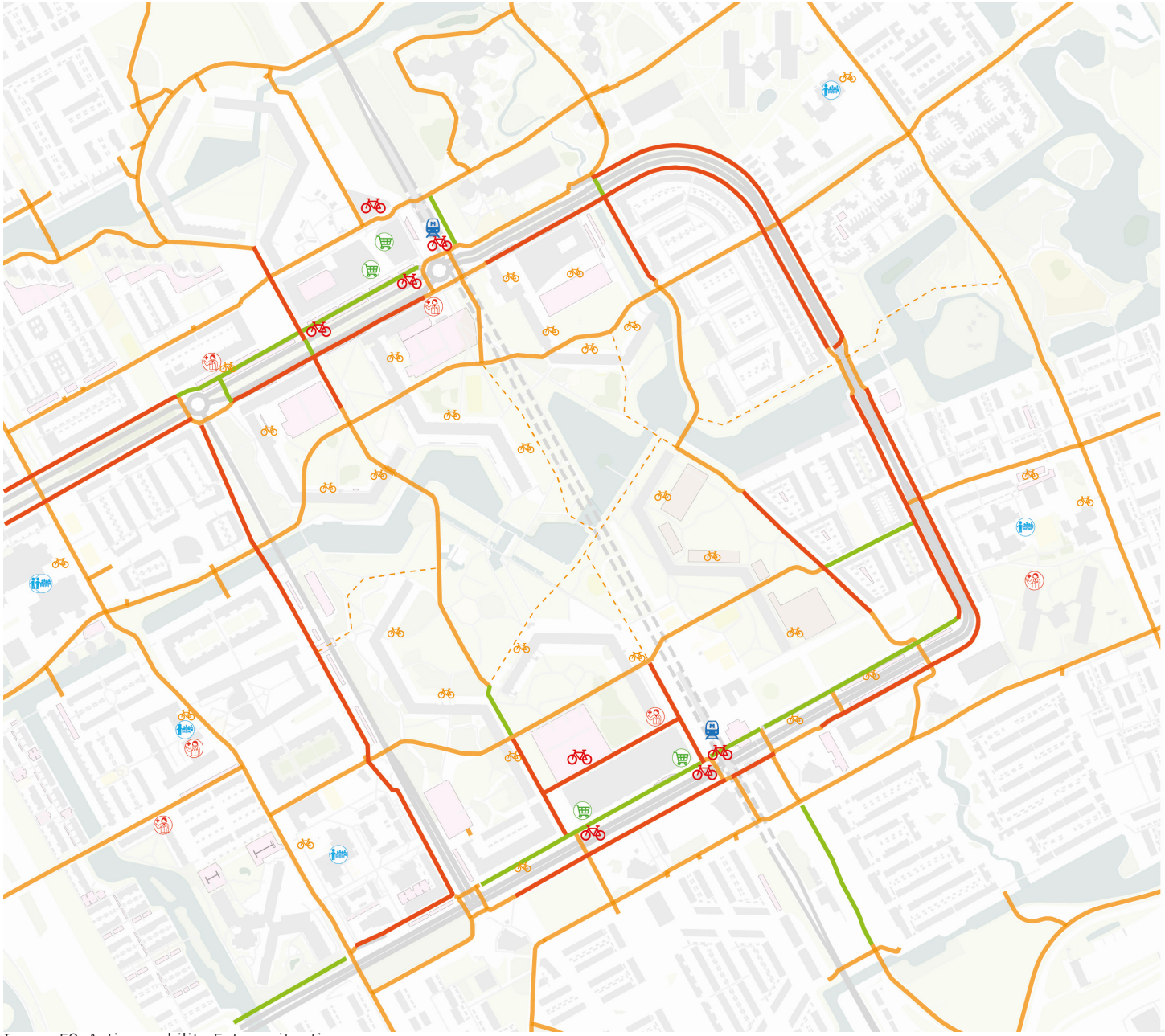


Image 59: Active mobility Future situation

Seamless Network

The new design turns cycling into the backbone of everyday mobility through a seamless, fully connected network. Former car roads become car-free cycling boulevards, neighborhood streets become cycle streets with clear bike priority, and new diagonal links cut across the rigid grid. For the first time, the network is continuous, coherent, and intuitive. New bicycle parking near housing blocks, public amenities, and public-transport hubs—together with shared bikes at strategic points—makes cycling not only safe and attractive but also practical. Cycling shifts from a patchwork of disconnected paths to the most natural, efficient, and reliable mode of transport for all residents of Zuidoost.

From Car Roads to Bike-First Corridors

The street is redesigned to strengthen the district-wide cycling network at the heart of the project. The car-free cycleway replaces the former carraod with a wide two-way path, organized by a centre stripe that keeps movement intuitive. Bollards block car access, with optional gates for emergency or service vehicles. At side streets, the cycleway continues uninterrupted—often on a raised surface—so drivers slow down and yield, ensuring cycling is never disrupted. This directly supports the project's goal of creating safe, seamless corridors where cycling becomes faster and more reliable than driving.

Where cars are still allowed, the street becomes a bicycle-priority street, extending the network through areas that cannot be fully car-free. Cycling clearly leads: speeds are low, and a raised central tile strip keeps cars centred while the rougher edges promote guest behaviour. This strengthens the project's aim of redistributing street space and shifting the mobility hierarchy toward active modes.

Together, these elements create a clear, intuitive, and low-stress cycling system. By eliminating fragmentation and reducing car dominance, the design makes cycling a more natural, convenient, and preferred choice for everyday trips in Zuidoost.

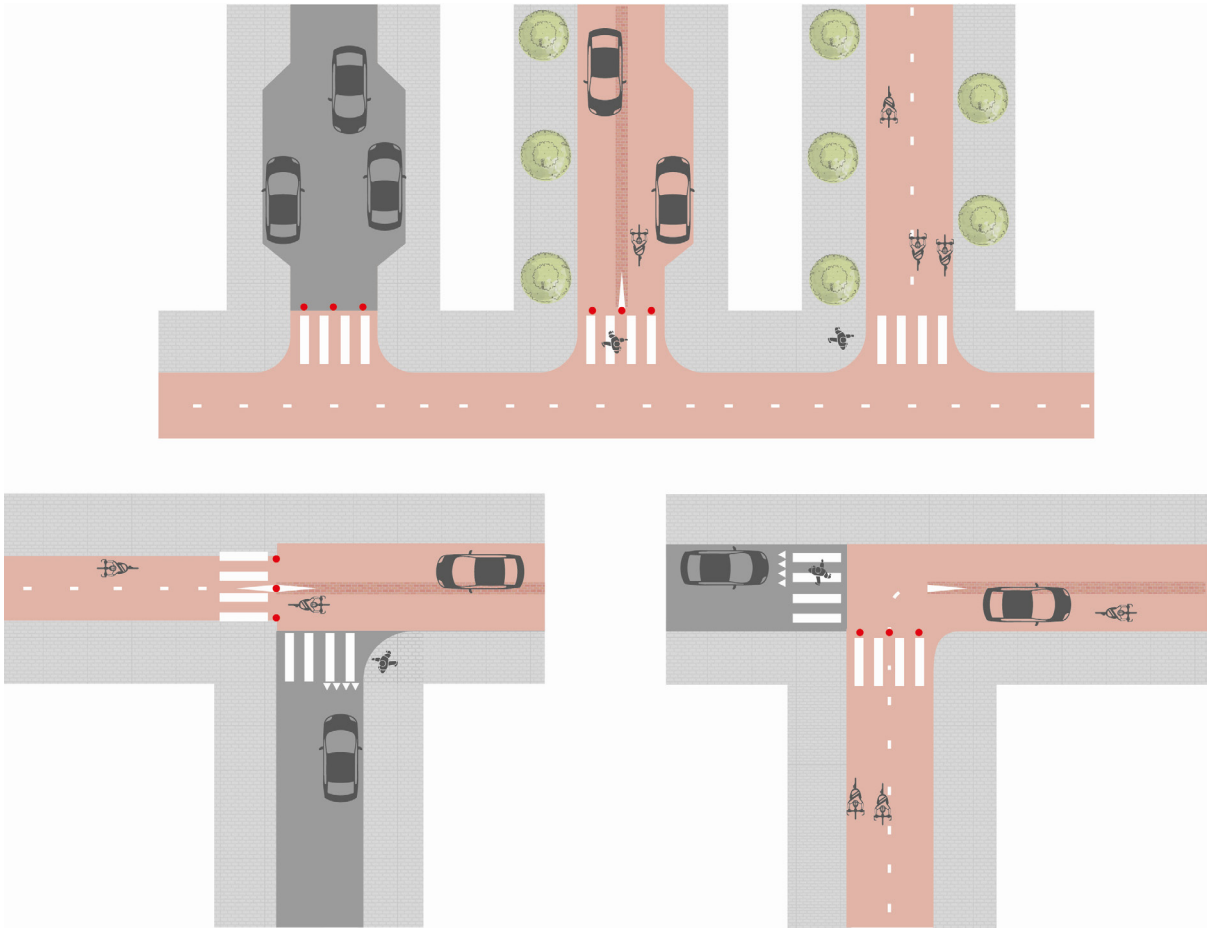


Image 60: Different kind of active mobility intersections



Image 61: Bike path, car free)



Image 62: Biking street, biking shared with car

Covered Bike Parking – Closer Than Cars

Covered shelters with clear roofs and open sides protect bikes from rain while keeping them visible, safe, and easy to reach. The design is modern and open, with good lighting, wide step-free access, and a few reserved spaces for shared e-bikes. Each shelter sits within a small green setting that softens the surroundings and screens the view of nearby parked cars. Planting beds and low greenery make the area calmer and more pleasant, turning bike parking into an attractive part of the streetscape rather than a purely functional object.

Crucially, shelters are placed directly at the entrances of amenities—always closer than car parking—so cycling becomes the quickest and most convenient option for daily errands. The same type of covered and well-designed parking is positioned in front of major apartment buildings, ensuring residents and visitors can always park close to their destination without navigating long distances or inconvenient routes.

This contributes directly to the project by shortening door-to-door travel time for cyclists, it removes small frictions that discourage active mobility, and strengthens the shift away from car dependency. By making bike parking weather-protected, attractive, and unmistakably more convenient than car parking, these shelters reinforce the project's vision of a district where cycling is the natural default for everyday trips.

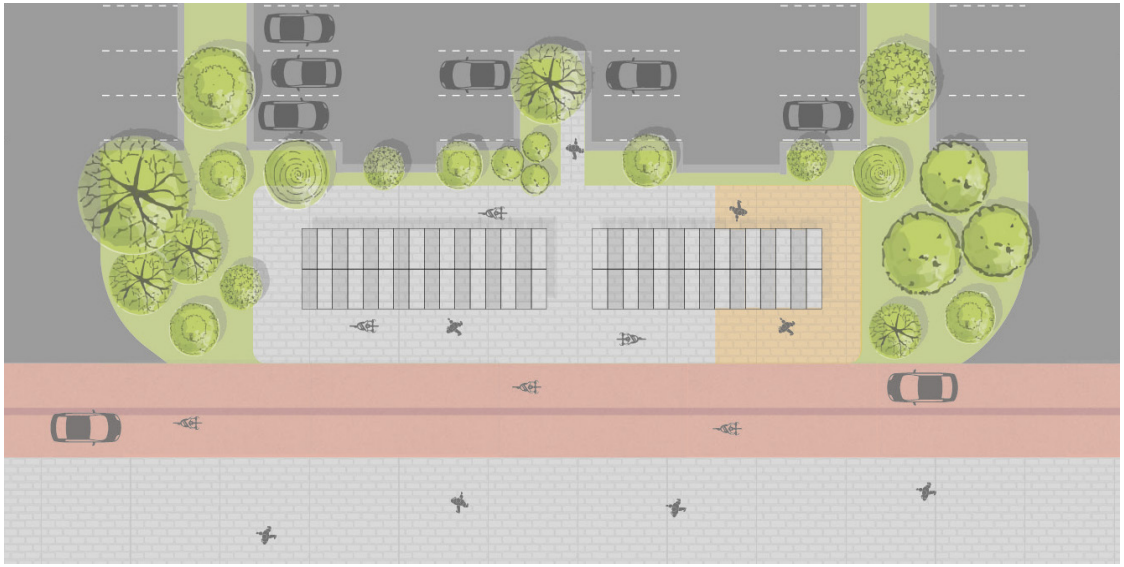
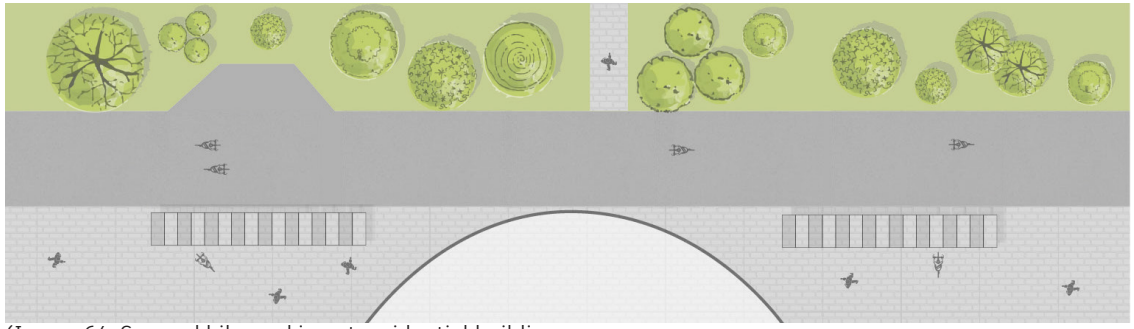


Image 63: Covered bike parking at central amenity locations)



(Image 64: Covered bike parking at residential building



Image 64: Impression of covered bike parking



Image 65: fietsnietje for conveinient bike locking



(Image 66: Oppertunity for shared mobility

Reference: Seville, Spain – Rapid Network Build-out

A powerful reference for reconnecting the cycling network is Seville, Spain. In 2005 the city had only a few fragmented bike paths – roughly 12 km in total – leaving the network incomplete and unattractive for daily use (Euronews, 2018). Starting in 2006, Seville invested heavily in a coherent cycling grid: within two years about 80 km of protected lanes were constructed, forming a continuous, legible network (Marqués et al., 2015; Interreg Europe, 2018). By 2017 the system had expanded to over 170 km of segregated lanes (Urban Mobility Observatory, 2023).

This rapid transformation turned cycling into a mainstream mode of transport. Daily bicycle trips rose from roughly 13,000 in 2006 to more than 70,000 by 2011 (Euronews, 2018), and cycling's modal share increased from 0.5 % in 2006 to around 6–9 % by 2011 (Marqués et al., 2015; Urban Mobility Observatory, 2023). Importantly, this growth represented a genuine behavioral shift rather than merely additional cycling – car use declined in parallel as overall trip patterns changed (GoBike, 2019). By 2021, municipal data reported car trips at approximately 40 % and cycling at ~4 %, suggesting some decline but a sustained cultural presence (Urban Mobility Observatory, 2023).

Seville's experience also demonstrates that such growth is not automatically permanent. After the initial boom, cycling numbers decreased slightly due to reduced investment, political turnover, competition from public transport and e-scooters, and the city's challenging summer climate (Marqués et al., 2015; Urban Mobility Observatory, 2023).

For Amsterdam Zuidoost, this example illustrates the importance of creating a seamless cycle grid that overcomes current fragmentation. Just as in Seville, many existing routes in Zuidoost are disconnected, forcing detours or unsafe crossings. By systematically linking these routes into a coherent network and prioritizing bicycles over cars in key corridors, Zuidoost can transform its existing green structure into a functional, attractive system for active mobility. The Seville case proves that such a shift is not only possible but also effective in changing mobility patterns and reducing car dependency – provided the network continues to be expanded, maintained, and supported over the long term.

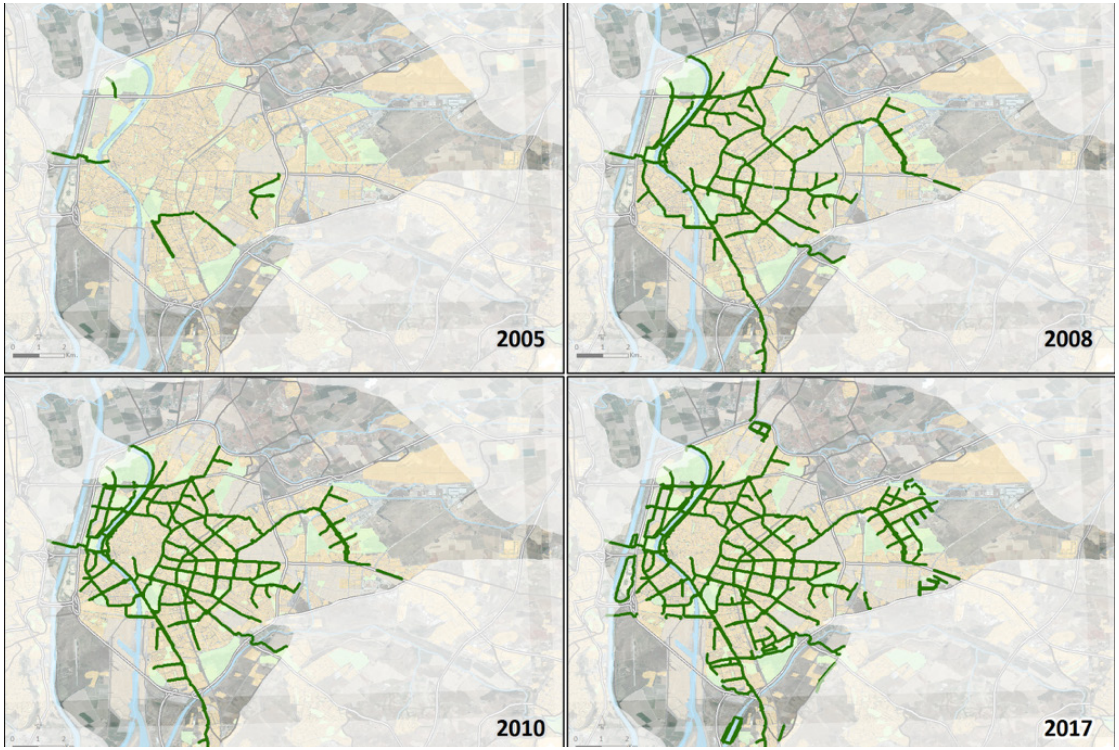
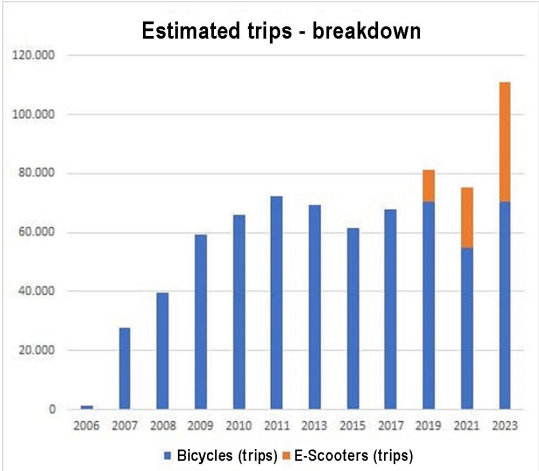


Image 67: Growing active mobility network in sevilla over the years (Marqués et al., 2015; Interreg Europe, 2018)

Transport Mode	2007	2009	2011
Bicycle	5.0%	6.6%	8.9%
Public Transport	30.7%	32.5%	34.8%
Motorbike	7.1%	8.1%	8.0%
Car	57.7%	52.8%	48.3%

(Image 68: Effects of growing active mobility network in sevilla over the years on bicycle and car use (Marqués et al., 2015; Interreg Europe, 2018)



(Image 69: Effects of growing active mobility network in sevilla over the years on bicycle trips (Urban Mobility Observatory, 2023)

6.2 Car traffic and parking
Current Situation

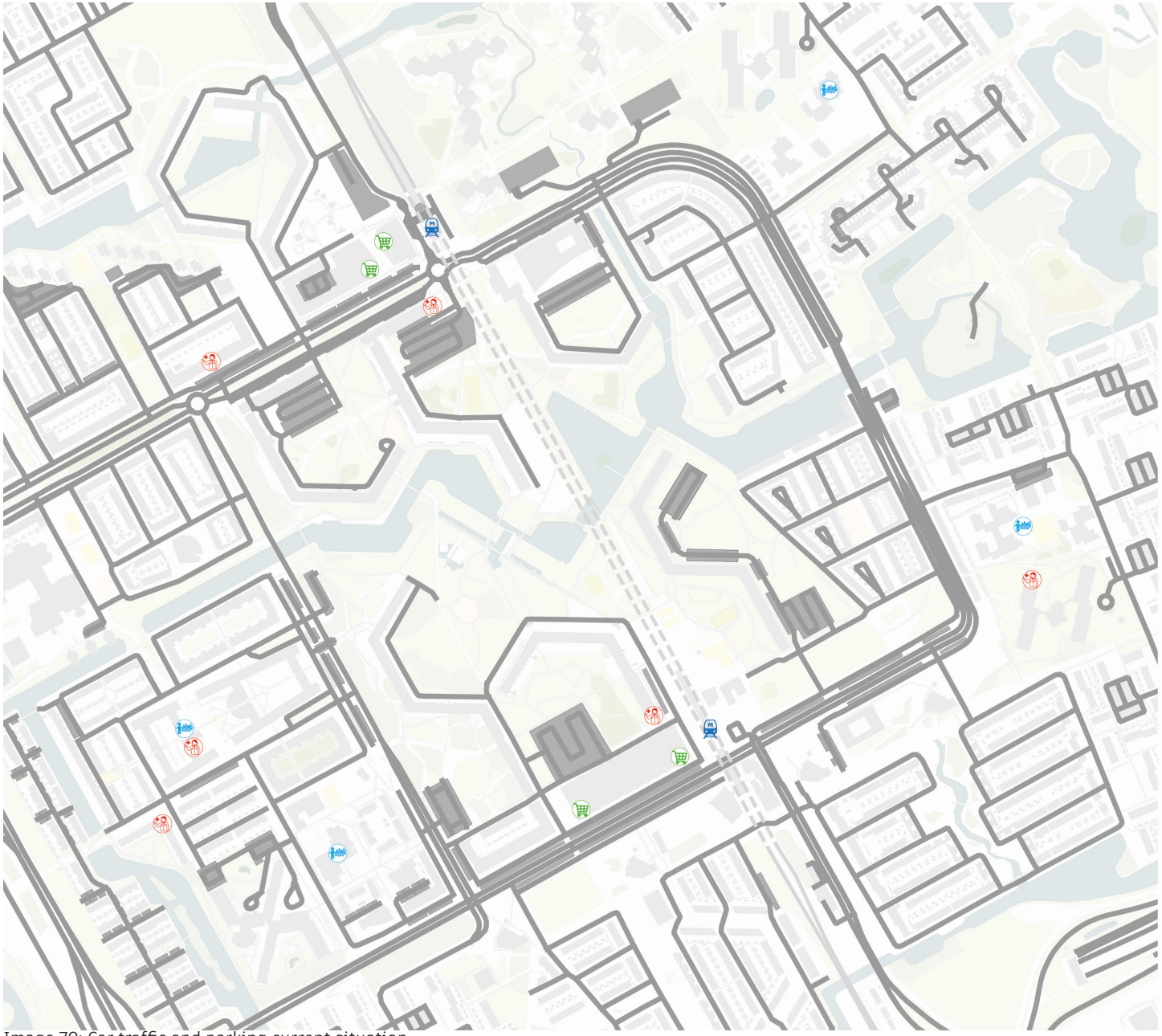


Image 70: Car traffic and parking current situation

Streets Ruled by Cars

Today, the car dominates both the main roads and the smaller neighborhood streets of Zuidoost. A broad multi-lane traffic artery slices through the district, acting as a barrier that isolates neighborhoods from one another. Within residential areas, cars take up a disproportionate amount of space with endless parking rows and streets designed primarily for car access. This suppresses the quality of public space, makes walking and cycling less safe and less inviting, and reinforces dependence on private vehicles.

Future Situation



Image 71: Car traffic and parking Future situation

People Centered Streets

The car is no longer the default in the redesigned Zuidoost. Large traffic corridors are transformed into car-light or completely car-free streets where pedestrians and cyclists take priority. Inside the residential neighborhoods, many streets close to through-traffic altogether, creating safe, comfortable, and child-friendly environments. Parking is gradually reduced and relocated into underground or integrated building solutions, freeing surface space for greenery, play areas, and social interaction. Parking remains available but is concentrated in central edge parking areas, where residents can also access shared cars—further reducing private car ownership by offering a convenient alternative. What was once dominated by parked cars and traffic becomes a shared urban landscape designed for people.

Mobility corridor profile change

In the current situation (image 1), the street consists of four separate traffic lanes divided by narrow strips of greenery. On both sides, long rows of parking spaces dominate the profile, leaving little room for pedestrians and cyclists. The result is a car-oriented, stony, and unattractive environment that mainly encourages car use.

In the intermediate phase (image 2), the four lanes are reduced to a single central carriageway. Instead of rebuilding the entire street, one of the two central lanes is retained and widened by half a lane to allow for two-way traffic. This means only one lane needs to be removed and the other slightly adapted, avoiding the need for a full reconstruction. The freed-up space on both sides becomes available for green zones, while the outer lanes are converted into cycle streets: slow-traffic routes where bicycles have priority and cars are only “guests.” Although many parking spaces are still present at this stage and the green strips are not yet fully functional as recreational or ecological areas, the street already feels greener, more coherent, and friendlier to active mobility.

In the final stage (image 3), all parking spaces have been removed. The wider strip of greenery is located on the side of the public facilities, where it is developed into a high-quality recreational zone with seating, trees, and meandering paths that support staying and meeting. The narrower strip on the opposite side is designed as an ecological corridor, reserved for biodiversity and nature continuity rather than human use. Together, these complementary green zones create a balance between ecological value and human comfort. Walking and cycling become safer, more attractive, and more logical than taking the car, while car use is discouraged by the removal of parking facilities and the relegation of cars to a secondary, subordinate role. The result is a green, low-traffic profile that makes the shift to active mobility the natural choice.

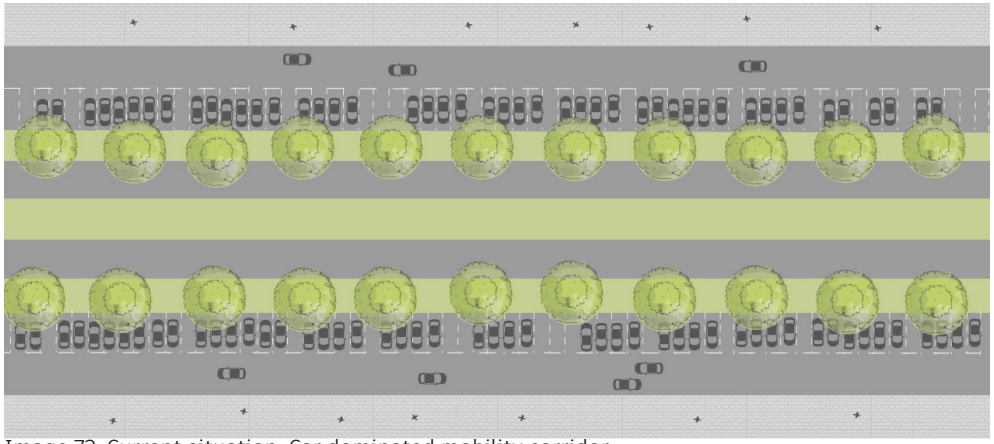


Image 72: Current situation: Car dominated mobility corridor

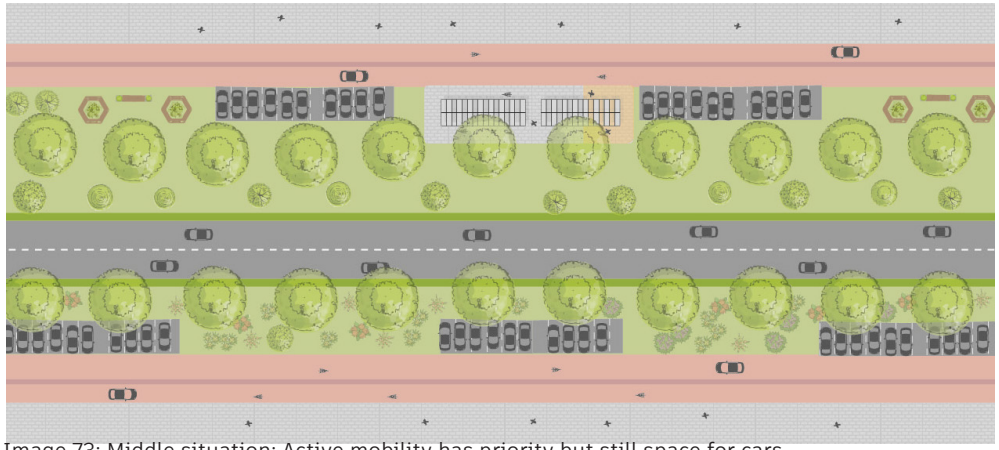


Image 73: Middle situation: Active mobility has priority but still space for cars

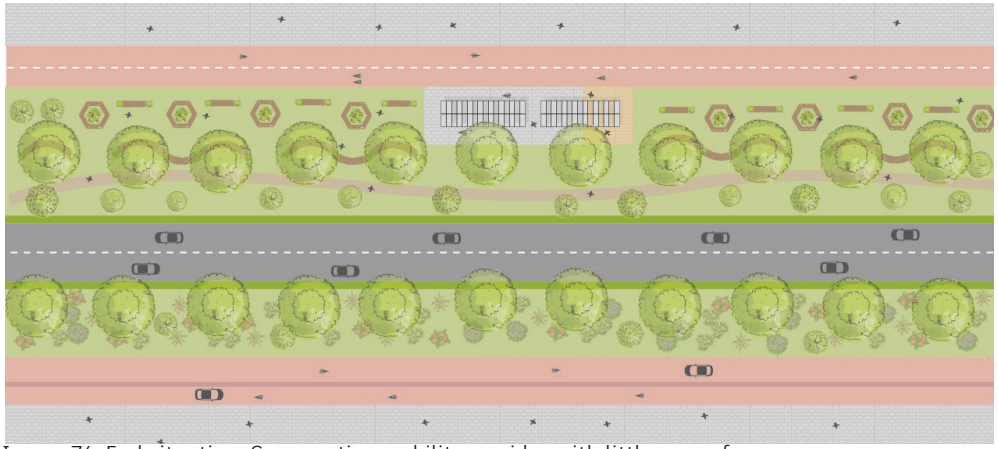


Image 74: End situation: Green active mobility corridor with little space for cars

Mobility corridor section change

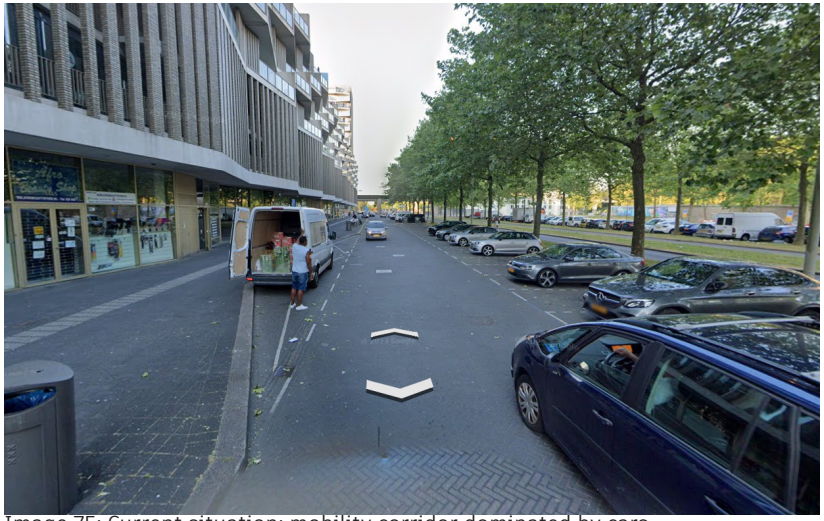


Image 75: Current situation: mobility corridor dominated by cars

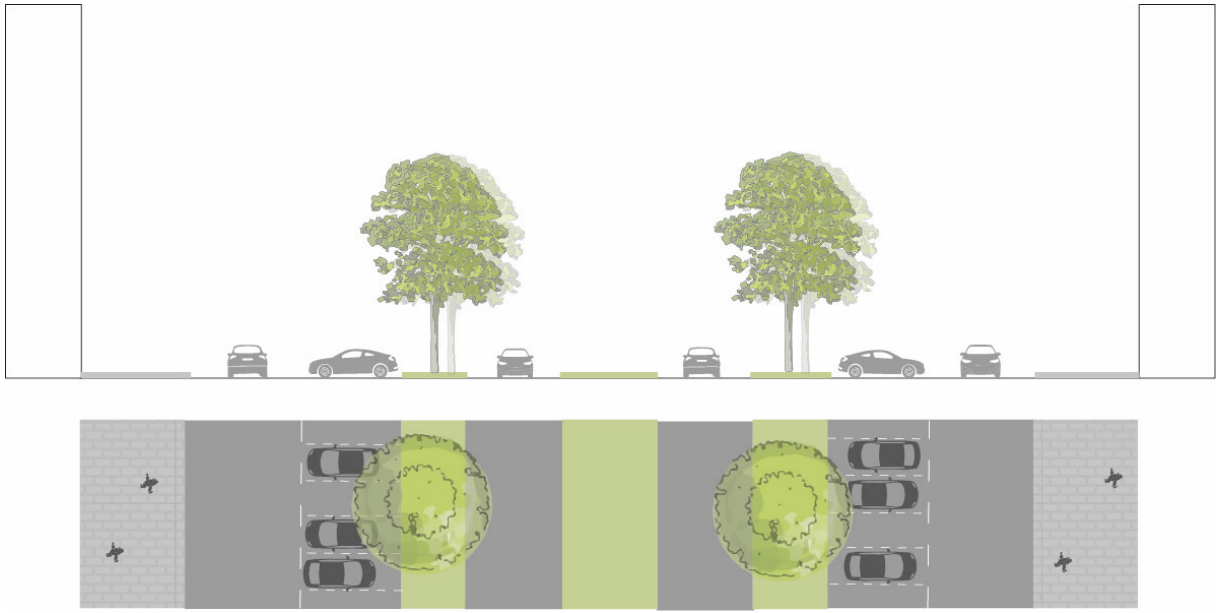




Image 76: End situation green and active mobility corridor



Car-Free residential street

The transformation of this street demonstrates how a car-dominated through-route can be reimagined into a lively and people-centered public space. Where the street once primarily served as a passageway for motor traffic, it has now been redesigned as a car-free environment. A removable bollard restricts car access, allowing only emergency and maintenance vehicles when necessary. The freed-up space has been redefined with greenery, wide pedestrian areas, and seating, creating a more comfortable and social atmosphere.

Planters filled with trees and flowers bring shade, biodiversity, and a sense of human scale to the street. People are now encouraged to walk, linger, and interact in an environment that feels safe and welcoming. The transformation shifts the street's role from a transit corridor to a place of encounter and activity.

This new design actively promotes active mobility by making walking and cycling more attractive, safe, and enjoyable. The removal of cars reduces noise and pollution, while the introduction of greenery improves the microclimate and overall well-being. In doing so, the street evolves from a route of movement into a vibrant social space that supports health, sustainability, and community life.

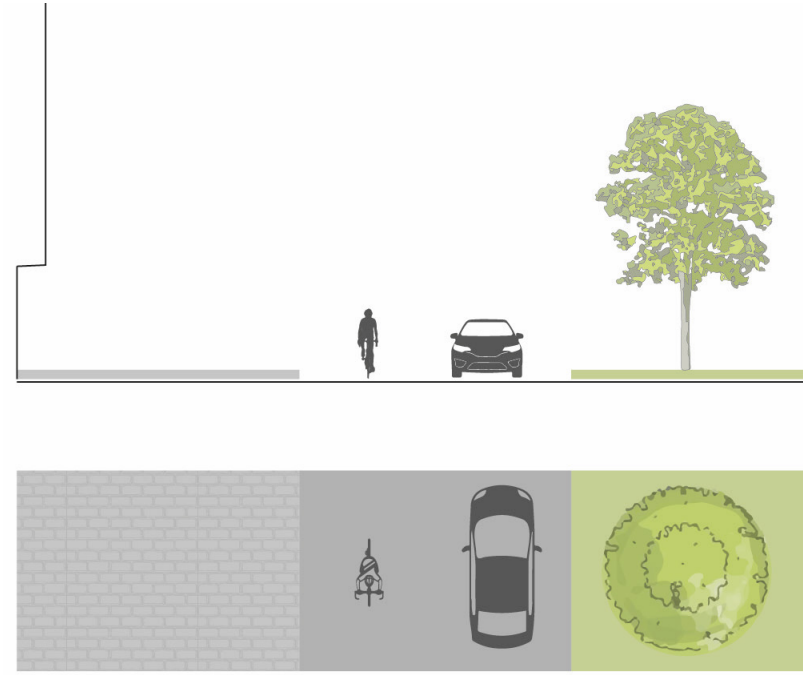




Image 77: Current situation: Car dominated residential street

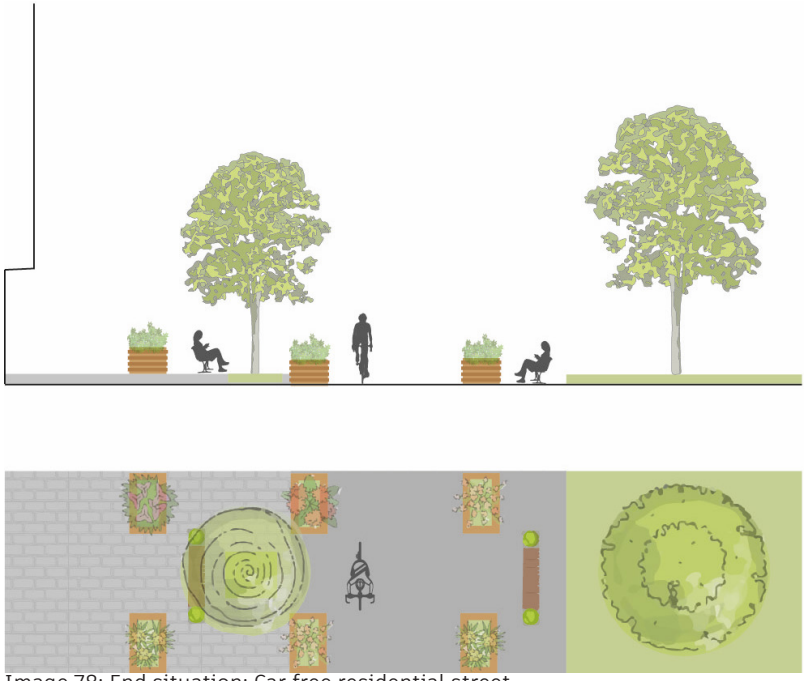




Image 78: End situation: Car free residential street

Reference: Barcalona, Spain- superblocks (Model superilles)

The superblocks in Barcelona serve as a strong reference for my project because they demonstrate how the accessibility of a neighborhood can be restructured. Instead of cars cutting through every street, motor traffic is restricted to the perimeter. This creates an inner area free from car dominance, where space is given back to cyclists, pedestrians, and social life. The concept aligns closely with the ambitions for Amsterdam Zuidoost: by removing cars from the heart of the neighborhood, a softer, greener public realm emerges that is safer and more pleasant for residents (Casamona, 2022).

However, the Barcelona experience also shows that such radical transformations are not easy to implement. Only a few superblocks have been fully realized, as the broader rollout faced political debates, local resistance, financial limitations, and logistical challenges such as access for deliveries and public transport. This indicates that while the vision of car-free inner areas is powerful, the process of implementation requires careful phasing, community engagement, and attention to co-existence with urban functions (Casamona, 2022).

For the Bijlmer, this means the lesson is not only in the design concept but also in the strategy. Zuidoost already contains large green spaces within its structure, so the main challenge is not to add greenery but to take decisive steps in removing cars from the streetscape. By gradually reducing parking and through-traffic, and replacing them with high-quality walking and cycling routes, spaces to meet, and areas to stay, the existing green network can be strengthened while avoiding the pitfalls Barcelona faced. The result is a more connected and people-oriented public realm, achieved through a realistic and locally grounded process (Casamona, 2022).

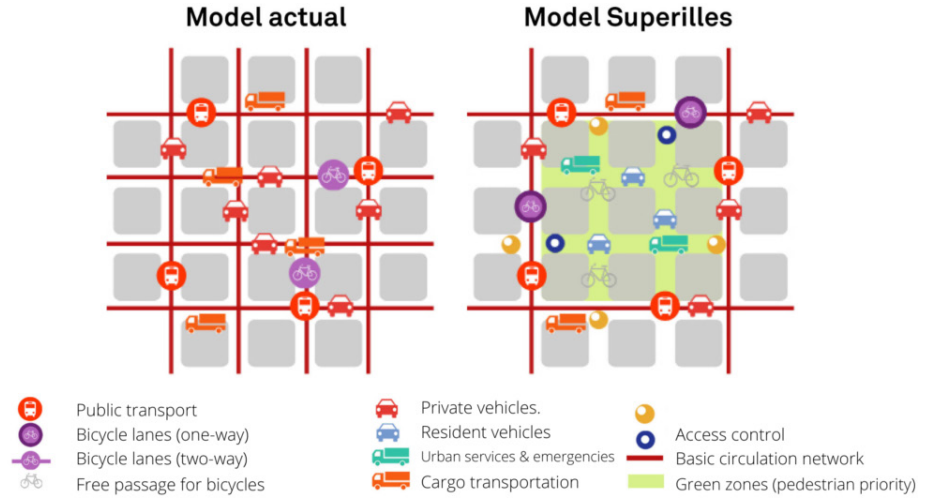


Image 79: Model superilles Barcalona (Casamona, 2022)


Image 80: Car free street (Casamona, 2022)


Image 81: New green pedestrian zone (Casamona, 2022)

6.3 Barriers and permeability
Current Situation

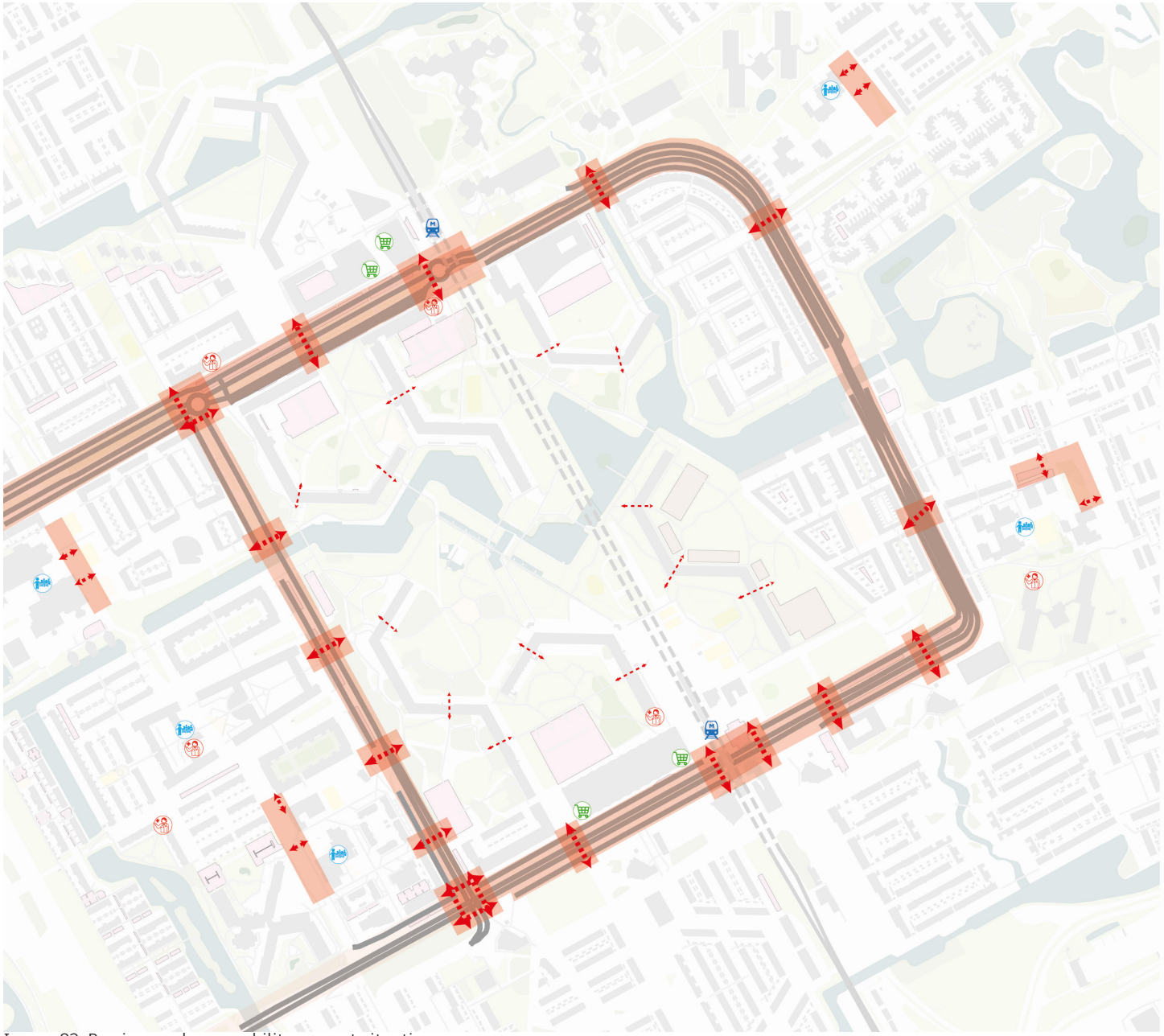


Image 82: Barriers and permeability current situation

Devided by Barriers

Movement through the neighborhood is constrained by major physical barriers. The wide four-lane road forms the sharpest divide, making it uncomfortable and often unsafe to cross on foot or by bike. Tunnels and passages under roads and buildings exist, but they are narrow, poorly lit, and intimidating, particularly after dark. This discourages use and forces people onto longer, roundabout routes. For children, elderly residents, and those with limited mobility, these barriers create significant obstacles to independent and active movement.

Future Situation

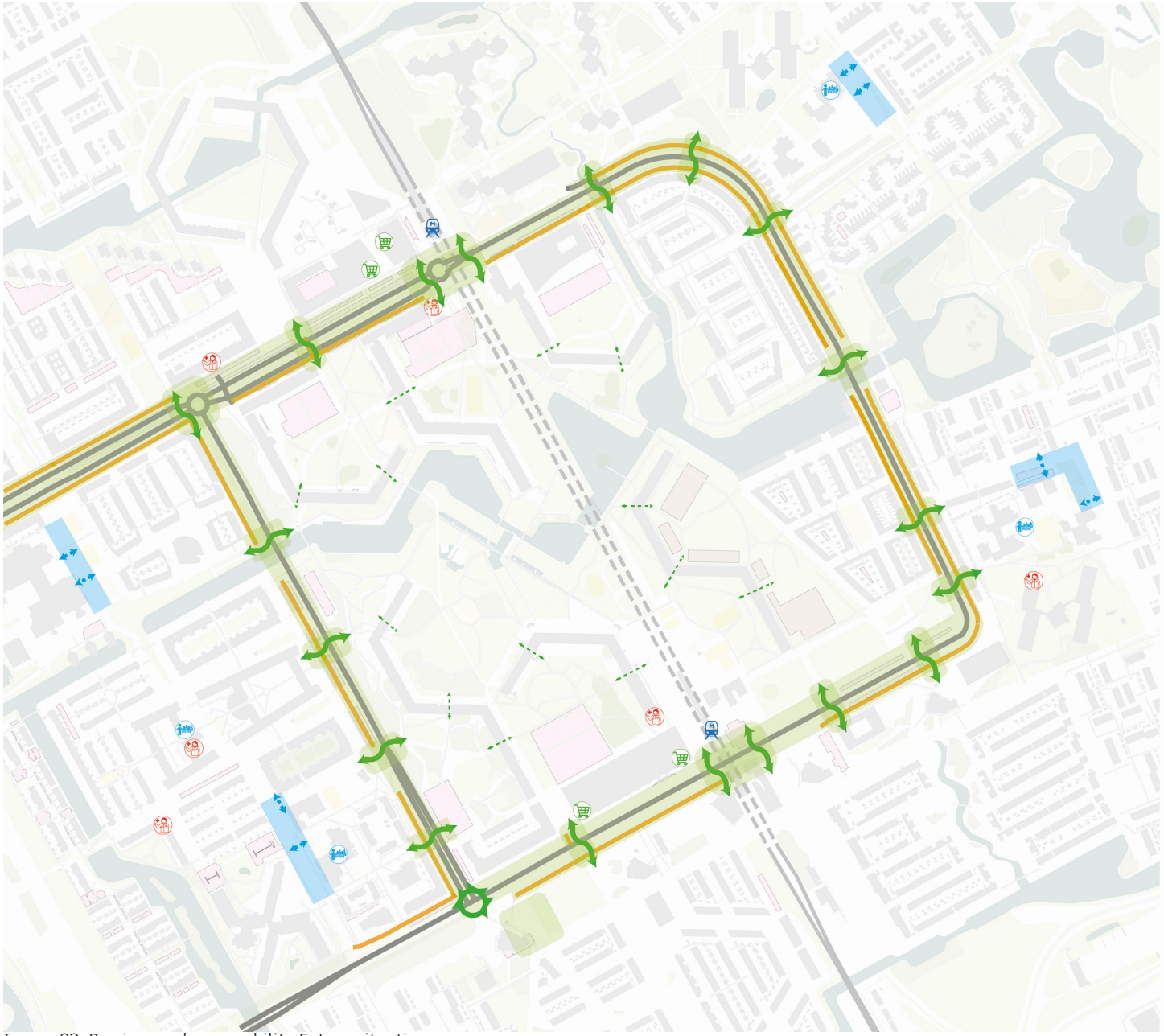


Image 83: Barriers and permeability Future situation

Connected by Crossings

Barriers are actively dismantled and replaced with a network of safe and legible crossings. Intersections are redesigned with shorter crossing distances, clear markings, and speed-calming measures, making it easy for even children to cross independently. Additional crossing points close gaps in the pedestrian and cycling grid, while tunnels and passages are widened, brightened with high-quality lighting, and reshaped to provide clear visibility and an inviting atmosphere. The result is a permeable neighborhood where walking and cycling routes are direct, safe, and accessible to everyone, regardless of age or ability.

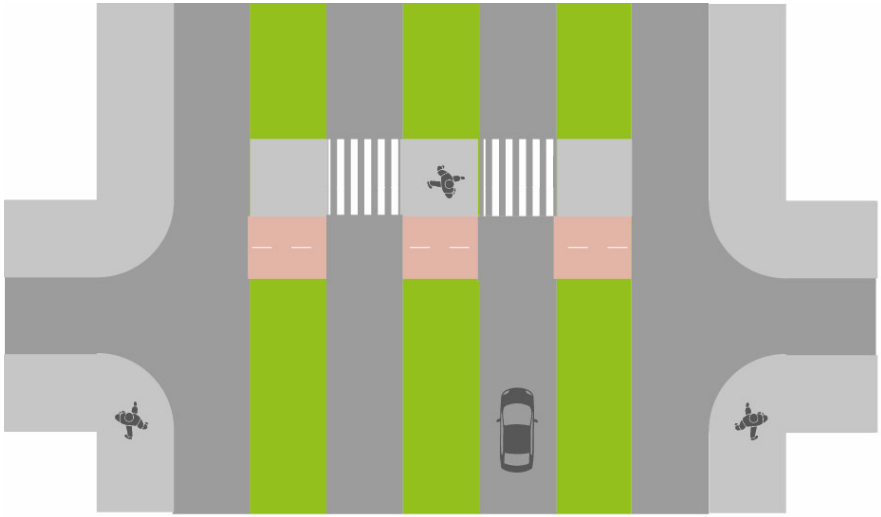
Current crossings

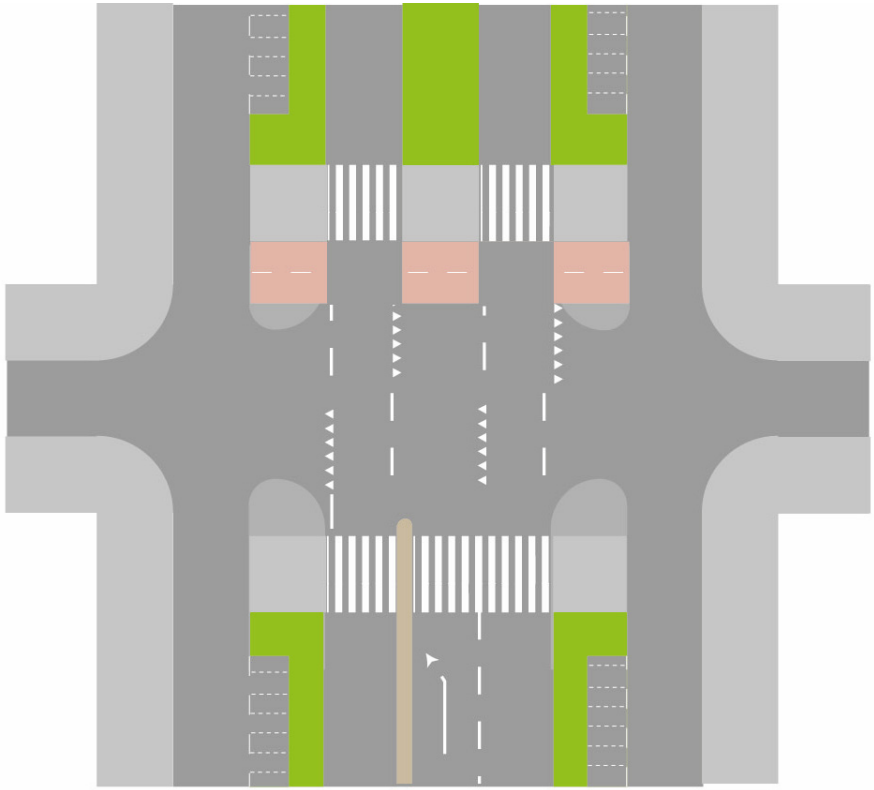
In the project area, several crossings can be found. The photo shows one of these crossings, but there are more, each with slightly different sizes and layouts. However, the overall essence remains the same: large intersections designed primarily around car traffic. To illustrate this, I have included a simplified general version that represents how most crossings in the area look. Above that, an image is shown of a single crossing point without an intersection. These are less common and somewhat simpler, but they were a useful starting point for the design process because of their reduced complexity.

What immediately stands out in all cases is the sheer size of the junctions and the enormous amount of asphalt that dominates the space. Wide carriageways, multiple turning lanes, and fragmented bicycle paths make the act of crossing long and uncomfortable. For pedestrians and cyclists, these intersections feel more like obstacles than connections. Waiting times at traffic lights can be long, and the fragmented layout forces active mobility users to cross in multiple stages rather than in one smooth movement. Instead of stitching neighborhoods together, the crossings often form boundaries that divide them, making walking and cycling less attractive compared to driving.



Image 84: Existing intersection crossing


Image 85: Existing crossing simplified


Image 86: Existing intersection crossing simplified

Future crossings

For the redesign of the crossings, three options have been developed.

The first keeps the two-lane profile with a green strip but narrows into one carriageway at crossings. This way, pedestrians cross in a single movement instead of stopping midway.

The second merges the two lanes into one central road that continues through intersections, reducing asphalt and simplifying the layout.

The third also uses one central carriageway, but it splits into two lanes at intersections with a middle refuge island, combining continuity with some extra turning capacity.

In all three cases, the outer lanes are transformed into bicycle streets, giving priority to cyclists while still allowing limited car access. At the crossings, speed bumps are added to slow down motorized traffic, and the cycle paths are drawn through continuously to provide cyclists with clear and uninterrupted routes.

These changes promote the use of active mobility because they shorten and simplify crossings, reduce conflict points with cars, and give walking and cycling a more logical and continuous structure. At the same time, car use is demoted: carriageways are narrowed or reduced, speed is lowered by design, and drivers no longer experience the intersection as a fast, car-dominated space. Instead, the street hierarchy shifts in favor of pedestrians and cyclists, making active mobility the safer and more attractive option.

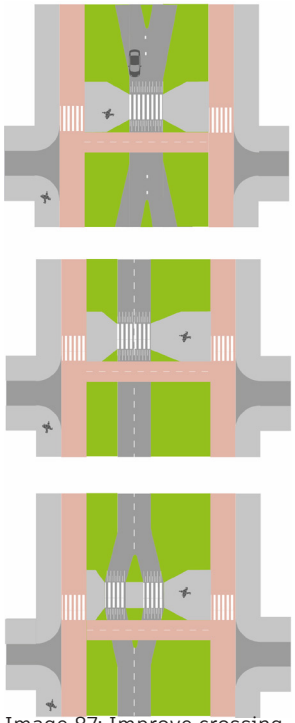


Image 87: Improve crossing

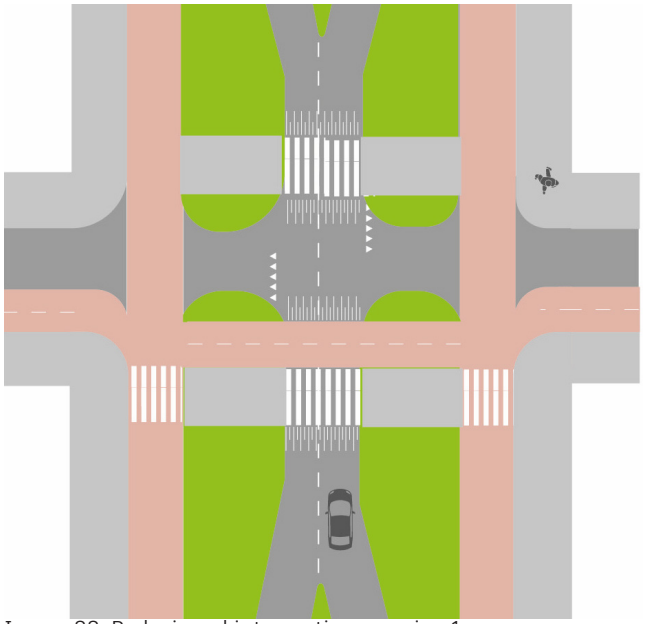


Image 88: Redesigned intersection crossing 1

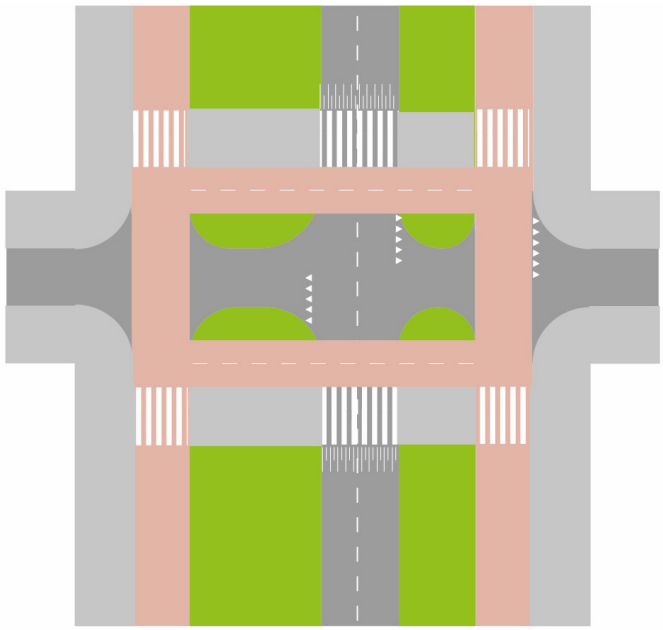


Image 89: Redesigned intersection crossing 2

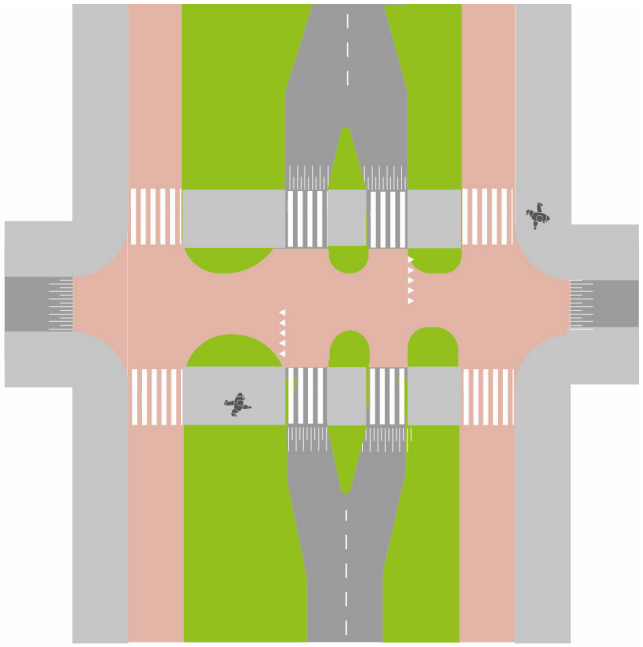


Image 90: Redesigned intersection crossing 3

Transforming underpasses

The two images clearly illustrate the difference between a current underpass and an improved version. In the existing situation (left), the tunnel appears dark, narrow, and unattractive. The lack of proper lighting and the bare, grey walls create an unsafe atmosphere, especially during the evening or at night. As a result, many people tend to avoid using the tunnel and take a detour, which reduces both accessibility and convenience.

In the improved situation (right), the tunnel is equipped with bright lighting, colorful wall art, and a clear separation between cyclists and pedestrians. This not only makes the passage more functional but also far more pleasant to use. The vibrant design and good visibility increase the sense of safety and comfort, encouraging people to pass through the tunnel even during nighttime.

Such interventions strongly enhance the permeability of an area: barriers are reduced, and routes become more accessible and attractive. Since people feel safer and more comfortable, it encourages the use of active mobility such as walking and cycling. In this way, the tunnel is no longer perceived as an obstacle but as a natural and enjoyable part of the slow traffic network.



Image 91: Existing underpass trough building

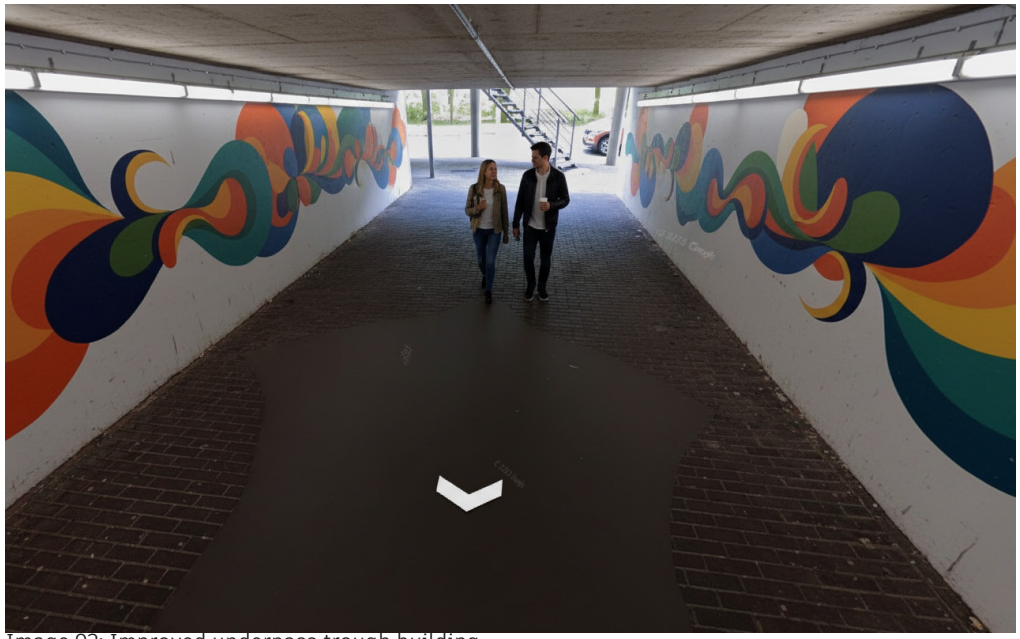


Image 92: Improved underpass trough building

NACTO Principles for Pedestrian Crossings

To support the design choices for safer pedestrian crossings, reference is made to the Urban Street Design Guide published by NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials). This guide brings together best practices from cities worldwide and demonstrates how lane reduction, curb extensions, refuge islands, and high-visibility crosswalks can significantly improve safety and comfort for pedestrians. The principles correspond closely with the interventions proposed in this project: by shortening crossing distances, consolidating traffic lanes, and adding green median spaces, wide streets can be transformed into permeable and human-oriented environments. To illustrate this, photographs of several of the most relevant NACTO examples are included alongside the design drawings, providing concrete precedents for how such measures can be implemented in practice.

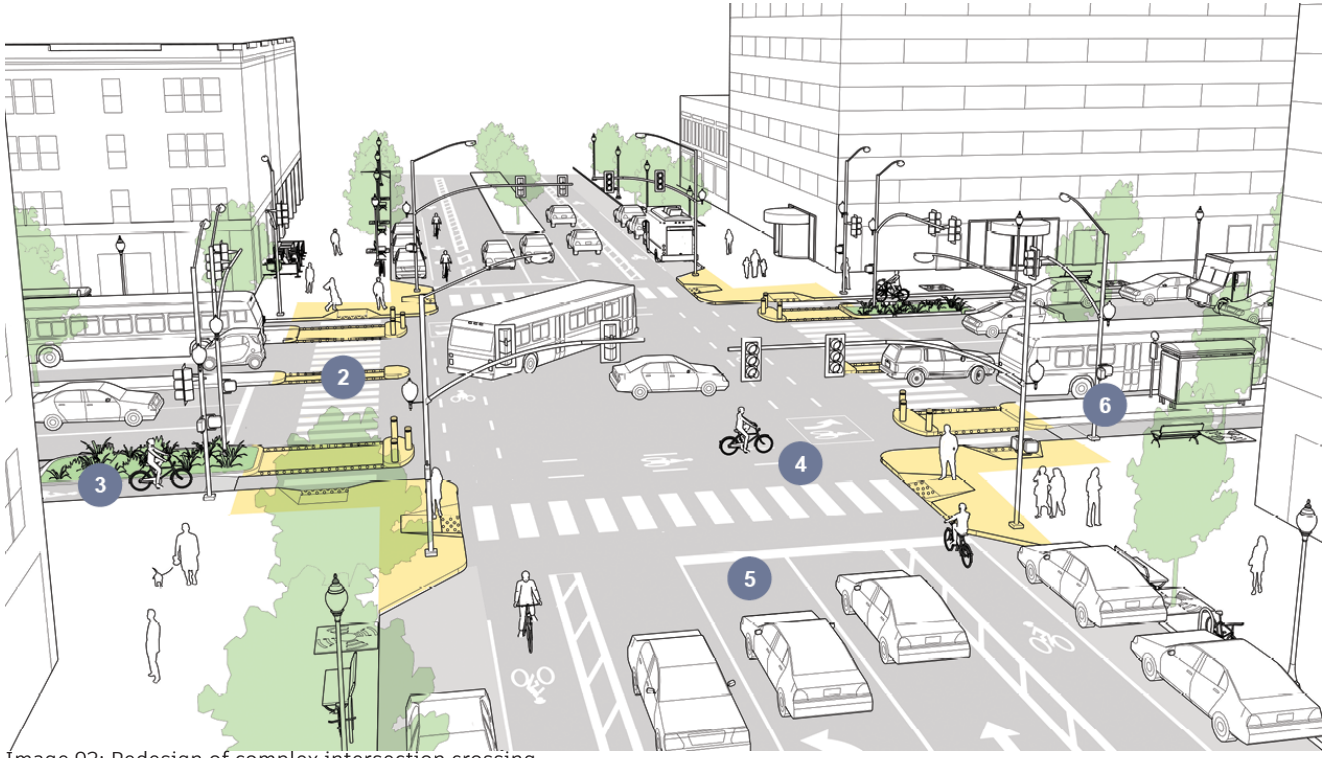


Image 93: Redesign of complex intersection crossing

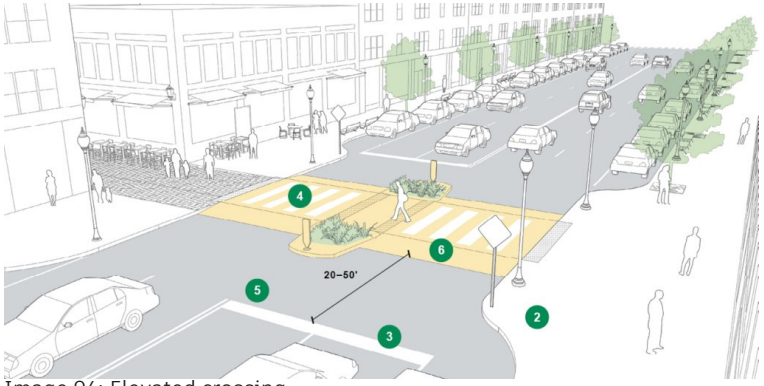
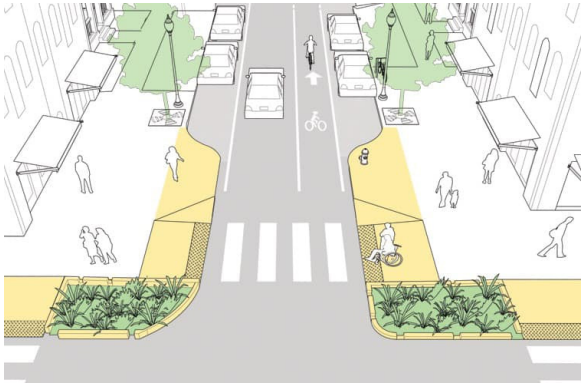


Image 94: Elevated crossing


Image 95: curb extension

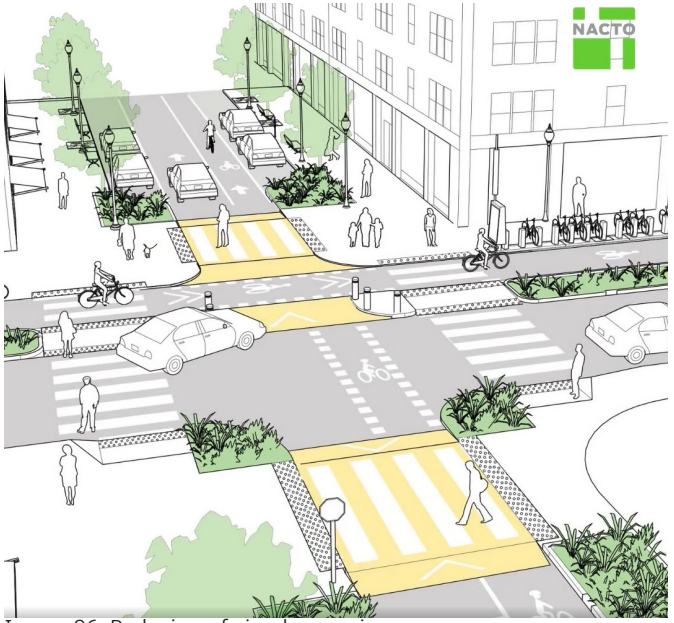


Image 96: Redesign of simple crossing

6.4 Public facilities & proximity

Current Situation

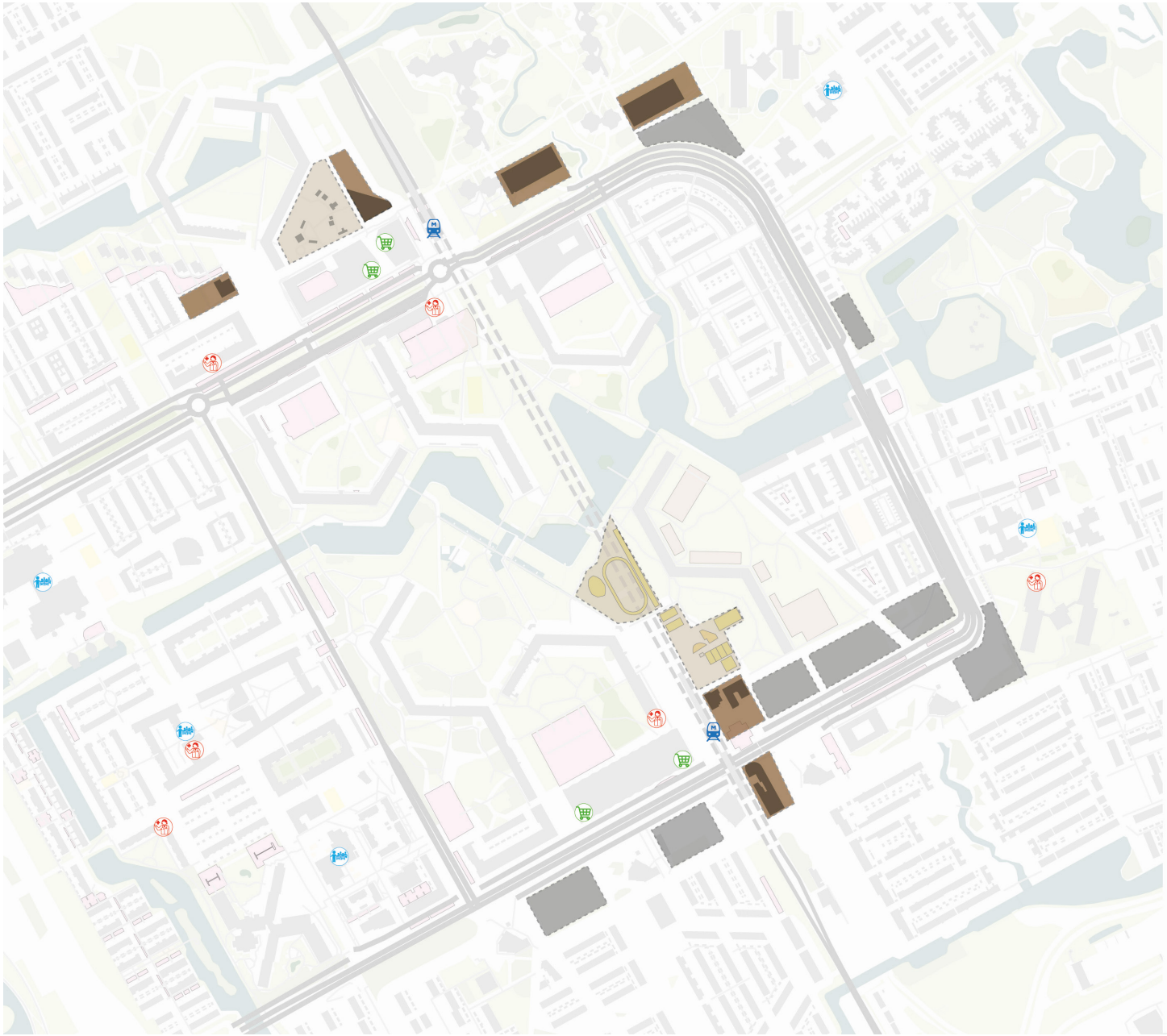


Image 97: Public facilities and proximity currrent situation

Vacant Plots, Limited Choices

Many residents of Zuidoost remain dependent on distant centers, such as Amsterdamse Poort, for everyday needs. Local sub-centers exist but often feel limited in range and vitality, leaving residents with little choice but to drive for groceries, healthcare, sports, or leisure. At the same time, vacant or underused plots within the district add little to daily life and fail to support community needs. This spatial mismatch reinforces reliance on the car and weakens the social and economic vibrancy of the neighborhood

Future Situation

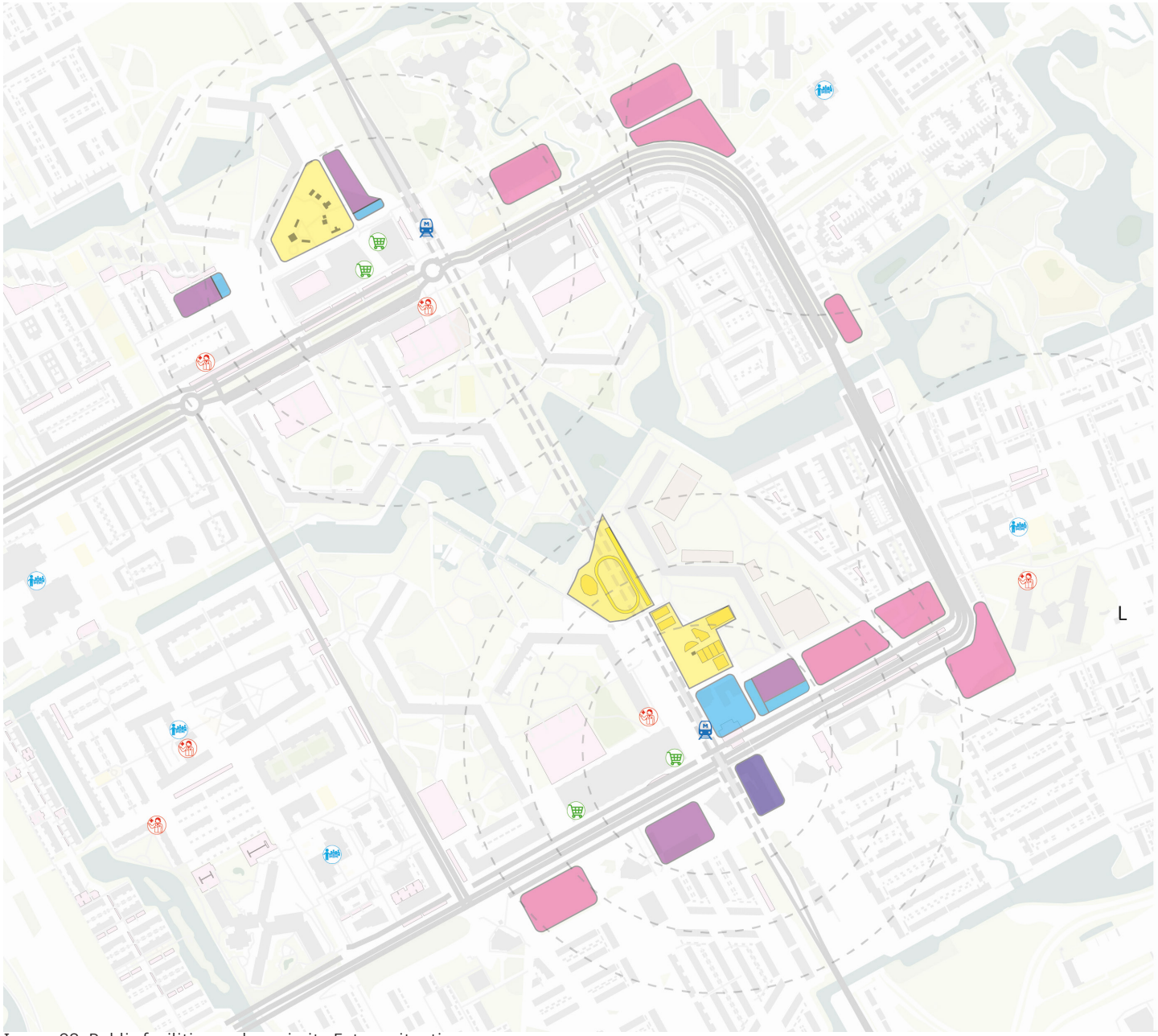


Image 98: Public facilities and proximity Future situation

Vibrant Local Hubs

The new approach strengthens existing sub-centers by expanding their program with shops, cafés, sports, and community facilities, making them multifunctional and lively hubs. Mixed-use developments bring housing, workspaces, and services together, creating places where living and daily needs are seamlessly integrated. New car-free housing projects are introduced near these centers, with shared mobility solutions instead of private parking, placing more residents within walking and cycling distance of essential services. The result is a self-sufficient district where daily life can unfold locally, reducing car dependency while enriching neighborhood life.

Zoom in Public facilities and Proximity

This part of the design focuses on adding new functions to create a complete and lively neighborhood center. By concentrating densification around the sub-center, facilities are brought closer to residents while also attracting more people and daily activity. The growing population creates a natural demand for public services and amenities.

New spaces are introduced for local facilities, flexible offices, and social functions such as a community center. Together, these elements strengthen the sense of community and bring more life to the area throughout the day. In addition, areas for sport and play are integrated to support active lifestyles and informal encounters.

Through this mix of housing, work, and recreation, the sub-center becomes a vibrant and accessible place where everyday life takes place within walking and cycling distance.

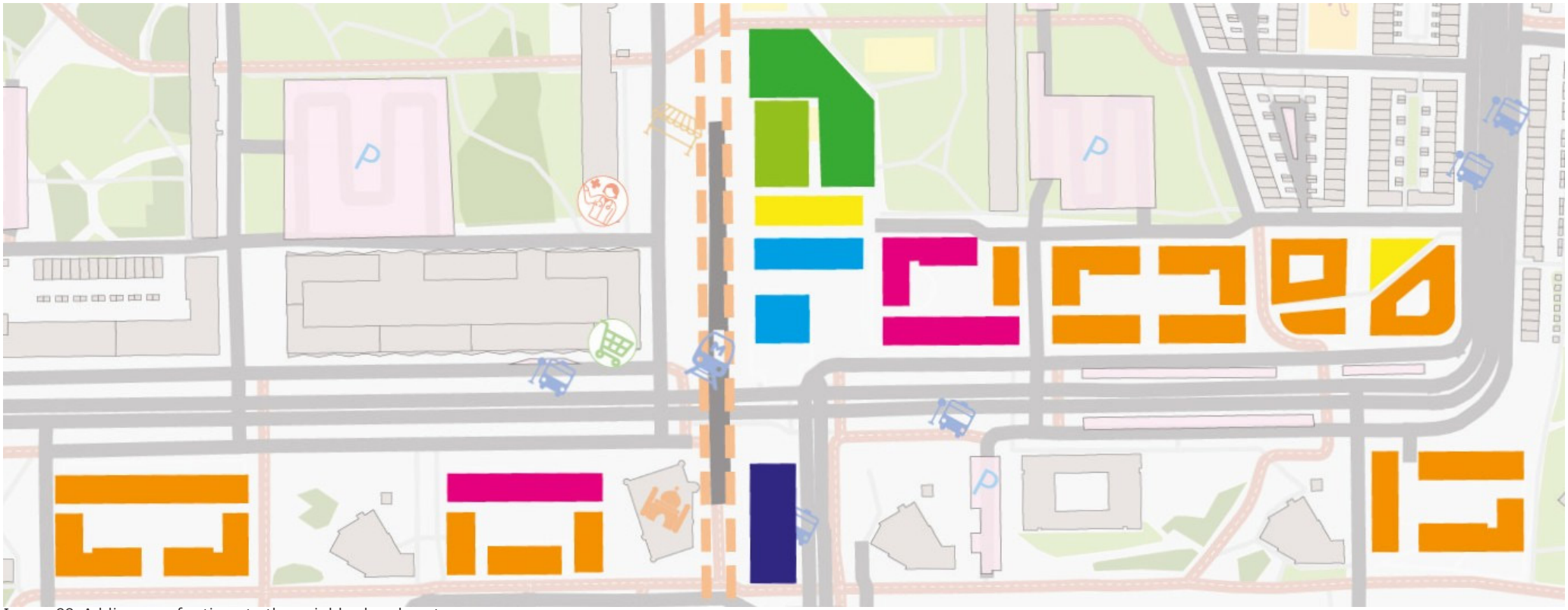


Image 99: Adding new funtions to the neighborhood center

The planned densification around the existing sub-centre introduces roughly 1,800 new residents. This increase generates a clear need for additional local services: an expanded medical centre (replacing the removed one), an extra GP, dentist and midwife, around 80 elderly-care places, one additional social worker, a renewed community centre, three daily-goods shops, two artisanal shops, and at least two restaurants with terraces. Schools in the area will become busier but do not require expansion (Stipo, 2012). The calculations used to determine the required number and type of amenities are provided in Appendix 4.

These new services are concentrated around the sub-centre, along the active-mobility axis and near the metro station, strengthening proximity and keeping everyday needs reachable by foot or bike. This clustering reinforces a more diverse and attractive neighbourhood centre with a richer mix of daily functions. In the accompanying images, you can see how this type of development could look—drawing inspiration from the car-free living environments demonstrated in Merwede, Utrecht.

The new housing blocks form a fully private-car-free district. Limited underground parking is available only for shared cars and as a temporary solution for a small number of residents who still depend on a private vehicle. The remaining parking spaces are reserved for people living deeper inside the neighbourhood, where all street parking is removed. This arrangement enables a gradual reduction of private car ownership while maintaining essential accessibility during the transition.

The courtyard typologies create semi-private but accessible living environments that strengthen the residential character of the area. New office and workspace facilities further contribute to a vibrant mixed-use setting, bringing workplaces closer to home and reinforcing proximity as a guiding principle.

Together, the added housing, services, and mixed-use programme help shape a more complete sub-centre where everyday life becomes easier, more local, and far less dependent on the car



Image 100: Example of what this new development could look like (Merwede | Nieuwbouw Utrecht, z.d.



Image 101: Example of what this new development could look like (Merwede | Nieuwbouw Utrecht, z.d.

Reference: Vauban, Freiburg – A Mixed-Use , car free Neighborhood

Vauban, a former military site in Freiburg, Germany, was redeveloped in the late 1990s into a pioneering sustainable urban district with approximately 5,000 residents. The neighbourhood was deliberately designed around a strong car-reduction strategy, in which private vehicles are largely excluded from the public realm and accommodated in collective parking facilities at the edges of the district. As a result, internal streets prioritise pedestrians and cyclists and function as safe, green, and socially active public spaces, where active mobility dominates daily movement patterns (Scheurer & Newman, 2009).

In addition to its car-light mobility structure, Vauban was developed as a mixed-use neighbourhood. Daily amenities such as shops, schools, childcare facilities, workplaces, and community functions are integrated into the urban fabric, enabling residents to meet most everyday needs within the neighbourhood. This spatial configuration reduces travel distances and supports a high quality of life while significantly lowering car dependency (Scheurer & Newman, 2009).

For Amsterdam Zuidoost, Vauban illustrates how restricting car presence within residential areas and embedding everyday facilities at the neighbourhood scale can transform green post-war housing areas into vibrant, mixed-use subcentres that naturally support walking and cycling.



Image 102: active ground floors make the area attractove


Image 103: Car free residential streets

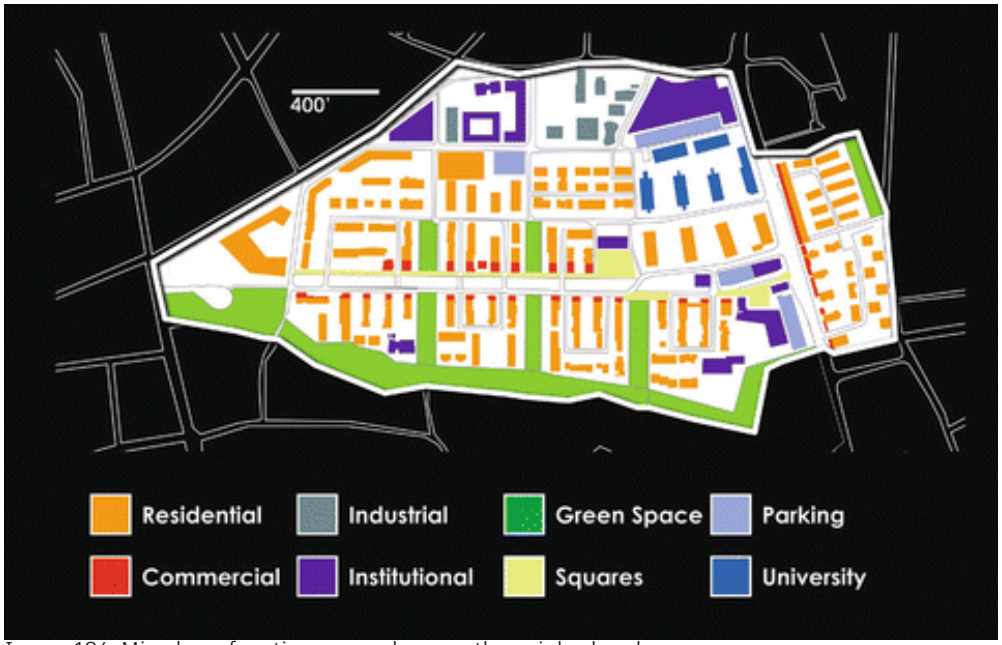


Image 104: Mixed use functions spread across the neigborhood

6.5 Stay and meeting space quality

Current Situation

Underused and uninspiring spaces

Before: Public space in Zuidoost is often anonymous and functional rather than inviting. Many streets and squares are dominated by movement rather than stay, offering little shade, greenery, or seating. Empty or leftover spaces remain unused and add little value, while existing green areas lack the facilities to attract regular use. As a result, people frequently travel outside the district by car for leisure, and walking or cycling routes feel monotonous and uninspiring.











Image 105: Stay and meeting space quality currrent situation

Future Situation



Image 106: Stay and meeting space quality future situation

Inviting spaces full of life

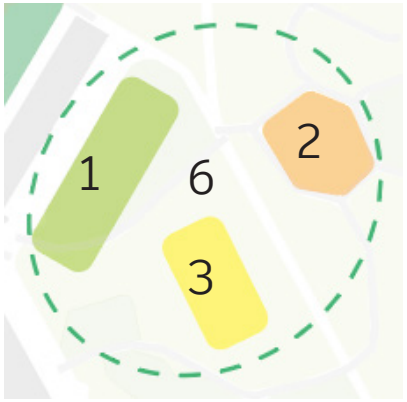
Streets, squares, and parks are transformed into places that encourage people to stay, meet, and enjoy their surroundings. The areas around centers and amenities are upgraded with seating, greenery, shading, and temporary installations that make them destinations in themselves. Unused spaces are activated with community initiatives, play areas, or cultural events, while green areas are enriched with walking trails, sport and play equipment, and picnic spots. Together these interventions create a web of pleasant, human-scaled places that make walking and cycling routes more enjoyable, turning everyday mobility into a social and active experience.

Clusters

To improve the quality of public space, a set of mini programs is introduced at the neighborhood scale. Neighborhood Clusters combine to produce (community gardens), to play (playgrounds), and to sport (local fields and courts), activating everyday life close to home. Service Units add to meet (central squares for gatherings), to rest (benches and shaded spots along routes), and to trade (market squares as lively hubs of exchange).

Together these programs create attractive, safe, and multifunctional places that encourage people to walk or cycle between them. By clustering daily needs and social functions within short distances, they strengthen proximity and reduce reliance on cars. When spaces are lively with people staying, playing, or meeting—not only passing through—the environment becomes safer and more inviting for pedestrians and cyclists. This reduces the urge to rush in and out for purely functional purposes and instead motivates residents to take more time in the area, making active mobility the most natural and enjoyable way to move.

Residential cluster



1: To produce



2: To play



3: To sport



Center cluster



4: To meet(/to stay)



5: To trade



6: To Rest



Layers of Identity: Green Corridors and Clusters

The green structure is not designed as neutral open space – green without function easily becomes unused and disconnected from daily life.
Instead, the corridors are shaped as active landscapes with a clear role and identity, forming a framework where movement, ecology, and social life coexist.
Each one focuses on a specific aspect of urban living – Stay, Move, Ecological, or Educational – ensuring that every part of the green network has a purpose and a distinct experience.
Together, they create a continuous system that supports recreation, biodiversity, learning, and activity throughout the neighbourhood, linking everyday life to the natural environment.

Within this framework, seven clusters act as local anchors that bring the design to a human scale.
Each cluster has its own atmosphere and target group, offering spaces that feel personal and recognisable to different users.
Some invite calmness and reflection, while others foster play, exchange, or community activity.
It is important that people can find places that match their vibe and character – whether quiet and green, or lively and social.
By giving every area a clear identity and a tangible sense of place, the design encourages people to move through, use, and care for their surroundings – turning the green structure into a living part of daily life.

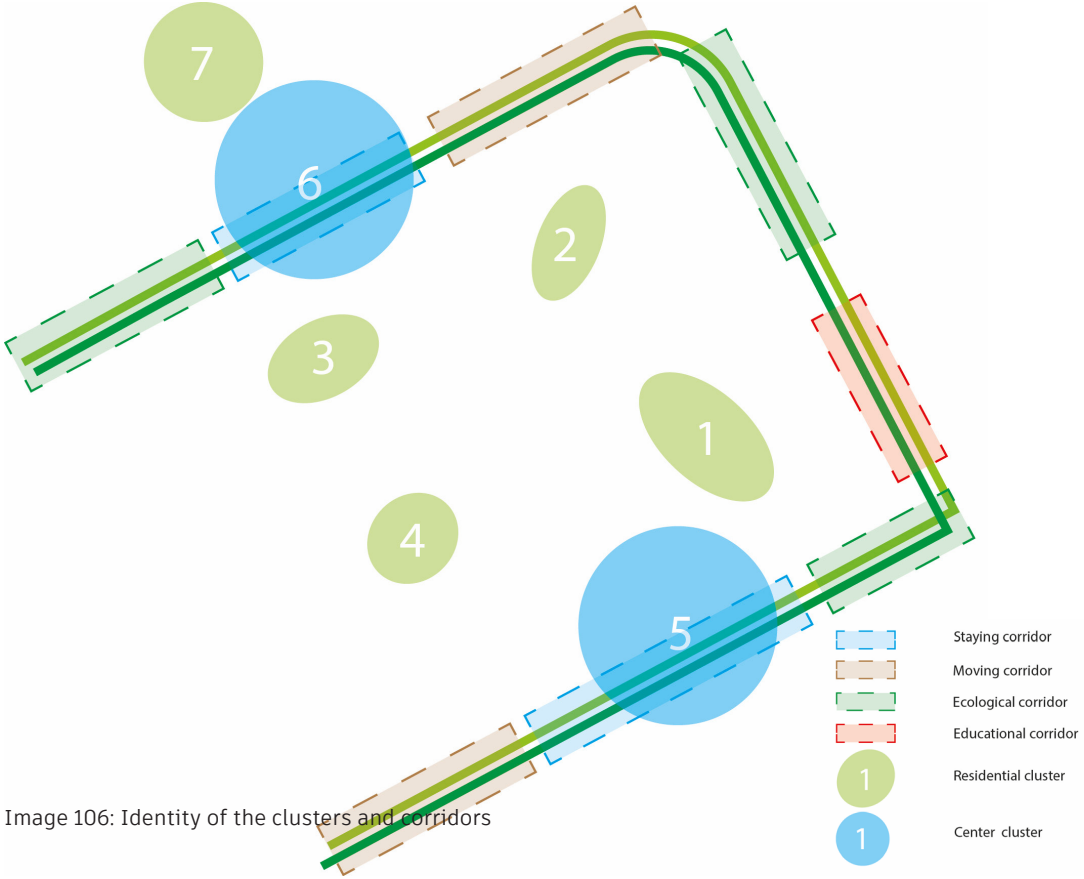


Image 106: Identity of the clusters and corridors

Corridor	Main Focus / Users	Identity
Stay Corridor	Residents seeking comfort and social contact	Calm and pleasant spaces for rest, sitting, and informal meeting. Designed with seating, shade, and greenery that invite people to slow down and stay.
Move Corridor	Active residents, cyclists, and pedestrians	Dynamic and open routes that encourage movement, walking, cycling, and outdoor exercise. A continuous and social line of activity through the neighbourhood.
Ecological Corridor	All residents and urban wildlife	Green zones that support biodiversity, connect natural habitats, and improve water management. Lush, continuous, and nature-dominated.
Educational Corridor	Schools, families, and community groups	Learning landscapes that connect schools, gardens, and facilities. Spaces for awareness, interaction, and learning from nature and each other.

Cluster	Target group	Identity
1 – The Playful Garden	Young families and children	A lively and social space where play and movement blend with greenery; open, safe, and full of spontaneous interaction.
2 – The Active Courtyard	Teenagers and active adults	An energetic and open environment for sport, exercise, and meeting; urban in character and lively throughout the day.
3 – The Productive Garden	Residents of all ages interested in making and gardening	A green and collective workspace where collaboration and learning take place; focused on growing, sharing, and community.
4 – The Quiet Courtyard	Older residents and people seeking rest	A calm and shaded space surrounded by soft planting; designed for relaxation, reflection, and quiet social contact.
5 – The Neighbourhood Square	Residents, visitors, and local entrepreneurs	A vibrant urban hub centred around trade, meeting, and small-scale events; the social heart of the area.
6 – The City Room	Residents, students, and passers-by	A comfortable and social place near public facilities; inviting for short breaks, lunches, or informal gatherings.
7 – The Outer Courtyard	Residents at the edge of the area	A transitional cluster between the high-rise housing and the car-free green network; robust and open, with gardens, sports, and sitting areas that activate the urban edge.

Public Square upgrade

The transformation shown here illustrates how a completely empty and unused square—only active on market days—can be turned into a vibrant public space that invites people to stay and enjoy it throughout the week.

In the new design, green elements, trees, and diverse planting introduce life and atmosphere to the space. Seating areas and terraces provide comfortable places to rest, meet, or watch the surroundings, while the varied paving and water features break up the monotony and give the square a human scale. The space now feels welcoming, shaded, and lively instead of hard and empty.

The new layout also strengthens active mobility. The improved comfort, greenery, and safety make walking and cycling through the space more pleasant, turning it into an attractive route and meeting place within the neighbourhood.

Furthermore, creating inviting social spaces close to home means that residents no longer have to travel far to find a pleasant place to relax or meet others. This accessibility supports local interaction, reduces unnecessary travel, and naturally encourages people to walk or cycle to their daily destinations.

Altogether, this design turns a lifeless, car-oriented space into a multifunctional, green, and human-centered square that promotes social life, wellbeing, and sustainable mobility.



Image 107: Current situation: paved and empty



Image 108: Future situation: green and attractive for lingering

Reference: Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm – Green Public Spaces as Social Connectors

In Hammarby Sjöstad, squares, streets, and waterways have been designed as places to stay and meet. Between the housing blocks, green plazas and car-free streets are equipped with seating, trees, play areas, and water features. These public spaces are not just corridors of movement but function as social hubs where residents can play, relax, and interact.

The integration of water and greenery gives the district a distinct identity and makes everyday walking and cycling routes more enjoyable. In contrast, Amsterdam Zuidoost often has empty tiled squares with limited staying quality, which discourages people from using them as meeting places. The example of Hammarby shows how such spaces can be enriched with seating, shade, play, and cultural elements, transforming anonymous open areas into vibrant places that actively contribute to livability and social life.



Image 109: Green public space with water retention



Image 110: Water as social connector



Image 111: Attractive walk along the water

6.6 Social safety
Current Situation

Closed, dark and Unwelcoming

Many routes and spaces in Zuidoost feel unsafe or intimidating, especially in the evenings. Tunnels and passages are narrow, dark, and poorly maintained, while ground-floor façades are often closed or inactive, leaving streets deserted. Overgrown inner courtyards and informal hangout spots contribute to a sense of unease. These conditions discourage walking and cycling after dark, pushing residents towards the car as a perceived safer alternative.











Image 112: Social safety currrent situation

Future Situation

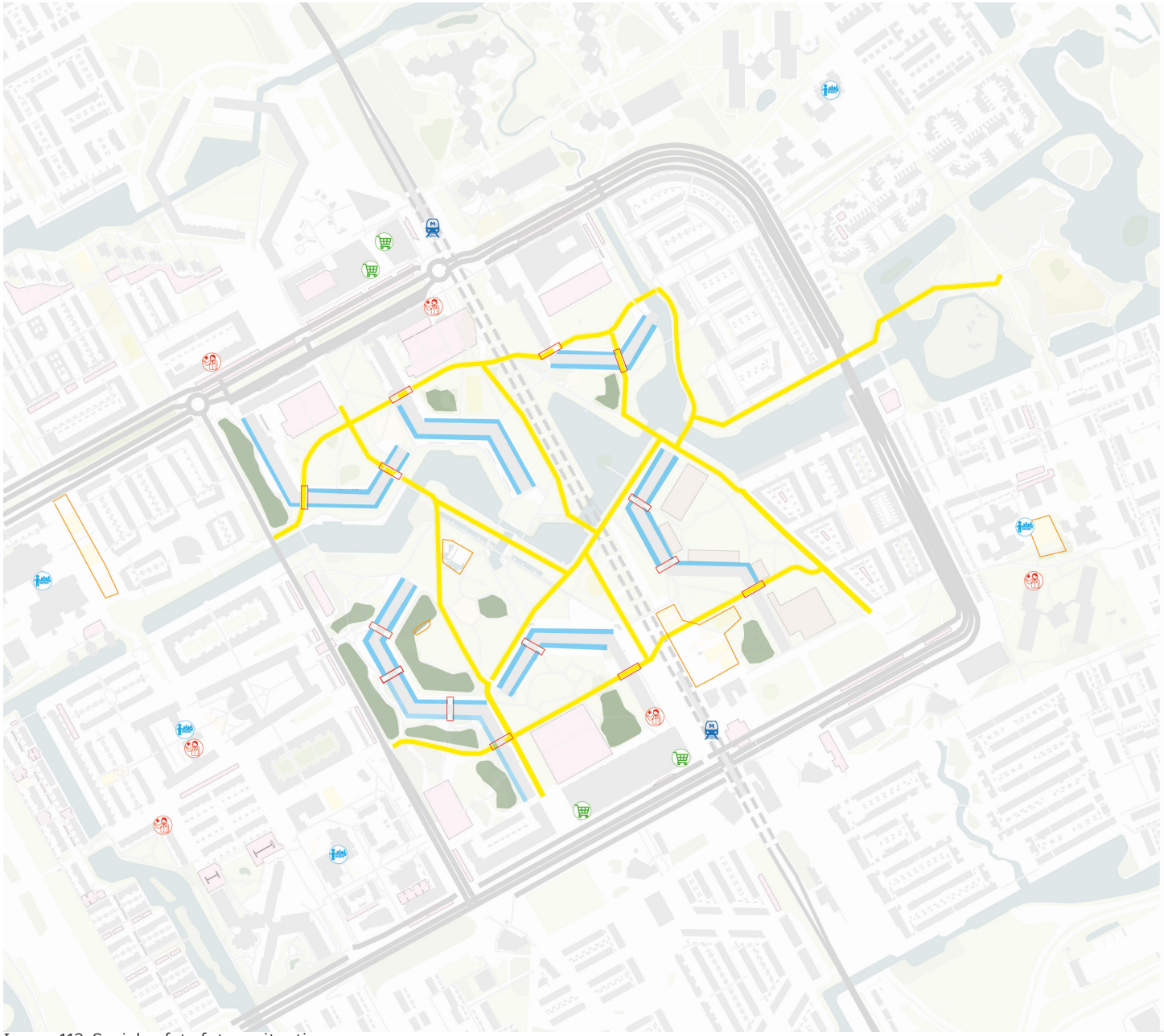


Image 112: Social safety future situation

Open, bright and Active

Safety and comfort become integral to the public realm. Central walking and cycling routes are fitted with high-quality lighting, particularly in green courtyards and inner areas where visibility is currently low. Ground floors are activated with open entrances, housing, and small shops, bringing life and social control back to the street edge. Passages are redesigned to be open and transparent, while hangout spots are either reprogrammed with sports and social functions or redesigned to avoid misuse. Residents can now move confidently and comfortably through their neighborhood at any time of day, supporting both active mobility and a stronger sense of community.

Opening up the ground floor

The transformation from a closed, opaque plinth to a fully open and transparent ground floor fundamentally reshapes the relationship between the building and the public space. Where the façade was once defined by blank walls, narrow doors, and inactive surfaces, it now features continuous glass panels, warm interior lighting, and clearly visible entrances. This shift turns the ground floor from a barrier into a welcoming, active interface with the street.

The transparent façade allows indoor activity to spill visually into the outdoor space, creating natural surveillance and reinforcing the feeling of safety. Passers-by can see movement, light, and everyday life behind the glass, making the route feel more pleasant and comfortable—especially during evenings or quieter hours.

By replacing the closed façade with transparency, the building becomes more welcoming, more connected to its surroundings, and more supportive of an active, vibrant streetscape.



Image 113: Current situation: Closed and unattractive ground floor


Image 114: Future situation: Open and attractive ground floor

A lively and inviting route

The first image shows the old situation: a dark, densely vegetated path where bushes and trees block visibility. The environment feels closed off and unsafe, especially at night. Lighting is poor and insufficient, making it uncomfortable to walk or cycle alone. There is no sign of activity or human presence – the place feels abandoned and uninviting.

In the new situation, the route has been completely transformed into an attractive, open, and safe path for cyclists and pedestrians. The dense undergrowth has been removed, allowing clear visibility beneath the trees. Modern warm-toned lighting ensures a pleasant and well-lit atmosphere, even after dark. Benches invite people to sit and rest, while children play on the grass and colorful flowers line the path. The presence of people and activity creates a lively and socially safe environment – a route where you feel comfortable cycling even at night.



Image 115: Current situation: Dark and uninviting mobility route



Image 116: Future situation: Open, light and inviting mobility route

Reference: Reinventing the ground floor after 50 years

Reinventing the Ground Floor after 50 Years explains how many post-war residential buildings were originally built with closed and inactive plinths that disconnected housing from the street. These sealed ground floors—often filled with garages or storage spaces—created unattractive, unsafe, and socially empty public realms (Stipo, 2012). Recent Dutch examples, especially in Rotterdam, demonstrate how opening and reprogramming these plinths can dramatically improve urban quality. By introducing transparent façades, shared entrances, ateliers, small businesses, and community rooms, the ground floor becomes active and inviting. As Stipo (2012) illustrates, even modernist building structures can be transformed to enhance social interaction, increase perceived safety, and strengthen the relationship between residents and the public space.



Image 117: Old situation: Closed and unattractive ground floor (Stipo, 2012)



Image 118: Current situation: Open and attractive ground floor (Stipo, 2012)

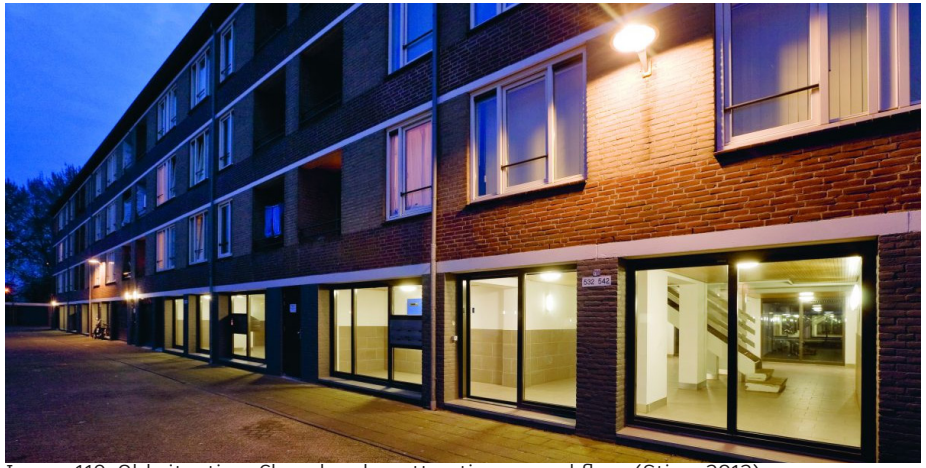


Image 119: Old situation: Closed and unattractive ground floor (Stipo, 2012)



Image 120: Current situation: Open and attractive ground floor (Stipo, 2012)

6.7
Thematic vision map

The thematic vision map brings all interventions from the six layers together into one integrated overview. By showing active mobility, car traffic, barriers, facilities, public-space quality, and social safety in a single map, it presents the full transformation vision for the entire area.

Because all elements are shown at once, the map becomes rich and layered. This richness is valuable: it reveals where different interventions reinforce each other, where themes overlap, and which locations offer the strongest opportunities for change. These points of convergence highlight the places with the greatest potential impact and help indicate where more detailed design exploration is most needed.

In the next chapter, these strategic areas will be zoomed in on and developed further, using the insights from this combined thematic vision.



Image 130: Vision map with all themed layers combined

7.
Focus Areas – Detailed Design

7.1 Selection of key locations
7.2 Design interventions
7.3 Area A
7.3.1 Plan (Current/Future)
7.3.2 Public space designs
7.3.3 Eye level perspectives
7.4. Area B
7.4.1 Plan (Current/Future)
7.4.2 Public space designs
7.4.3 Eye level perspectives

This chapter zooms in on the two locations that form the heart of the spatial transformation in this project. These areas—selected for their strategic position within the mobility network and their potential to demonstrate meaningful change—allow the broader design principles from the previous chapter to be tested, specified, and made tangible.

We begin by outlining the rationale behind choosing these focus areas, followed by a set of concrete design interventions. These interventions translate the guiding themes into actionable spatial solutions at a smaller scale and are explicitly linked to four user groups. This helps reveal how space is being rebalanced: away from car dominance and toward active-mobility users, public-space users, and everyday-facility users.

The chapter then explores Area A and Area B in depth. For each, current and future plans—including an isometric view—illustrate how the structure of the neighbourhood shifts over time. Finally, we zoom in to the super-local scale through detailed public-space designs and eye-level perspectives. Together, these visuals show how people will experience the renewed environment in daily life, making the transformation both spatially and experientially clear.

8.1 Selection of Zoom- In Locations

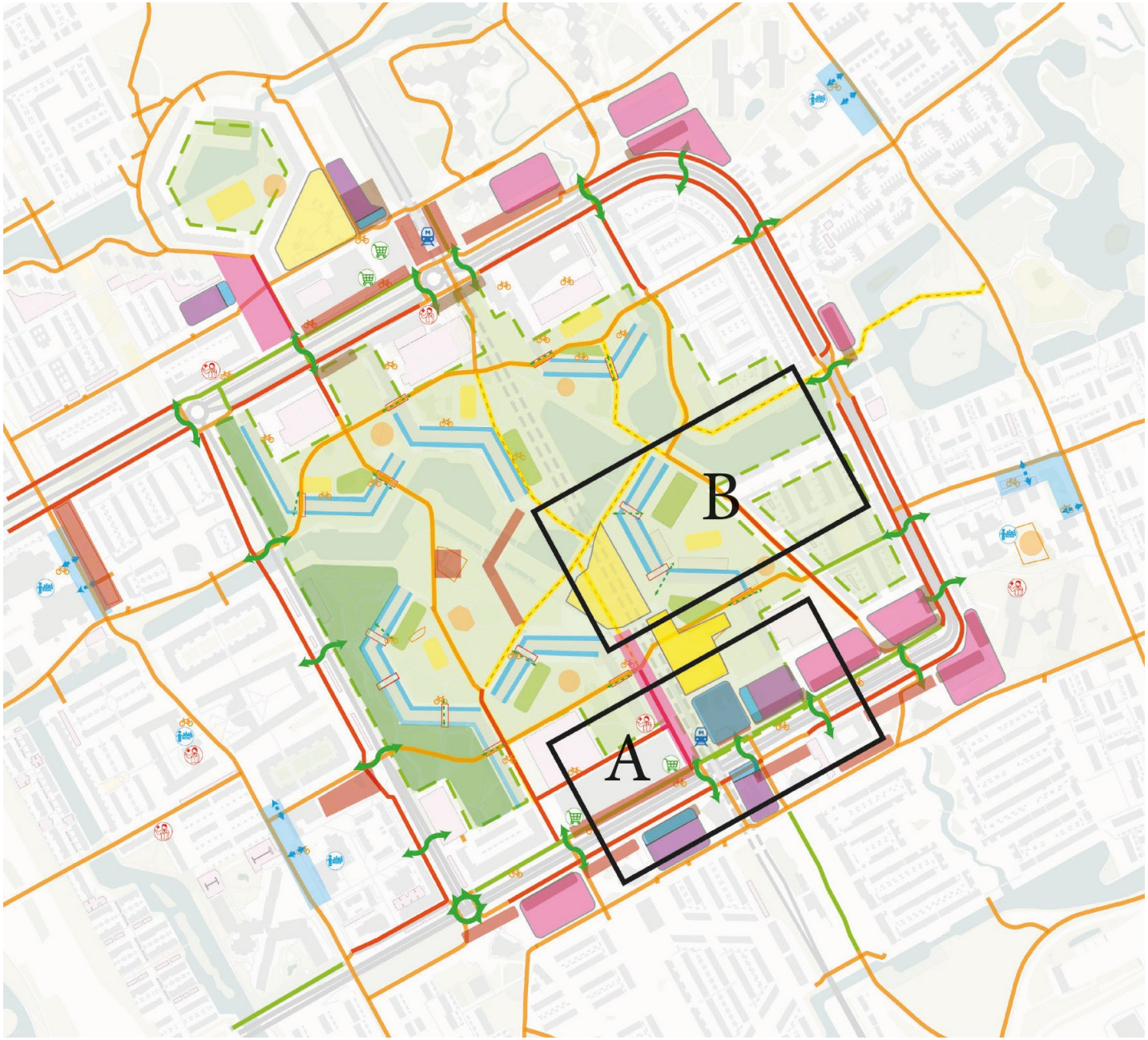


Image 131: Identified focus areas

Identifying Focus Areas

From the combined intervention map, two key areas were identified for a closer design zoom-in. These are places where multiple themes intersect – moments where the layers of mobility, public facilities, quality, and safety physically meet and influence one another. By zooming in, the goal is to explore how these themes merge into a coherent whole, how they complement each other, and where potential tensions arise. This detailed scale makes it possible to test what the area could look like when all interventions come together – and to reveal what might still be missing.

Area A was chosen because it lies along one of the main traffic corridors and borders a major centre with public facilities and a metro stop. It is a strategic, dynamic place where interventions from nearly all themes overlap and together drive a major transformation of the area's character – from traffic-oriented to people-oriented.

Area B, on the other hand, represents a quieter, more residential setting located deeper within the green structure. Here, the focus is not on centrality or movement but on the quality of living environments: the car-free interior, the diversity of staying spaces, and the sense of social safety. Together, the two areas illustrate the range of contexts in which the integrated design approach must operate – from active, mixed-use hubs to calm, intimate neighbourhood interiors.

8.2 Design interventions

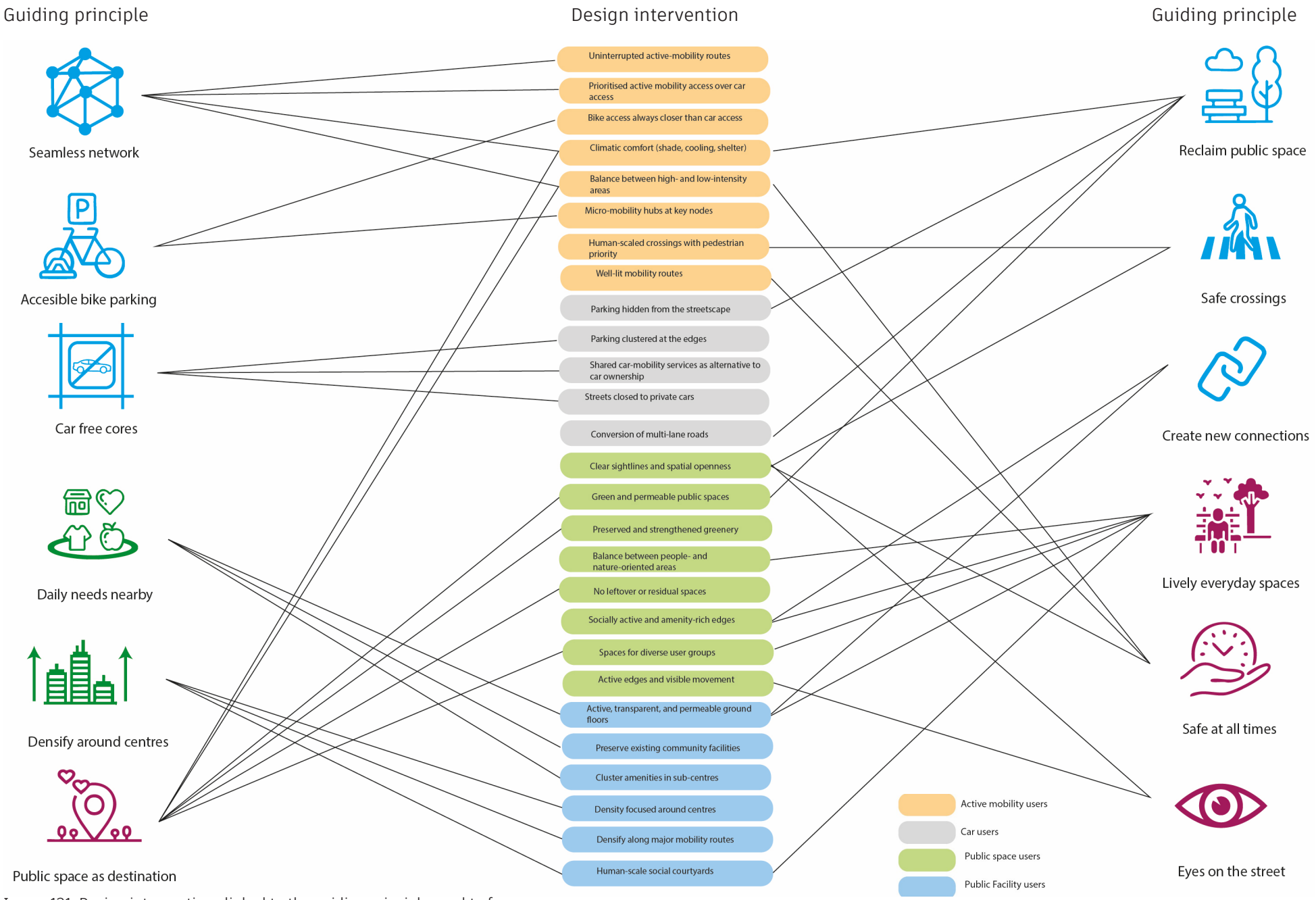


Image 131: Design interventions linked to the guiding principles and to four users groups

This diagram visualises how the guiding principles from the previous chapter translate into the concrete design interventions used for Areas A and B. While the guiding principles operate at a broader, district-wide scale—setting ambitions such as creating a fine-grained active-mobility network, reclaiming public space, and enabling safe and lively connections—the design interventions represent the actionable measures implemented at the zoom-in scale. They are the tools that give practical form to the larger strategic framework and determine how the spatial transformation materialises within the two pilot areas.

Each intervention is linked to one of the thematic guiding principles on the right, but it is also categorised into four user groups. The colour system clarifies who each intervention is designed to benefit/influence most directly. This user-centred structure reveals how space is being rebalanced: away from car dominance and toward those who walk, cycle, use public space, or rely on everyday local amenities.

This approach aligns closely with the logic of the 15-minute city, where proximity, accessibility, and everyday mobility are understood through the lived perspective of the resident. The diagram therefore not only shows what is being designed, but also for whom, why, and under which guiding principles.

1. ACTIVE MOBILITY USERS
For active mobility users, the district evolves into a continuous, safe, and comfortable movement network where walking and cycling naturally become the most logical ways to travel. Routes are clear, legible, and always prioritised over cars, with good sightlines, daylight, shade, and climatic comfort contributing to a calm, intuitive experience. Well-distributed bicycle parking and micro-mobility hubs support seamless transitions, while human-scaled crossings and socially active edges maintain visibility and safety at all times. Because daily destinations lie within short walking or cycling distance, these routes form the backbone of a 15-minute city. The combination of proximity, clarity, and priority for active modes makes everyday trips quick and comfortable without the need for a car, ensuring equal access to essential functions for all residents.

2. CAR USERS & ESSENTIAL CAR-DEPENDENT RESIDENTS
For car users, the transformation means a gradual but clear shift away from the dominance of the private car in the public space. On-street parking is removed, overall parking area is reduced, and residential streets become car-free or restructured as bike- and pedestrian-first corridors. As a result, driving becomes less direct and less convenient, while walking, cycling, and spending time outside become significantly more attractive due to the improved spatial quality.
Residents who are genuinely dependent on a car still have access to a limited system of edge parking and shared-car services. The car remains functional, but it no longer dictates the structure of the neighbourhood. This shift frees space for greenery, public life, and local amenities—fundamental elements of a 15-minute city where ecological quality and everyday proximity take precedence over car throughput.

3. PUBLIC SPACE USERS
For people using public space, the district becomes greener, quieter, and more versatile. The public realm is freed from leftover spaces and parked cars, transforming into a coherent system of squares, play areas, gardens, and paths that feel safe, comfortable, and inviting for all ages. Shade, planting, openness, and a human scale create pleasant, accessible environments, while visible activity and socially active edges ensure liveliness and social safety throughout the day. These spaces function as the social anchors of a 15-minute urban structure—places where people meet, interact, and participate in daily life close to home. High-quality public space strengthens inclusivity, social cohesion, and ecological performance while ensuring that every resident has widespread access to meaningful places to stay.

4. LOCAL FACILITY USERS
For residents accessing everyday amenities, schools, shops, sports fields, and care facilities become closer, clearer, and easier to reach without a car. Clustering around centres, transparent ground floors, and human-scaled layouts make facilities part of the everyday street experience. Strategic density and clear walking and cycling routes create short, predictable, and intuitive trips for all users.This structure embodies the fundamentals of a 15-minute city: short distances, mixed functions, and universal accessibility. It enables residents to organise their entire daily rhythm through walking and cycling, while ensuring that all essential functions are equitably distributed and easy to reach.

Area A
Current Situation

The Bijlmer is historically shaped by car-focused planning, and this is strongly visible in the current situation of Area 1. A disproportionately large share of public space is dedicated to motorized traffic, clearly prioritizing cars over active mobility users, public-space users, and visitors of nearby facilities. The central traffic axis—four wide car lanes cutting through the district—acts as a significant barrier that fragments the area, despite its direct proximity to key amenities.

Crossings along this axis are designed primarily around vehicular flow. Their layout, scale, and turning geometries make them unattractive and uncomfortable for people walking or cycling: long crossing distances, indirect routes, and car-dominated junctions reduce safety and discourage everyday active mobility. Across the district, the active mobility network is repeatedly interrupted by car roads, unexpected transitions where cycle paths merge with traffic, and broken or indirect connections. This disrupts continuity and creates an environment where walking and cycling feel unsafe, indirect, and inconvenient.

Along the existing walking and cycling routes, activity levels are low, edges are inactive, and lighting conditions are often insufficient—especially in the evening. These factors contribute to a sense of insecurity and reduce the perceived quality of the routes. At the same time, large areas of public space are allocated to on-street parking, occupying valuable land and reducing spatial quality, while bicycle parking is limited or absent.

Central public spaces that should function as comfortable staying environments are of low quality. They mostly consist of exposed hard surfaces with minimal greenery and lack human-scaled design. Even these staying areas remain dominated by the presence of cars, either through adjacent roadways or nearby parking lots.

While the district contains large amounts of green space, much of it lacks programming, identity, or activation. Some pockets have ecological value with dense tree structures, but many others are large leftover grass fields—spatially undefined, monotonous, and disconnected from daily use. Despite being located near important amenities and mobility corridors, these spaces contribute little to everyday life or the public-space experience.

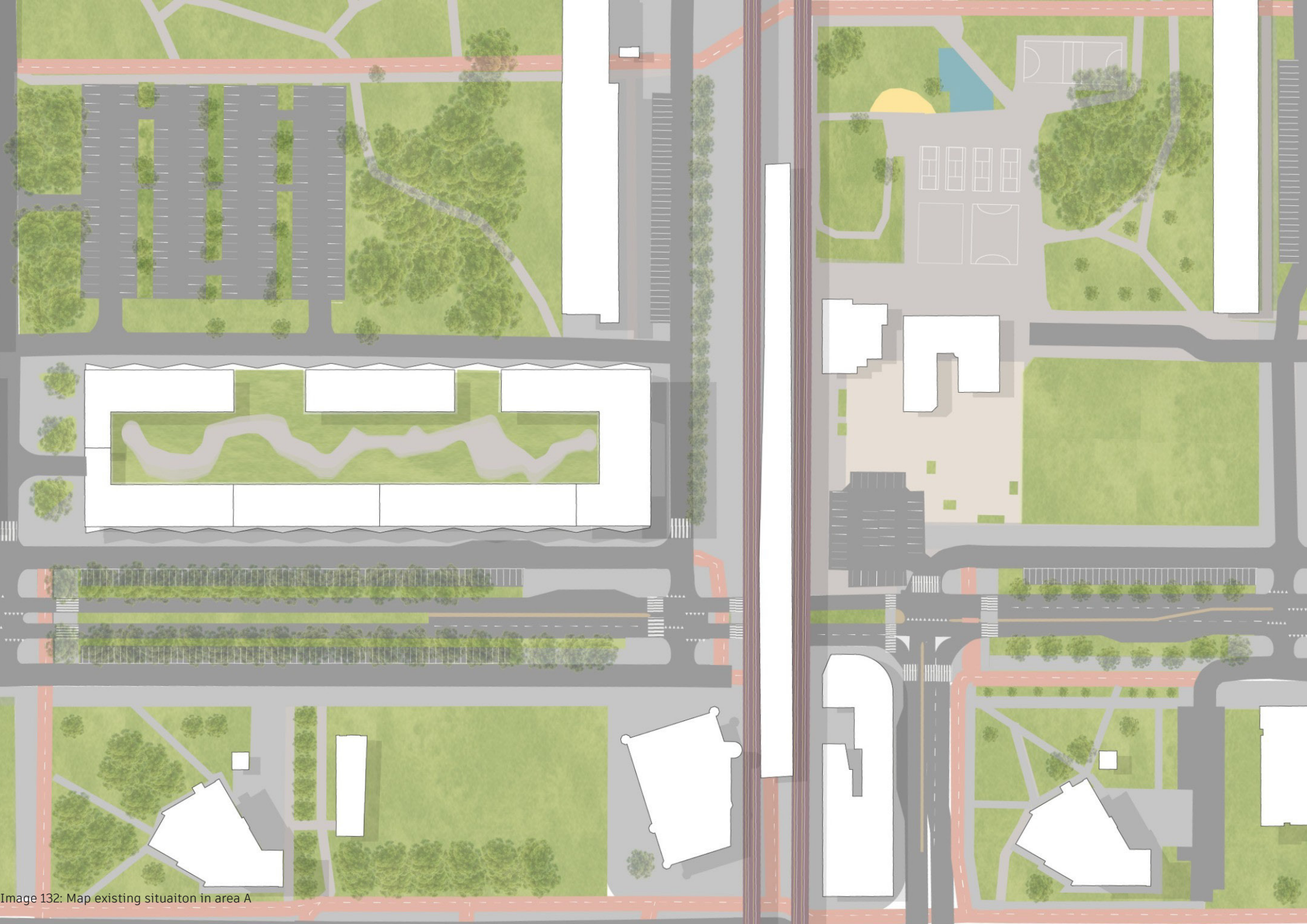


Image 132: Map existing situaiton in area A

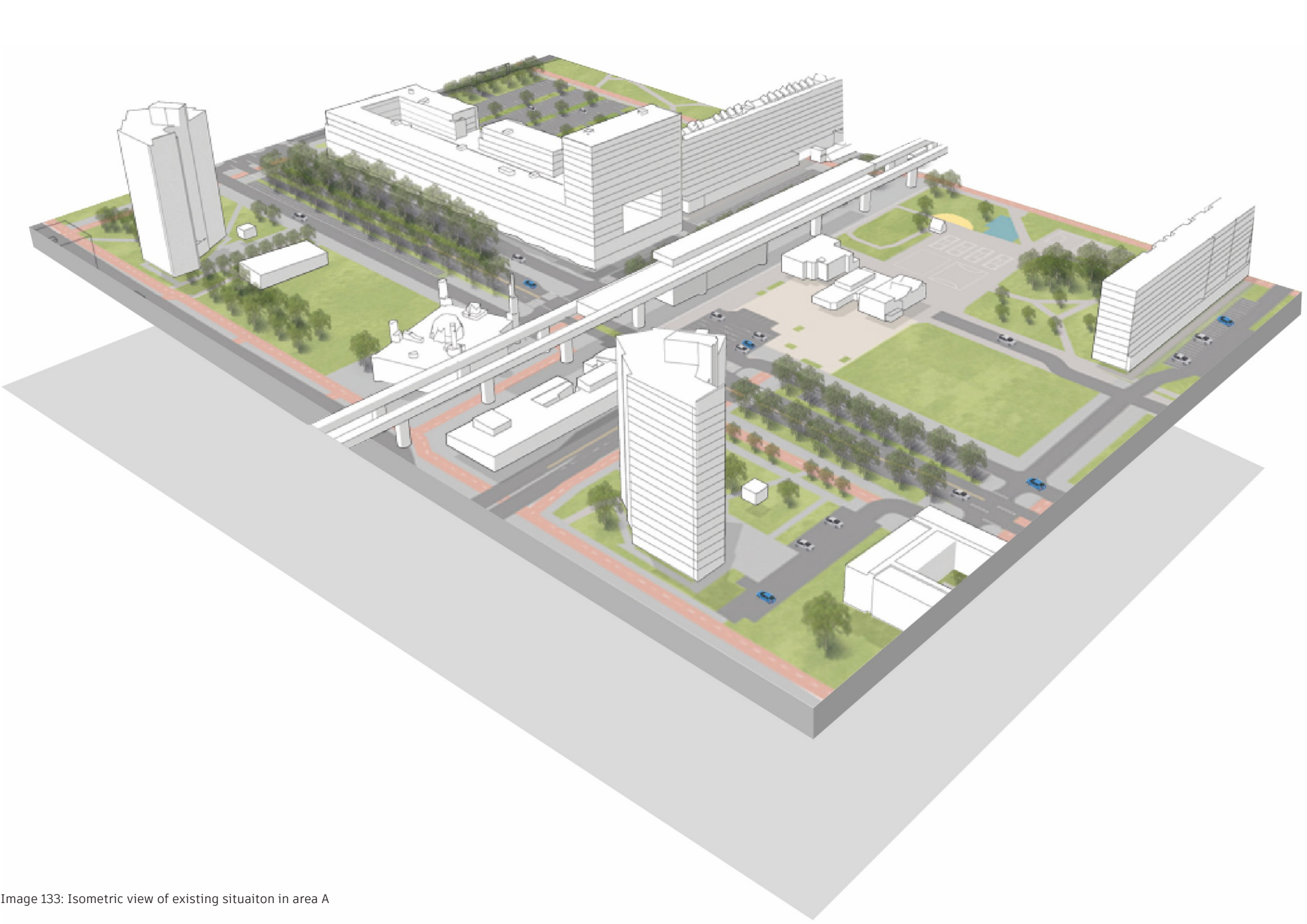


Image 133: Isometric view of existing situaiton in area A

Area A
Future Situation

In the transformed situation, Area 1 shifts fundamentally away from its car-focused structure and becomes a human-centred district where active mobility, everyday accessibility, and high-quality public space guide the spatial organisation. The previously fragmented walking and cycling network is reconnected into continuous, intuitive routes, ensuring that people can move safely and directly across the neighbourhood. Fixing these broken links reduces detours, eliminates unsafe transitions, and makes active mobility the easiest and most logical mode of travel.

The former four-lane mobility corridor—once a hard barrier cutting through the district—is reprofiled into a calmer and more balanced street. By reducing car space and introducing generous sidewalks, red cycle paths, safer crossings, and a greener central structure, the street is no longer an obstacle but becomes a permeable urban axis. This improves everyday access to amenities, increases safety, reduces noise and speed, and creates a more comfortable microclimate through shade and vegetation.

Removing street parking from the central neighbourhood fabric directly frees up valuable public space that can be repurposed for people instead of cars. It also prevents cars from dominating the entrances of amenities and public spaces, improving visibility, safety, and walkability. Parking is instead consolidated into one edge-located parking area for those who remain dependent on the car. This reduces car traffic within the neighbourhood, minimises unnecessary circulation, and keeps essential access without undermining the quality of central public spaces. The addition of shared-car spaces encourages collective mobility, lowering the total number of vehicles needed.

Across the district, new and well-distributed bicycle parking is introduced—always located closer to destinations than car parking. This simple hierarchy shift contributes to behavioural change by making cycling structurally more convenient than driving, which reinforces everyday active mobility and supports healthier, low-carbon movement patterns.

Large leftover fields—once monotonous and underused—are transformed into new housing and public facilities. This targeted densification around the existing sub-centre not only brings amenities closer to residents, but also brings residents closer to amenities, strengthening daily proximity and reinforcing the 15-minute urban logic. The new buildings introduce much-needed program, spatial definition, and social life, while their forms create semi-public courtyards that offer sheltered, intimate, and communal spaces for residents. This transformation turns previously wasted land into meaningful, socially productive parts of the district.

Grey and hardened public spaces are converted into attractive staying areas filled with greenery, micro-climatic comfort, and informal seating. This creates places where people can rest, meet others, and spend time—rather than simply passing through. These places evolve from anonymous transit zones into genuine neighbourhood destinations—small urban anchors consistent with the 15-minute ambition of having diverse micro-places to meet, rest, and socialise within walking distance.

Crossings throughout the area are redesigned to be human-centred: shorter distances, elevated surfaces, clear sightlines, and pedestrian-first geometry. These improvements reduce stress, prioritise safety, and make movement more intuitive for children, elderly residents, and less confident cyclists.

Together, these interventions turn Area 1 into a place where everyday life is shaped around people instead of cars. By giving less space to car traffic and parking, and more space to walking, cycling, and public life, the plan creates a fairer and more balanced use of the neighbourhood. This shift supports the idea of spatial justice: the streets and public spaces now serve many different residents, not just car users. At the same time, the closer and safer connections between homes, amenities, and green spaces strengthen the principles of the 15-minute city, where daily needs are easy to reach through short and comfortable trips. Area 1 becomes a healthier, more social, and more accessible neighbourhood—one where people can move, meet, and spend time in a pleasant and human-centred environmen

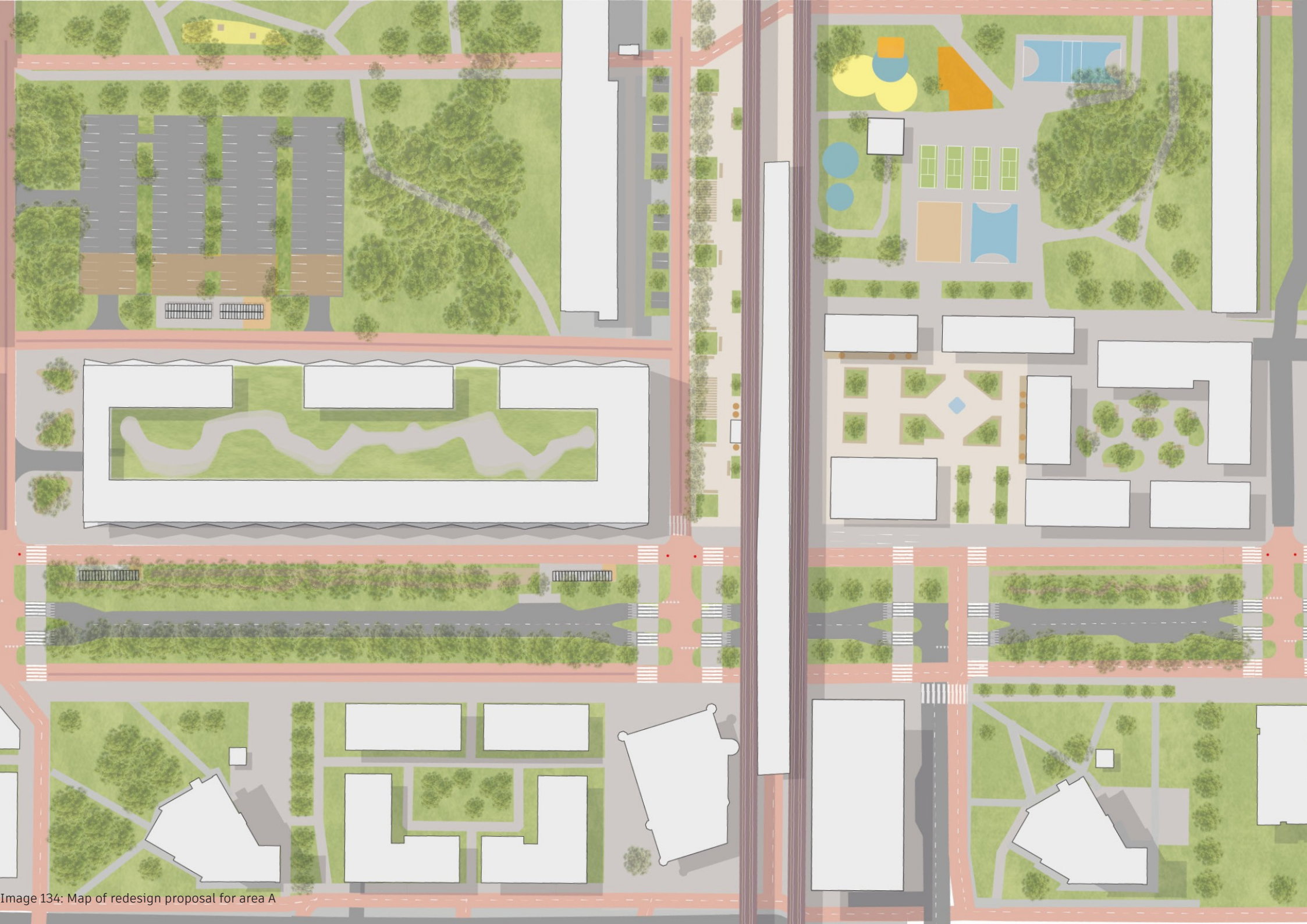


Image 134: Map of redesign proposal for area A

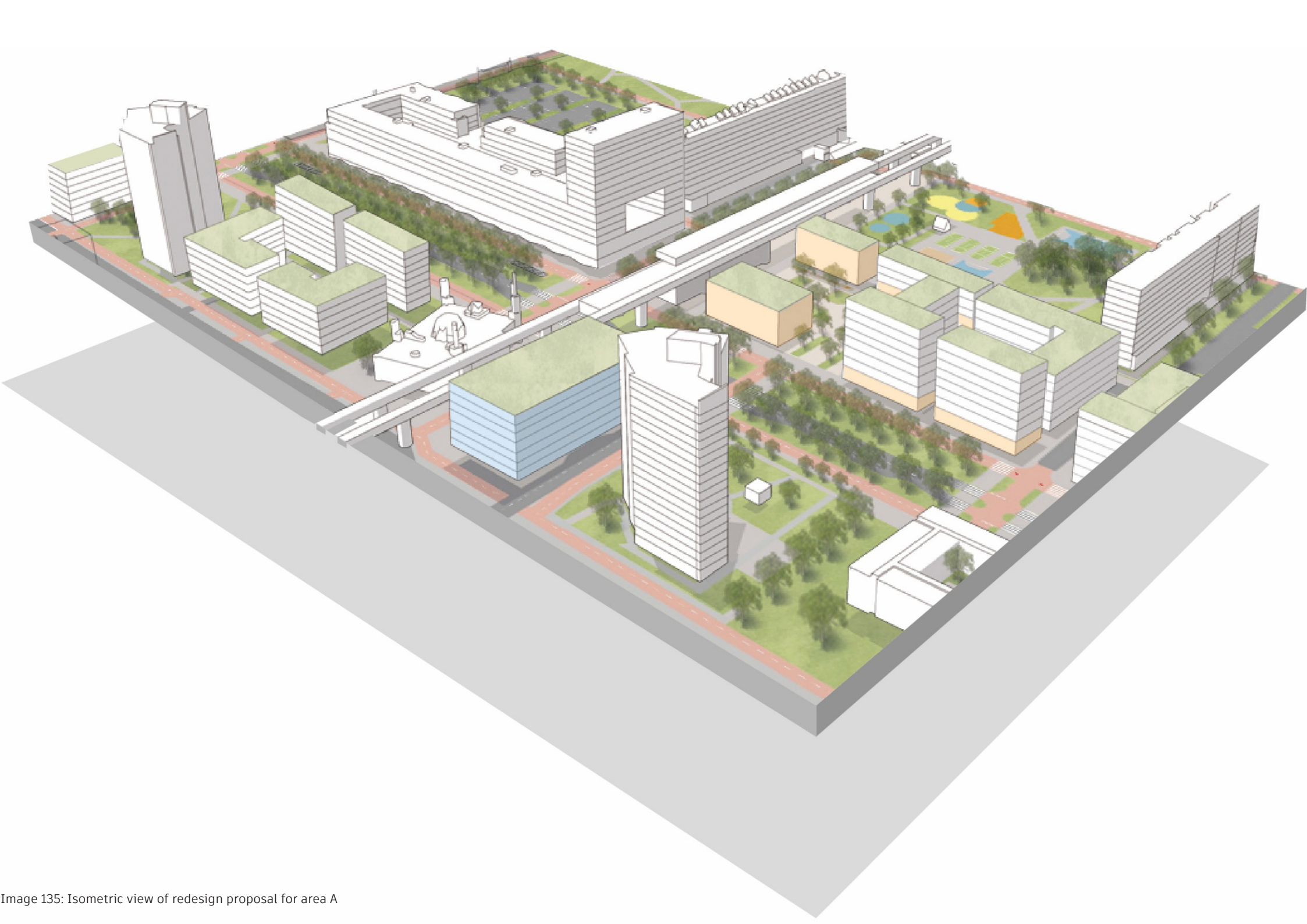


Image 135: Isometric view of redesign proposal for area A

Public space designs and eye level perspectives Area A

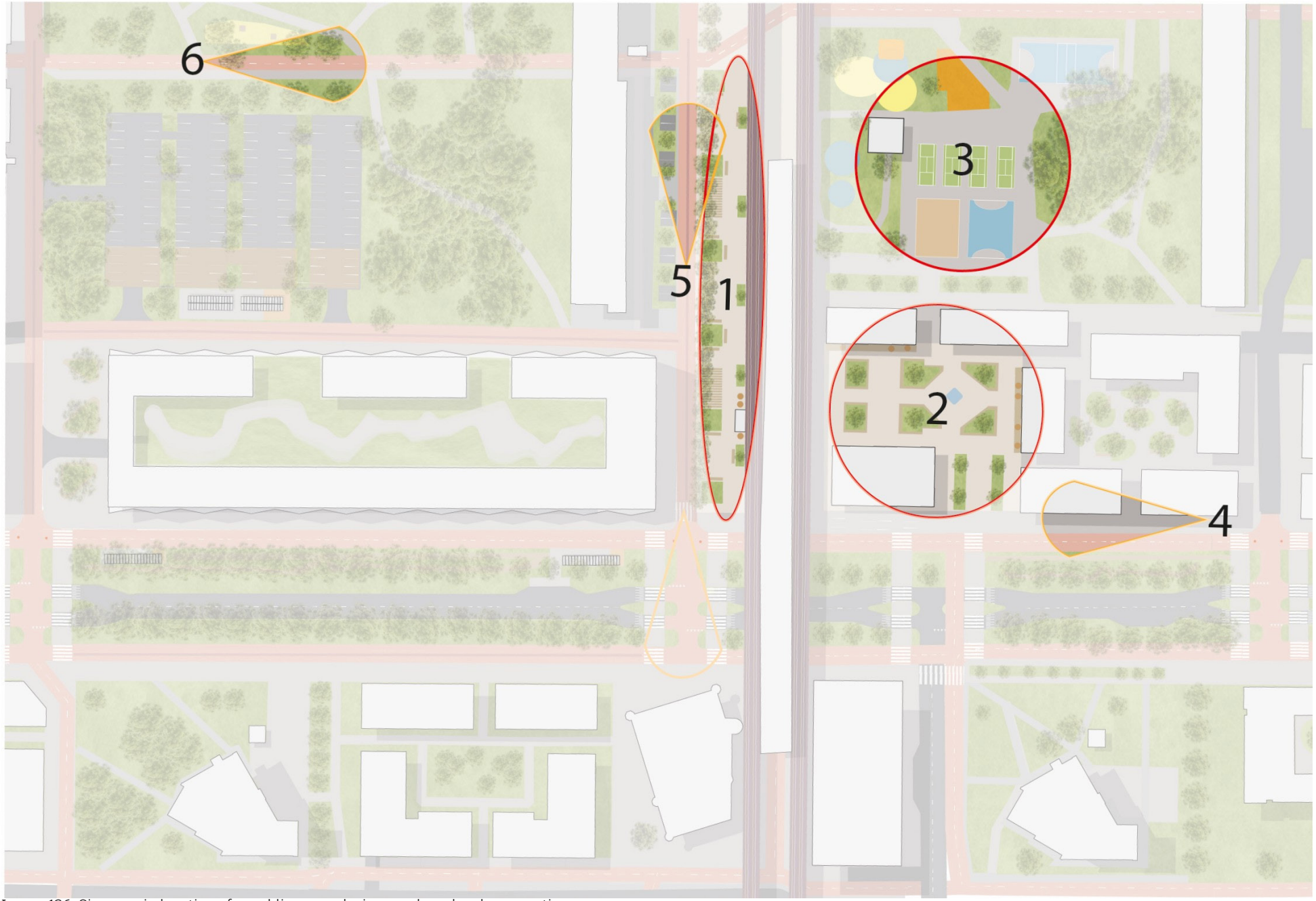


Image 136: Six zoom in locations for public space designs and eye level perspectives

This image shows the locations of three bird's-eye zoom-ins and three eye-level perspectives, together illustrating how public space transforms across the district. The bird's-eye views present the redesigned public spaces at a super-local scale,. These three locations were selected because they undergo the most significant changes: each shifts from a hard, fragmented, and unattractive space into a high-quality, well-connected public realm that becomes a new anchor point in the neighbourhood.

Public space design 1 focuses on the existing facilities strip, where the weekly market takes place. This area is reorganized, greener, and improved in terms of spatial clarity and staying quality, while becoming better linked to surrounding walking and cycling networks.

Public space design 2 shows the new central public space formed between recently added buildings, facilities, and housing. Here, new program, routes, and greenery merge into a lively and attractive place for daily use.

Public space design 3 highlights the enhancement of the existing multifunctional sports and play area, preserving its strengths while embedding it more strongly within the new mobility and green structure. The three eye-level perspectives illustrate how these interventions change the everyday experience from a user's point of view.

Perspective 4 shows the experience along the newly built facilities and housing, located directly on the central green mobility axis.

Perspective 5 captures a route alongside the existing facilities strip, redesigned to be greener, safer, and more pleasant.

Perspective 6 depicts a quieter, more intimate route within the green inner part of the neighbourhood, offering a calmer and more landscape-oriented experience.

Together, these perspectives demonstrate how the transformation reshapes not only physical space but also how residents and visitors move through and perceive the district.


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Public space design #A1

Reclaiming a Paved Void as a Vibrant Public Square

This location sits directly beneath the elevated metro viaduct, right beside the existing strip of neighbourhood facilities. Although highly central, it currently presents itself as a fully hardened, empty, and anonymous public space. Framed by a row of trees on one side and the metro structure on the other, the area offers no program, no identity, and no reason to stay—just a large expanse of paving that remains unused throughout most of the week.

Only on Saturdays does the space reveal its potential. When the market sets up, it becomes a lively, energetic place filled with people, sound, and activity. This weekly transformation shows that the space can be vibrant and socially important. Yet outside market days, that liveliness disappears, and the square returns to functioning as an oversized leftover surface. Given its proximity to amenities and transit, it should instead operate as a key staying space supporting daily neighbourhood life.

In the renewed situation, this paved void becomes a green, welcoming, and human-scaled public square. Lush planting beds, pergolas, and clusters of trees soften the environment and create a comfortable microclimate, while diverse seating options invite people to sit, rest, and spend time. A small kiosk with parasols adds everyday convenience and a touch of commercial activity. A subtle linear water feature enriches the atmosphere and climatic quality, turning the area into a pleasant destination rather than a space to simply walk through. Importantly, the flexible layout preserves ample open space for the weekly market, allowing the square to retain its vibrant Saturday character while becoming far more usable throughout the rest of the week.

This transformation directly supports the project's aims by creating a local place with identity, comfort, and everyday amenities. Residents gain nearby destinations for meeting, relaxing, and spending time outside, reducing the need to travel elsewhere for quality public space and contributing to the 15-minute ambition of keeping daily experiences within walking distance.

Beyond proximity, the renewed square strengthens active mobility by creating a comfortable, engaging environment along the movement network. People walking or cycling now pass through a lively space with clear social presence, improving safety, human scale, and overall livability. The added greenery boosts ecological and climatic quality, while the kiosk and seating naturally support social cohesion.

Together, these elements turn the square into a true neighbourhood anchor: a vibrant everyday place that enriches the local public realm, reinforces the active-mobility structure, and advances the project's ambition of creating inviting, accessible, and socially lively spaces throughout the district.





Public space design #A2

Transforming an Empty Square into a Civic Heart

This large paved space in front of the medical centre and community building was previously an empty, anonymous part of the neighbourhood. Despite its strategic location next to the metro line, the area offered little more than hard paving and scattered parking spaces. Most of the surface was dedicated to car access, with almost no places to sit, linger, or enjoy the outdoors. The absence of greenery, shade, and enclosure made the space feel oversized, uninviting, and purely functional—used only by people entering nearby buildings or parking their cars. Although its central position gave it strong potential, it functioned as an underused infrastructural zone rather than a meaningful neighbourhood place.

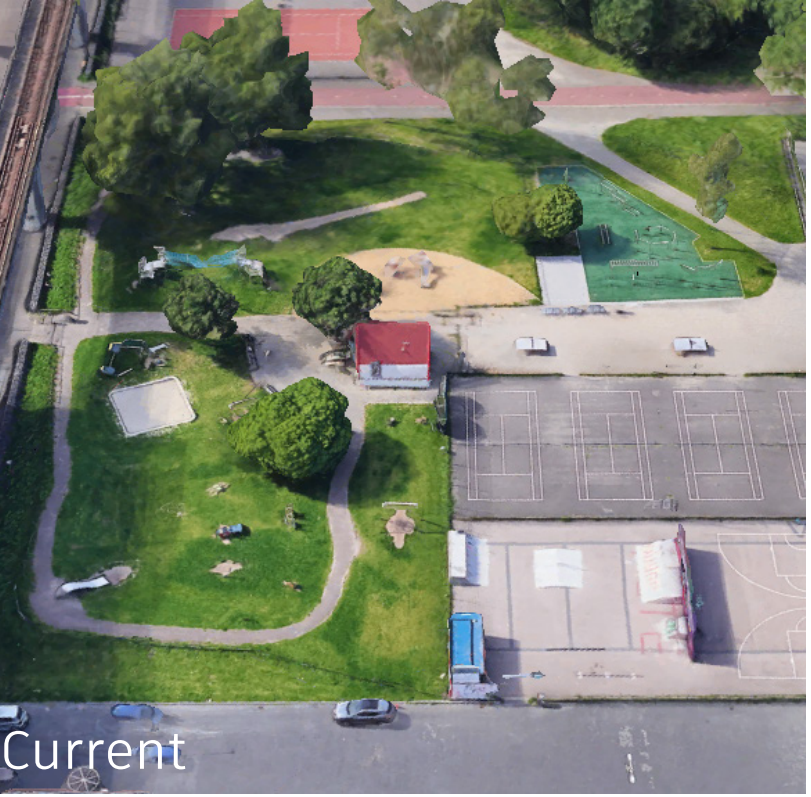
In the renewed situation, this empty paved area transforms into a vibrant, green, and welcoming neighbourhood square. New mixed-use buildings—combining active ground-floor amenities with housing above—now frame the space and bring a daily rhythm of life. Cafés, local services, community-oriented functions, and terraces animate the edges, while new homes place residents directly next to everyday facilities, ensuring continuous activity and natural social supervision.

A new library anchors the southern side of the square, responding to the need for educational and cultural functions in the district. Its presence turns the square into a civic centrepoint—a place for learning, meeting, and community life throughout the day.

Lush planting, canopy trees, comfortable seating clusters, and well-designed microclimatic zones replace the former expanse of paving. The square becomes an attractive, human-scaled environment where people walk, cycle, rest, meet others, or use nearby services—no longer a space to pass through, but a place to spend time.

Targeted densification around the square plays a key role. By adding new housing directly adjacent to amenities, cultural functions, and active-mobility routes, more residents live within seconds of what they need. This increases daily use, supports local services, and keeps the square socially active, safe, and inviting at all hours.

This transformation directly strengthens the project goals. By mixing living, working, and social functions in one central location, the design increases proximity, promotes active mobility, and creates a strong neighbourhood anchor. In doing so, it improves everyday accessibility and overall livability, fully aligning with the project’s ambition to create a more people-oriented, active-mobility-focused urban environment..





Public space design #A3

From Exposed and Dull to Inviting and Active

This centrally located outdoor play and sports area sits next to the metro line and within short walking distance of local amenities, giving it strong potential as a neighbourhood meeting space. The concept—combining play, informal recreation, and sport—is well suited to the area. However, the old layout fell short: large grey surfaces dominated, activity zones felt disconnected, and there was little greenery or shade. The open edges made the space feel exposed and unprotected, limiting everyday use, especially for children and families. Although the foundation was solid, the area needed an upgrade to realise its potential.

In the renewed situation, this foundation is preserved but significantly strengthened. The design focuses on enhancing identity, comfort, and usability while keeping the original multifunctional concept. The concrete sports fields are upgraded with new artificial grass, making them more suitable for tennis and everyday recreation. Other hard surfaces receive rich, colourful coatings that enliven the space and clearly define different activity areas.

New play zones and active pockets are added in the green spaces between existing elements, creating a more coherent and continuous recreational landscape. Weekly sports and play events now take place at the small central meeting point, drawing residents into the space and giving it a steady rhythm of social activity.

To address the previously exposed feeling, the entire perimeter is bordered with a soft layer of greenery. This planted edge provides gentle enclosure and improves comfort and safety while maintaining openness and clear sightlines. The result is a more inviting, sheltered, and family-friendly environment.

Through these upgrades, the space evolves from a grey, underused zone into a lively multifunctional hub for play, sport, meeting, and social interaction. By offering nearby, high-quality outdoor opportunities, the area strengthens proximity to essential services and reduces the need to travel elsewhere. Its improved comfort, identity, and safety encourage walking and cycling, reinforcing active mobility as the natural choice for local trips.

These changes directly support the project's ambition to create a more livable, human-scaled urban environment. The renewed play–sport area becomes a key social anchor—an accessible, recognisable space that enhances daily life, supports healthy movement patterns, and adds vibrancy to the public realm. In this way, the transformation aligns fully with the project's goal of redistributing space toward people and improving the overall quality of public space in Amsterdam Zuidoost.





Eye level perspective #A4

From Car-Dominated Artery to Active-Mobility Spine

This part of the mobility corridor was formerly a four-lane road dominated by motorised traffic. Long rows of on-street parking filled most of the space, while an unused grass strip on the right-hand side acted as a leftover, inactive zone that added little to the public realm. Despite its highly strategic location—close to amenities, mobility hubs, and the elevated train line—this corridor offered poor conditions for walking and cycling. Active mobility felt secondary and unsafe in a landscape shaped almost entirely by cars, even though this is exactly where high-quality links should meet.

In the renewed situation, the entire street is restructured into one of the district's main active-mobility routes. The former traffic- and parking-dominated profile is replaced by a wide, continuous cycling priority lane that connects directly to key amenities and forms a central east–west movement axis. The unused grass strip is transformed into a new mixed use neighbourhood, placing residents next to services, the metro station, and a high-quality active-mobility route. New buildings follow the existing height profile, creating continuity while supporting active ground-floor functions along the corridor.

A green corridor now lines the route with lush planting, shade trees, and seasonal colour, improving the spatial quality of both the public realm and surrounding housing. This segment of the corridor is designed as a place to stay, meet, and move comfortably: people can walk at a relaxed pace, sit, meet friends, or enjoy terraces along active edges.

All traces of the car-dominated layout disappear from the main alignment. Parking is removed, and cars no longer run directly along the route. Essential access is maintained instead through a calm secondary road located between two green corridors and screened by planting, keeping vehicles discreet and barely visible.

Through this transformation, the corridor shifts from an unattractive, car-focused street into a vibrant active-mobility spine and local destination. By reallocating space away from car infrastructure toward high-quality cycling and pedestrian facilities, the design counters the historical overprioritisation of motorised mobility and redistributes space more equitably—one of the project's core spatial-justice principles. This redistribution strengthens everyday accessibility and supports the ambition of placing amenities within comfortable walking and cycling distance. The addition of new housing and active edges increases local activity and daily presence, reinforcing the corridor as a lively, people-oriented environment and further contributing to the 15-minute city concept.





Eye level perspective #A5

From Car-Dominated Artery to Active-Mobility Spine

In the existing situation, this street functions as a car-centred space dominated by long rows of parked vehicles and extensive hard paving. The route feels unattractive, grey, and passive, offering little comfort or appeal for people walking or cycling. Although cyclists technically use the street, the environment is entirely shaped around cars, making active mobility feel secondary, unsafe, and uninviting.

In the renewed situation, the street is transformed into a high-quality active-mobility route. Most of the on-street parking is replaced by a generous green strip filled with planting, trees, and small sitting areas that completely change the character of the space. The main alignment becomes a smooth, continuous red-asphalt cycling route that clearly prioritises active mobility while still maintaining essential access for vehicles.

Cars can still enter when necessary—specifically for Saturday market operations on the adjacent square. A small number of parking bays remain discreetly integrated into the new green strip, reserved exclusively for market stallholders. Outside these moments, the street is intended to function as a calm, people-oriented corridor, where walking and cycling are the natural, attractive, and most comfortable modes of movement.

The transformation turns an unappealing, car-dominated environment into a lively, green, and human-scaled mobility route with activity along the edges. The addition of greenery and places to sit softens the space, improves microclimate, and introduces daily life and social presence along the route—elements that greatly enhance comfort and perceived safety for active mobility users.

This shift directly contributes to the goals of the project. By reallocating street space from car use toward walking, cycling, and greenery, the design strengthens everyday accessibility, improves livability, and reduces dependency on cars. It creates a corridor where movement, staying, and social interaction naturally intertwine—supporting the wider ambition of developing a more active-mobility-focused, 15-minute neighbourhood in Amsterdam Zuidoost.





Eye level perspective #A6

From Car-Dominated Artery to Active-Mobility Spine

In the existing situation, this segment of the mobility route is functional but visually dull and inconsistent. The cycling path works well, yet the surroundings feel inactive: a wide, empty green strip on the left lacks purpose, parked cars on the right dominate the view, the sidewalk sits awkwardly separate from the route, and the outdated lighting creates an unsafe atmosphere at night. Together, these elements make the corridor feel uninviting, even though its basic structure is sound.

In the renewed situation, a series of subtle but carefully targeted interventions improves the quality of the route. The parked cars are visually hidden behind a new hedge, reducing their impact on the streetscape. The sidewalk is repositioned to sit more naturally alongside the greenery, creating a clearer and more comfortable structure for both pedestrians and cyclists. Activity is introduced by adding a children's playground directly next to the route, ensuring a lively daily presence and more social eyes along the corridor. Lighting is upgraded to enhance night-time visibility and strengthen the sense of safety after dark.

While the overall layout remains almost the same, these small upgrades collectively raise the comfort, safety, and attractiveness of the route. They demonstrate that not all transformations need to be large or dramatic to be effective. Instead, subtle, well-placed interventions can meaningfully enhance everyday experiences and contribute to a coherent, high-quality mobility network.

This approach directly supports the ambition of the project: creating consistent, inviting active-mobility routes throughout the district. By improving even modest stretches—through greenery, activity, safety, and visual quality—the design helps build a neighbourhood where walking and cycling feel natural, pleasant, and seamless at every step.

Area B
Current Situation

The current situation shows a quiet, predominantly residential area that is clearly divided into two distinct parts. On the left side lies a large, open green space with a single high-rise apartment building placed within it. This open landscape appears spacious, but in practice it is barely used: the green consists mostly of wide grass fields with a few scattered trees that provide no real function or sense of place. Although greenery is present, it remains almost completely underutilised and does not contribute meaningfully to everyday life in the area.

The right side of the area has a very different structure. Here, low-rise family houses are arranged in courtyard-like clusters, yet many of these courtyards are dominated by parking. Street parking is present almost everywhere, and the shared residential spaces between the homes have largely been taken over by cars. As a result, the car strongly defines the streetscape and occupies a significant portion of the available space.

Parking is also very prominent around the high-rise building. On the right side of the block, a large surface parking area stretches along the entire façade. This visibly reduces the spatial quality of the surroundings: the area feels less green, less welcoming, and lacks a human scale. The space consumed by cars could have contributed to usable public space, better landscaping, or more coherent green structures—but instead it functions mainly as storage for vehicles.

Despite the overall spaciousness of the neighbourhood, the way this space is used is inefficient. While there is an abundance of room for cars, there is very little space dedicated to bicycles around the high-rise building. Two cycling routes do run through the area, but the routes are interrupted by car streets, breaking continuity and reducing the quality and attractiveness of the cycling experience.

In summary, this is an area with clear potential due to its generous open spaces, yet the current layout is heavily shaped by parking and underused greenery. The balance between mobility, greenery, and everyday living quality is missing, resulting in an area that feels disconnected and spatially underperforming.

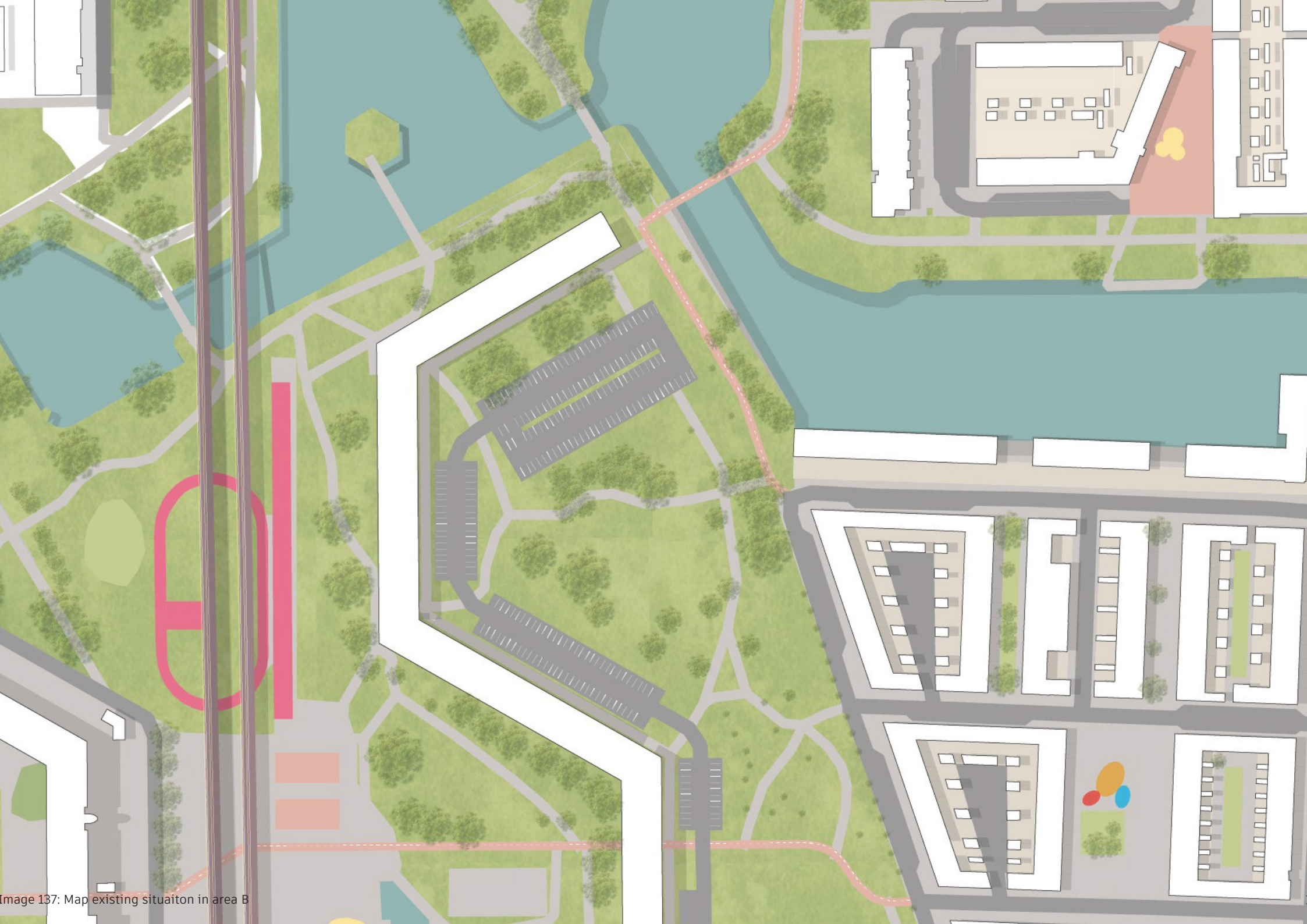


Image 137: Map existing situaiton in area B

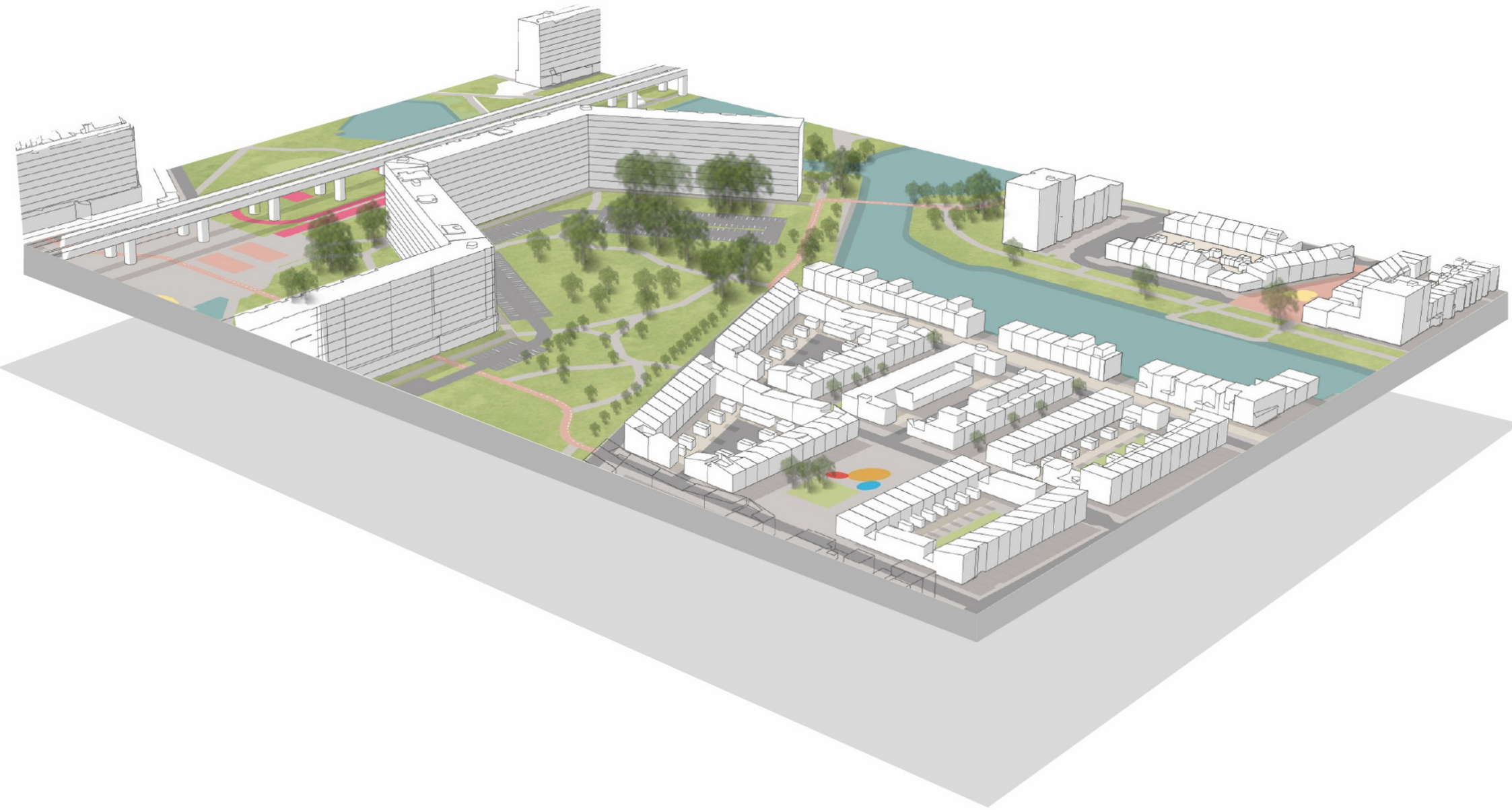


Image 138: Isometric view of existing situaiton in area B

Area B
Future Situation

In the new situation, the large surface parking areas and most on-street parking are removed from the neighbourhood. Parking is relocated to a set of central mobility hubs at the edges of the district, where residents also have access to shared cars. This frees up substantial space within the area and removes the visual and spatial dominance of parked vehicles.

Several internal streets are closed to through-traffic, creating car-free residential interiors that become calmer, greener, and more attractive for walking, playing, and staying. The surrounding streets remain accessible for car access when needed, but everyday movement within the neighbourhood shifts towards active mobility. Previously disconnected cycling routes are repaired and upgraded: some streets become bicycle-priority routes, others transform into dedicated and continuous cycle paths.

Streets and public spaces that once functioned mainly as corridors for car movement now take on a softer, greener character. Asphalt is replaced by planting, trees, and small-scale interventions that slow vehicle speeds and give walking and cycling a natural sense of priority. The removal of parking also opens up space for new functions in the neighbourhood: community gardening, sport, play, and other active or social uses are introduced to give structure and meaning to the formerly underused open areas. Playful, active, and productive landscapes are integrated along the main movement routes to create liveliness, visibility, and a sense of safety.

Underused or overlooked public spaces throughout the neighbourhood are improved and made more inviting, allowing them to function as everyday places for relaxation, activity, and social interaction. The overall effect is a shift toward a greener, more coherent, and socially active public realm supported by continuous, high-quality active-mobility connections.

Underused or overlooked public spaces throughout the neighbourhood are improved and made more inviting, allowing them to function as everyday places for relaxation, activity, and social interaction. The overall effect is a shift toward a greener, more coherent, and socially active public realm supported by continuous, high-quality active-mobility connections.

Altogether, the transformation shifts the neighbourhood from a car-oriented layout to a human-centred environment, where everyday life takes place in green, comfortable, and socially active public spaces. Even though space in this area is not scarce, redirecting a large portion of it away from car parking and car movement improves the quality of the urban environment. By reallocating these large open areas toward community gardens, play, sport, staying spaces, and continuous active-mobility routes, the design supports spatial justice—not by solving a lack of space, but by ensuring that available space is used in ways that benefit many more residents in their daily lives. At the same time, the renewed network of uninterrupted walking and cycling connections supports the principles of the 15-minute city, making everyday destinations easily reachable through safe, pleasant, and comfortable routes. The district becomes more equitable, more connected, and more liveable—an environment shaped not by the demands of cars, but by the everyday needs and experiences of people.

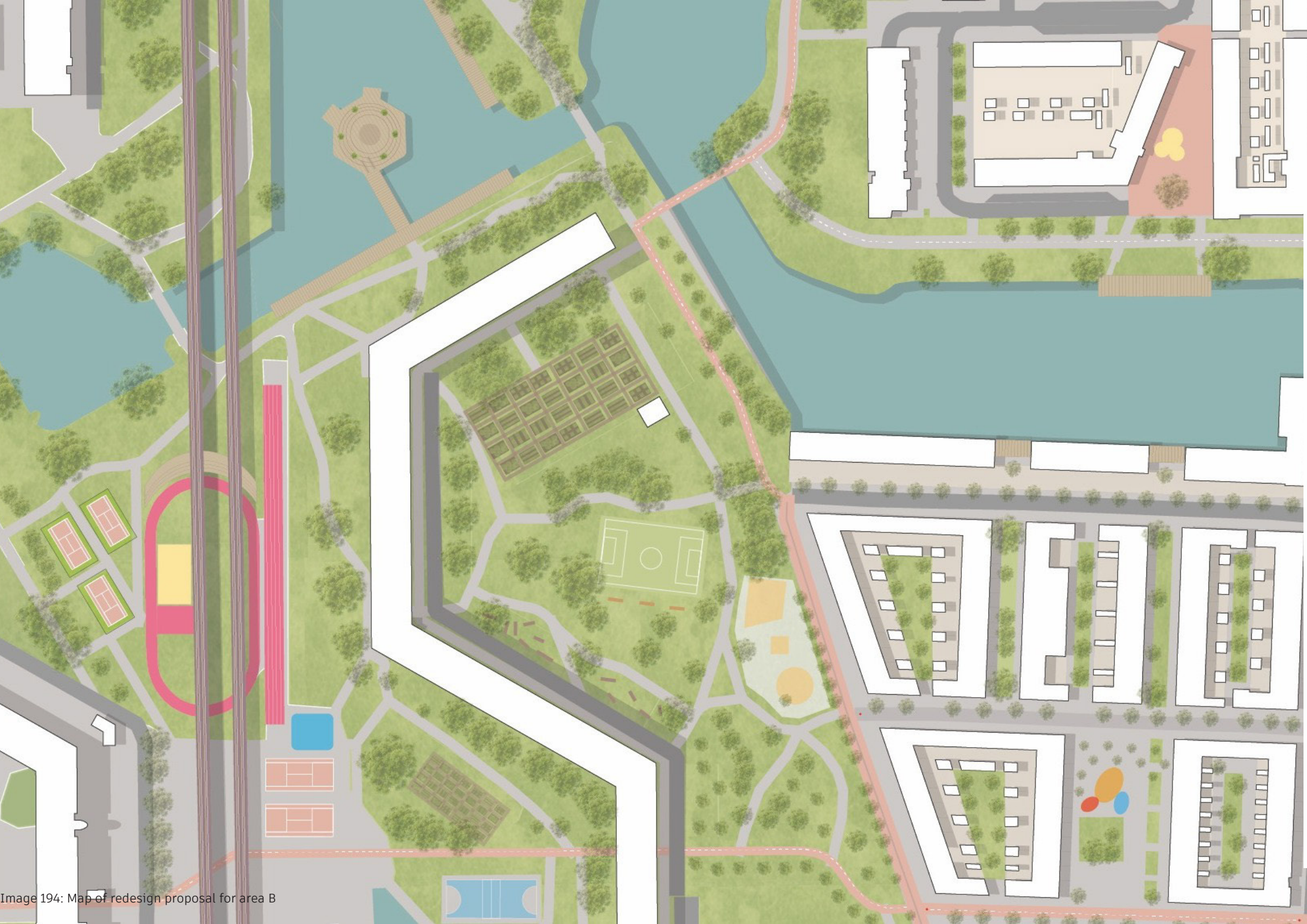


Image 194: Map of redesign proposal for area B

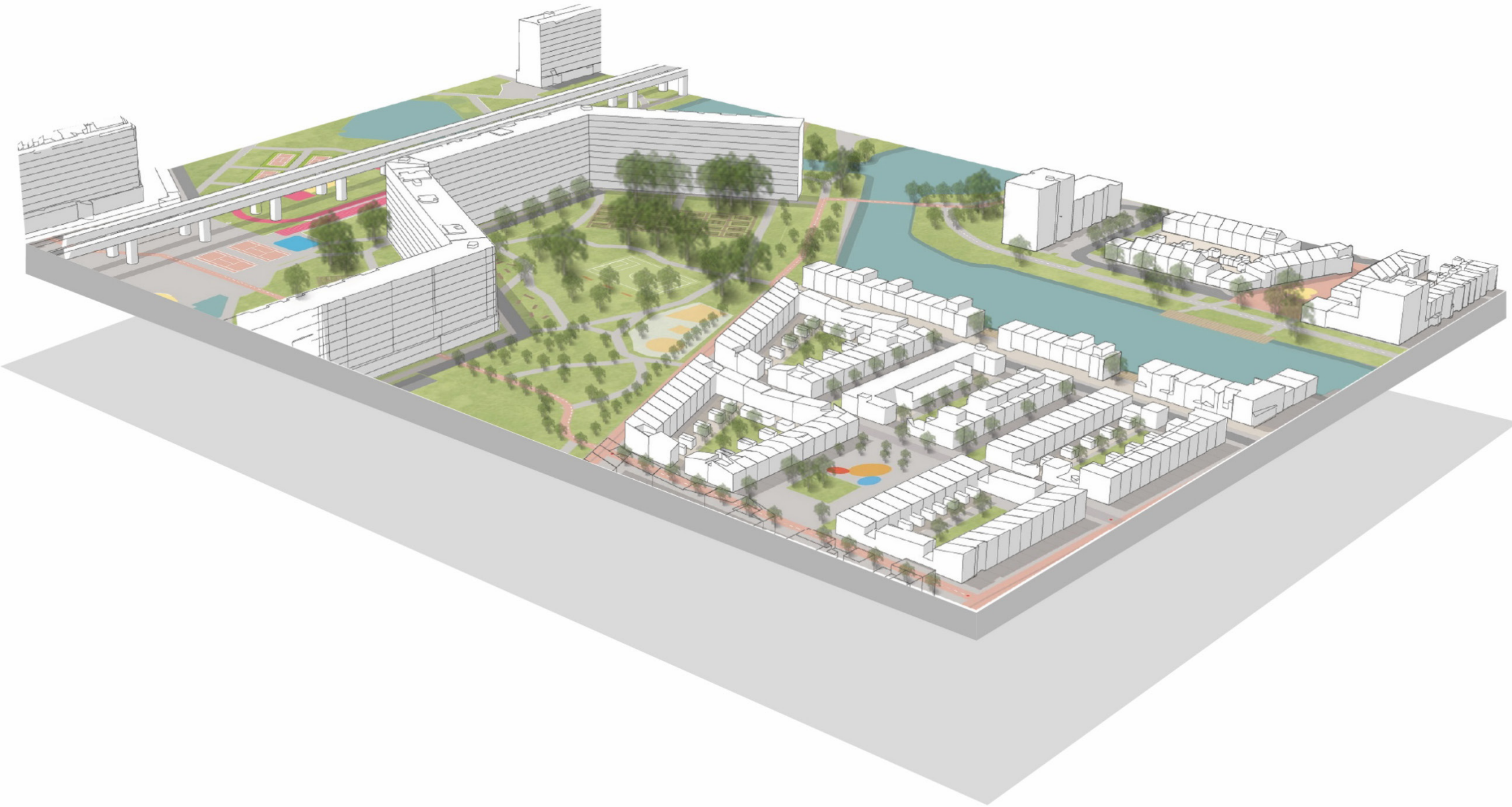


Image 140: Isometric view of redesign proposal for area B

Public space designs and eye level perspectives Area B

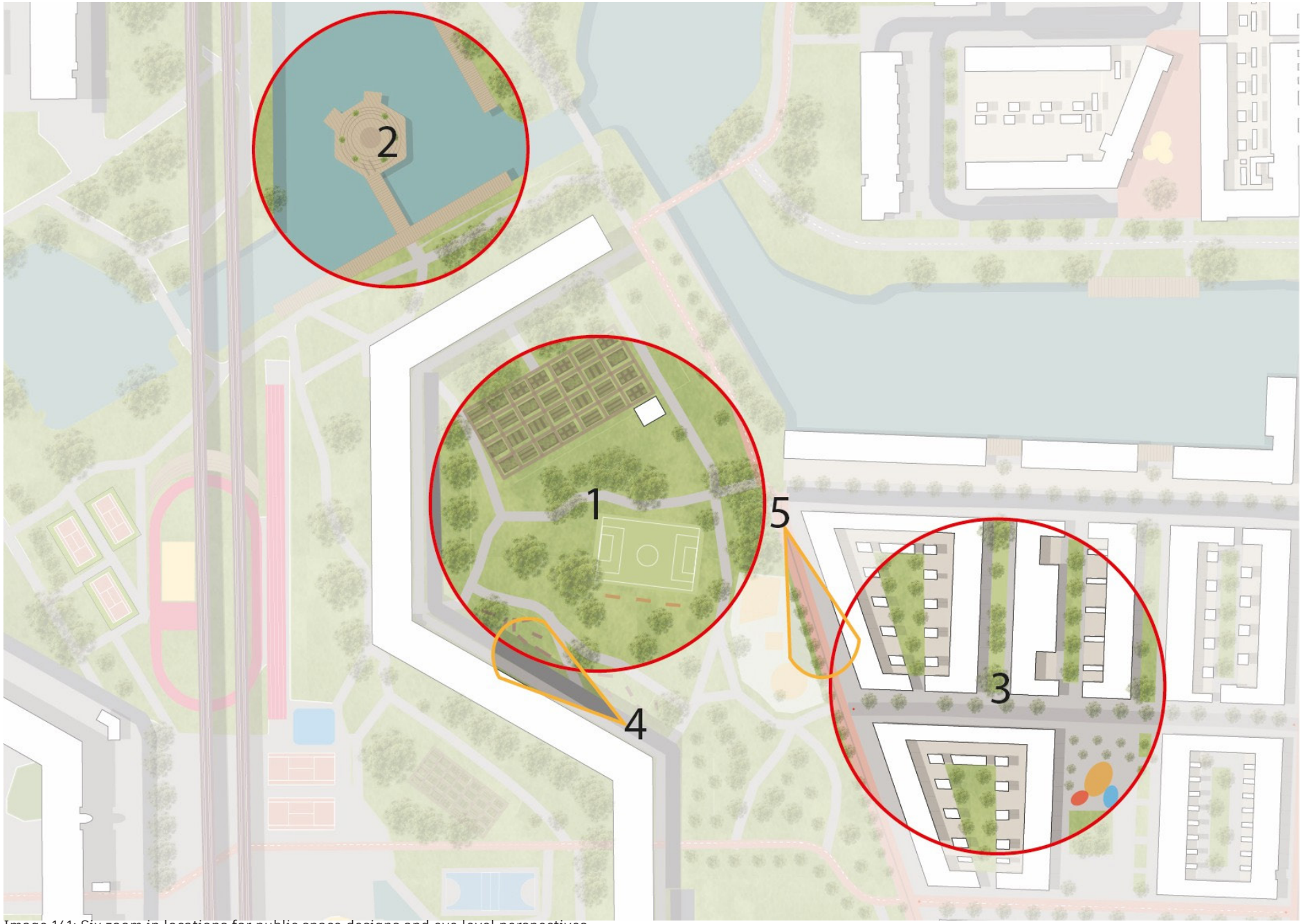


Image 141: Six zoom in locations for public space designs and eye level perspectives

This image shows the locations of three bird's-eye zoom-ins and two eye-level perspectives that together illustrate the transformation of Area 2. These specific locations were chosen because they undergo the most significant and impactful changes, shifting from car-dominated and underused spaces into greener, more active, and people-focused parts of the neighbourhood.

Zoom-in 1 shows the large area beside the high-rise apartments, transformed from surface parking and unused green into a car-free landscape with new programs and activated greenery.

Zoom-in 2 captures the renewal of the neglected waterfront, which becomes a social anchor where residents can gather and spend time by the water.

Zoom-in 3 focuses on the family-housing area, where inner streets are made car-free and redesigned as green, safe, and inviting shared spaces.

The eye-level perspectives provide a sense of the everyday experience:
Perspective 4 illustrates the transformed street along the high-rise, now greener, slower, and free of on-street parking.

Perspective 5 shows the restored active-mobility route, upgraded with greenery and activity such as a playground placed directly along the path.

Together, these views give a clear impression of how Area 2 becomes greener, better connected, and more attractive for everyday life.


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Public Space Design #B1

From Car-Dominated Green Void to Attractive Community Space

The existing situation shows a residential green area directly adjacent to the high-rise apartment block. Although the space appears generous, it is strongly shaped by car infrastructure: a car-oriented access road loops around the building, and large surface parking areas sit directly beside the façade. Behind this lies an open green field made up mostly of grass with a few scattered trees, but without any real function or everyday use.

The main active-mobility route running north–south through the area is interrupted by the car road, forcing cyclists and pedestrians to cross a vehicle-dominated section, breaking continuity and reducing comfort. Overall, the space feels underused and lacks activity, despite being the main outdoor area for many residents living in the high-rise. As a result, a space with strong potential for community life, everyday use, and social interaction is currently not functioning to its capacity.

In the transformed situation, the entire area becomes almost car-free. All parking directly around the building is removed, with only one central parking hub at the neighbourhood edge remaining for private cars and shared-car use. This frees up valuable space and completely shifts the atmosphere of the area.

The newly available space is used to introduce meaningful functions: an allotment garden for local food production, a sports field for informal activity, and two playgrounds—one traditional and one nature-based. Both playgrounds are placed along the active-mobility route, making the route more lively while ensuring the play areas feel safe through constant movement and natural surveillance.

These new elements—producing, playing, and sporting—form one of the residential clusters introduced in the project. This particular cluster, the Playful Garden, focuses on young families and children, creating an open and social environment where greenery, movement, and everyday interaction come together.

This transformation dsupports the project's goals by reducing car dominance and reallocating space to play, sport, social use, and active mobility, the design distributes space more fairly. The area now supports everyday life for a wide range of residents instead of primarily serving parked cars. At the same time, the Playful Garden cluster aligns with the 15-minute city concept: families have playgrounds, green spaces, and activity areas right next to their homes, all connected by safe and continuous active-mobility routes. The area shifts from an empty green field into a lively neighbourhood destination where people can meet, move, and spend time close to home.





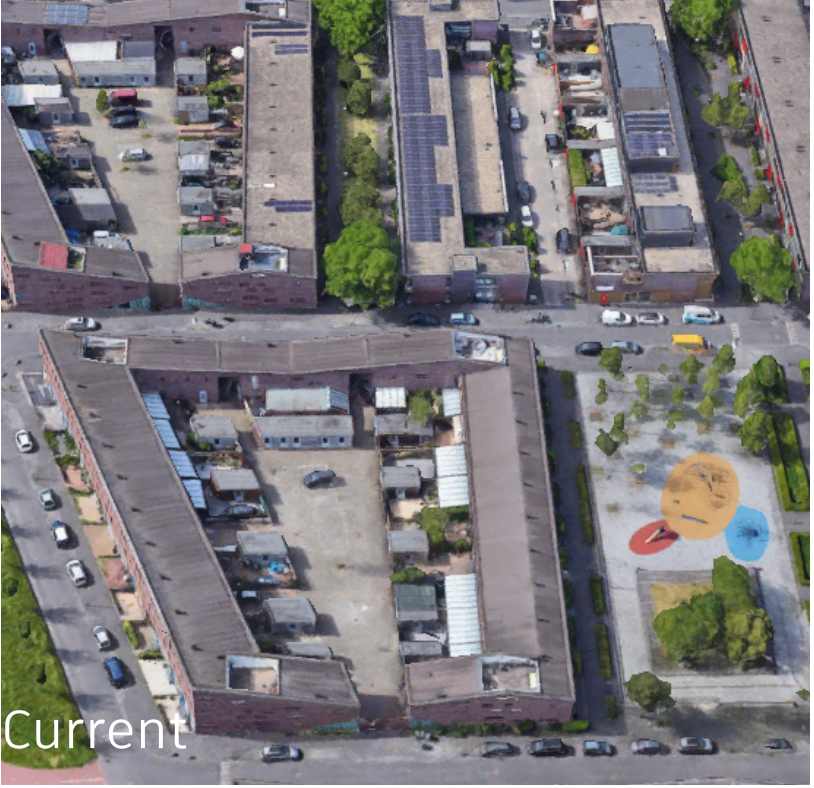
Public Space Design #B2

Waterfront Transformation: From Unused Island to Meeting Place

The existing waterfront area is currently an underused and overlooked part of the neighbourhood. The artificial island in the water serves no meaningful function, and access to the water's edge is limited—dense reed growth and unshaped banks prevent people from getting close or spending time there. Despite its central location in the green heart of the neighbourhood, the space offers little reason for residents to visit, gather, or enjoy the water. Its potential as a social and recreational meeting place remains completely untapped.

In the transformed situation, the entire waterfront becomes an attractive, accessible, and inviting place. Wooden decks line the water's edge, creating comfortable spots to sit, relax, and enjoy the view. The island itself is redesigned into a stepped wooden platform—a shared social space where people can sit alone, gather in groups, or simply enjoy being by the water. Stairs leading into the water provide safe access for swimmers during warm seasons, allowing the lake to function as a true recreational asset for the neighbourhood. (Naturally, this depends on ensuring the water quality is suitable for swimming.)

With these additions, the waterfront shifts from an unused leftover space into a genuine social destination within the neighbourhood. Residents no longer need to travel far to enjoy water, meeting places, or summer recreation—they have these experiences right next to their homes. This strengthens everyday proximity and aligns directly with the principles of the 15-minute city, where key leisure and social spaces are always within a short and comfortable walking or cycling distance. The upgraded waterfront becomes a lively anchor point in the green heart of the district, supporting community life and providing a unique local place to relax, meet, and connect.





Public Space Design #B3

Revitalising the Residential Block: Green and Car free Streets

The current situation in this single-family housing block is strongly car-dominated. Street parking fills almost every edge of the neighbourhood, and the shared inner courtyards—originally intended as communal spaces—are now used almost entirely for parking. All internal streets function primarily as car corridors, leaving little room for greenery, walking, or social life. These car streets also interrupt the existing active-mobility network, forcing cyclists and pedestrians to cross vehicle routes and reducing comfort, continuity, and safety.

In the new situation, the active-mobility network is fully corrected and strengthened. A bicycle street is introduced along the left side of the block, and a car-free cycle path runs along the bottom. The central horizontal street in the middle of the neighbourhood also becomes car-free. As a result, cars can still circulate around the outside of the block for access, but the entire interior becomes a calm, green, and safe space for walking, cycling, and staying.

All parking is relocated to a new, large underground parking facility at the southern edge of the district, which also includes spaces for shared cars. Cars can still reach the surrounding streets for quick drop-off or loading, but long-term parking is moved 1–2 minutes away—freeing the residential area from the constant presence of parked vehicles.

The space released by removing parking is used to green and soften the neighbourhood. Former car streets are transformed into attractive green streets where walking and cycling become the natural choice. The inner courtyards, once full of parked cars, are redesigned as small pocket parks—quiet, intimate places where residents can meet, relax, and enjoy a shared outdoor space directly next to their homes.

By reallocating street space and courtyard space from cars to people, the design promotes spatial justice: neighbourhood land is no longer used mainly for vehicle storage but supports everyday life for a larger and more diverse group of residents. At the same time, the new green streets, pocket parks, and continuous cycling routes strengthen the principles of the 15-minute city. Daily needs, social spaces, and comfortable mobility options are now all available within a short walk or bike ride. The result is a healthier, more liveable, and more community-oriented neighbourhood—designed around people rather than cars.





Eye Level Perspective #B4

From Parking Zone To Neighborhood Street

The existing situation is a strongly car-dominated street functioning mainly as an access road to the high-rise block. The profile is designed entirely around vehicle movement and parking: wide parking rows on both sides, a central carriageway that clearly prioritises cars, and no real space for cyclists or pedestrians. Cyclists are forced onto the sidewalk, creating unsafe and unclear conditions. The green landscape on the right is cut off by parked cars, making it inaccessible and significantly reducing the spatial quality of the street.

In the renewed situation, the street is transformed in a way that reclaims space for people and active mobility. All on-street parking is removed and relocated to a nearby central parking facility that also includes shared cars. This frees the entire street profile for a new, attractive red-brick fietsstraat—an environment where cycling is prioritised and driving becomes secondary. Along the right side, a natural play landscape is introduced, with soft topography and wooden play elements. This not only activates the route but also places the playground in clear sight of the flats, allowing parents to watch their children from inside their homes.

Cars can still enter the street, but only for short functional moments—dropping someone off or quickly unloading—before returning to the central parking area. This keeps the street accessible without allowing car presence to reclaim dominance.

This transformation directly supports the project's core ambitions: redistributing urban space towards active mobility, enhancing everyday safety and comfort, and creating a more liveable environment. The street evolves from a car-oriented access lane into a green, socially active neighbourhood space that encourages walking, cycling, playing, and meeting—fully aligned with the 15-minute city principles and the spatial justice as defined in this project.





Eye Level Perspective #B5

Revitalising the Residential Block: Green and Car-Free streets

The current situation in this single-family housing block is strongly car-dominated. Street parking fills almost every edge of the neighbourhood, and the shared inner courtyards—originally intended as communal spaces—are now used almost entirely for parking. All internal streets function primarily as car corridors, leaving little room for greenery, walking, or social life. These car streets also interrupt the existing active-mobility network, forcing cyclists and pedestrians to cross vehicle routes and reducing comfort, continuity, and safety.

In the new situation, the active-mobility network is fully corrected and strengthened. A bicycle street is introduced along the left side of the block, and a car-free cycle path runs along the bottom. The central horizontal street in the middle of the neighbourhood also becomes car-free. As a result, cars can still circulate around the outside of the block for access, but the entire interior becomes a calm, green, and safe space for walking, cycling, and staying.

All parking is relocated to a new, large underground parking facility at the southern edge of the district, which also includes spaces for shared cars. Cars can still reach the surrounding streets for quick drop-off or loading, but long-term parking is moved 1–2 minutes away—freeing the residential area from the constant presence of parked vehicles.

The space released by removing parking is used to green and soften the neighbourhood. Former car streets are transformed into attractive green streets where walking and cycling become the natural choice. The inner courtyards, once full of parked cars, are redesigned as small pocket parks—quiet, intimate places where residents can meet, relax, and enjoy a shared outdoor space directly next to their homes.

By reallocating street space and courtyard space from cars to people, the design promotes spatial justice: neighbourhood land is no longer used mainly for vehicle storage but supports everyday life for a larger and more diverse group of residents. At the same time, the new green streets, pocket parks, and continuous cycling routes strengthen the principles of the 15-minute city. Daily needs, social spaces, and comfortable mobility options are now all available within a short walk or bike ride. The result is a healthier, more liveable, and more community-oriented neighbourhood—designed around people rather than cars.

8.
Implementation

8.1 Broader Strategy
8.3 Supporting Meassures
8.4 Contribution to other urban challgenges

This chapter explains how the project moves from local design interventions to a broader, district-wide transformation. It begins by outlining the broader strategy, showing how the pilot area connects to its surroundings and how improvements here can trigger a ripple effect—making it easier and more accepted to extend similar changes to neighbouring areas.

Next, the chapter briefly introduces a set of supporting measures. Although the focus of the project is spatial, a successful mobility transition also depends on behavioural, cultural, and organisational support. This section acknowledges their importance without going into extensive detail.

Finally, the chapter highlights how the project contributes to contemporary urban challenges. While mobility is the core focus, the interventions naturally create co-benefits for climate resilience, public-space quality, social safety, and everyday liveability.

8.1 Broader strategy

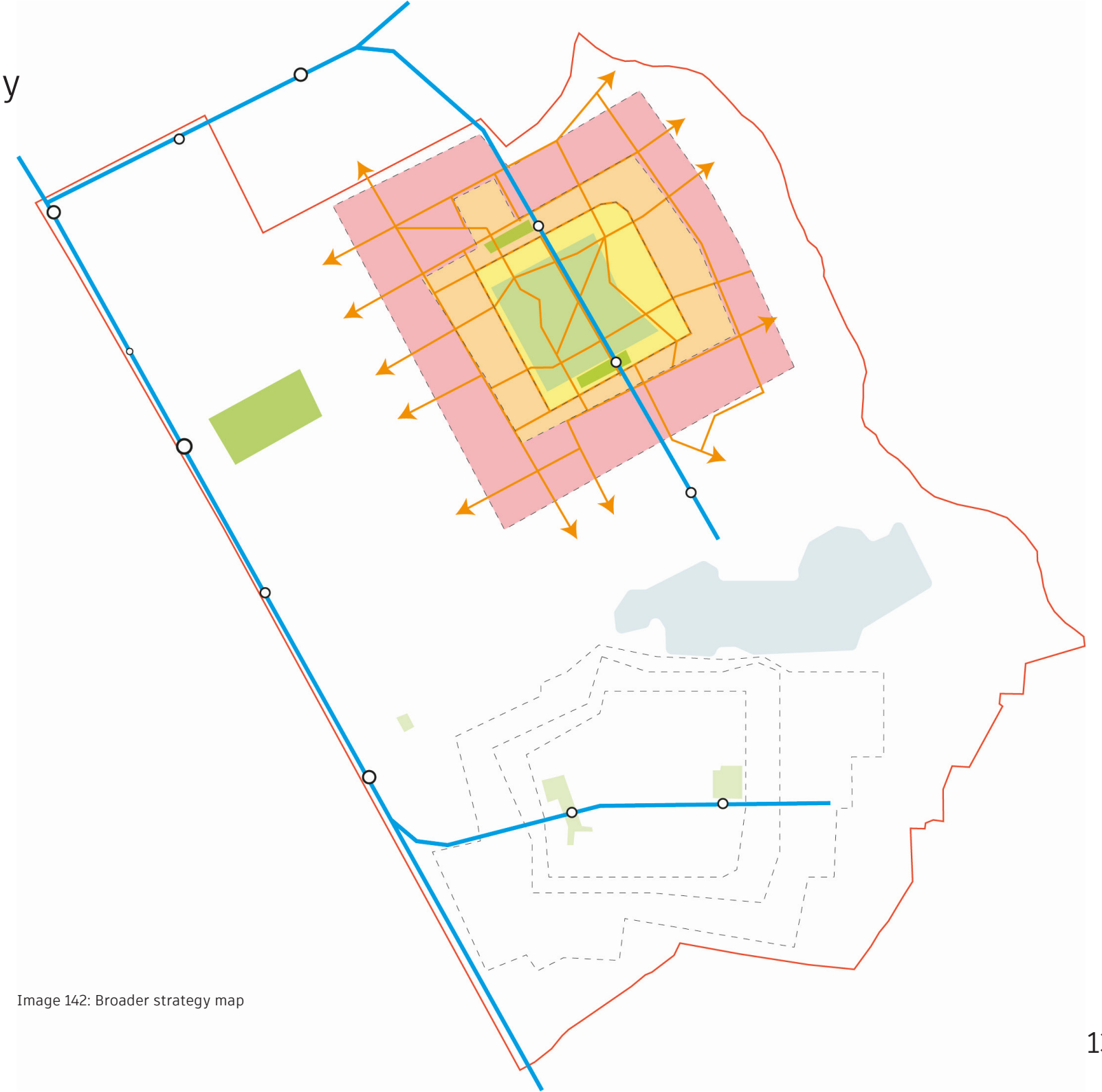


Image 142: Broader strategy map

The strategy begins with the transformation of the pilot area – the place with the greatest potential to generate visible and measurable change. Due to the existing proximity of functions and amenities, relatively small spatial interventions can already have a strong impact on daily behaviour and use. The area is well connected to the wider neighbourhood through existing cycling and walking routes and nearby public transport stops, making it part of the broader urban network.

Within the pilot area, the spatial principles of the strategy are implemented for the first time, creating a more attractive and accessible environment for pedestrians and cyclists. The area serves as a test ground where new street profiles, greening, and car-light layouts come together, resulting in a high-quality public realm that is safe, comfortable, and vibrant throughout the day.

Compared to its surroundings, the pilot area offers qualities that nearby neighbourhoods currently lack: continuous and pleasant walking and cycling routes, well-designed public spaces with places to sit and meet, active ground floors with visible social life, and a mix of daily functions within short distance. Together, these elements create a place that feels alive and inviting – somewhere people actually want to go rather than just pass through.

Because of this improved quality, residents from surrounding areas increasingly choose to walk or cycle to the pilot area instead of travelling to more distant destinations. They are drawn by the combination of convenience, atmosphere, and human presence: it becomes a natural place to shop, meet, and spend time. This concentration of daily activity creates a visible shift in local movement patterns and stimulates more interaction in the public realm.

As more people use the area, the sense of safety and liveliness grows, reinforcing a positive feedback loop – activity attracts more activity. Gradually, this behavioural change extends into the surrounding neighbourhoods, as improved routes and growing social presence make walking and cycling more pleasant and familiar. Step by step, the ripple effect spreads through the district, forming a sustainable and socially active urban network.

As the daily network of local facilities strengthens, the area begins to function more independently. By decentralising amenities and introducing more local shops and services, residents can find what they need closer to home – within walking and cycling distance. More people will therefore shop and spend time locally, reducing the need for longer trips across the district.

As a result, the pilot area gradually develops into a local sub-centre that takes over part of the daily functions, reducing dependency on the Amsterdamse Poort, the main shopping centre of Zuidoost. Over time, the Amsterdamse Poort may evolve into a more compact and specialised centre, focused on urban and cultural activities rather than everyday retail.

8.2 Phasing strategy

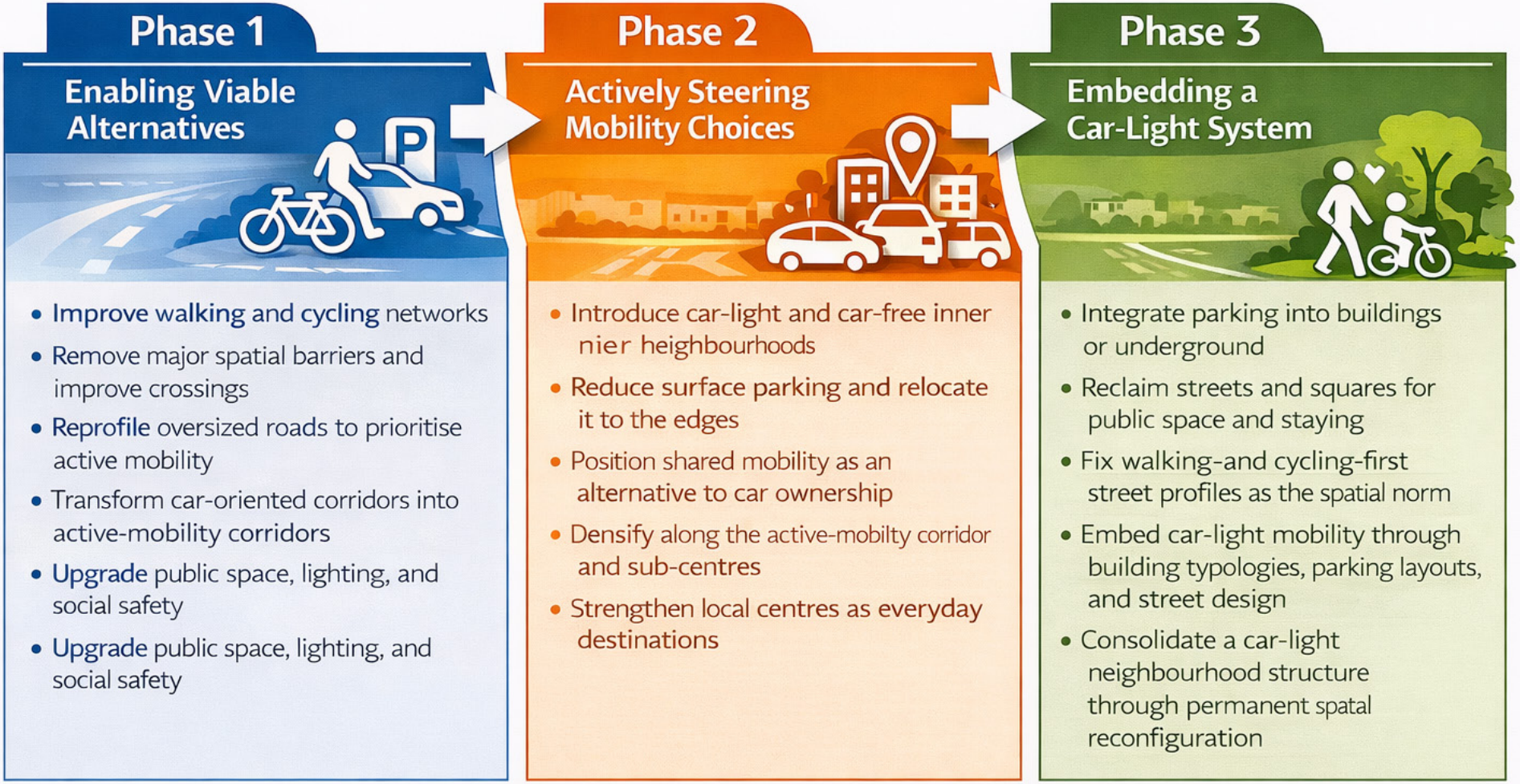


Image 143: Phasing strategy in 3 steps

Phase 1 – Enabling Viable Alternatives

The first phase focuses on removing the spatial and practical barriers that currently make the car the default option for everyday trips. Walking and cycling networks are transformed into a continuous and legible system by improving crossings over major barriers, redesigning intersections, and shortening crossing distances. Oversized road profiles are reprofiled to prioritise walking and cycling, reducing the dominance of car traffic along key routes.

A central intervention in this phase is the transformation of car-oriented corridors into active-mobility corridors. These corridors form the backbone of everyday movement, with clear priority for cyclists and pedestrians. Along these routes, public space is upgraded through improved lighting, increased social safety, and clearer spatial organisation, ensuring that active mobility is safe and reliable throughout the day and year. Parking is addressed only selectively at this stage, primarily where it directly undermines route continuity or spatial quality.

Phase 2 – Actively Steering Mobility Choices

In the second phase, spatial interventions are used to steer everyday mobility behaviour away from car use. With the active-mobility network functioning as a reliable backbone, inner neighbourhood areas can be restructured as car-light or car-free environments without compromising accessibility. Surface parking is systematically reduced and relocated to the edges of the area, making private car use less convenient for daily trips.

At the same time, shared mobility options are strategically positioned at these edges, allowing occasional car use without the need for individual car ownership. Targeted densification along the active-mobility corridor and around existing sub-centres introduces new housing and facilities, bringing people closer to everyday amenities. By strengthening local centres as attractive, multifunctional destinations, daily activities increasingly align with walking and cycling, reducing the need for longer, car-based trips.

Phase 3 – Embedding a Car-Light System

In the final phase, the car is no longer a practical necessity within the neighbourhood, allowing further reduction to become both feasible and socially acceptable. Parking is largely integrated into buildings or placed underground, freeing the public ground level from parked cars. Streets and squares are reclaimed as high-quality public spaces designed for staying, meeting, and local activities.

Walking- and cycling-first street profiles are fixed as the spatial norm, ensuring that the hierarchy of movement is permanently embedded in the urban structure. Car-light mobility is further reinforced through building typologies, parking layouts, and street design, aligning the physical environment with everyday behaviour. Through these permanent spatial reconfigurations, a stable car-light neighbourhood structure is consolidated, in which active mobility and local life become the most natural and self-evident choices.

8.3 Supporting Meassures

While spatial interventions form the core of this project, they address only one side of the transition. Mobility behaviour is also shaped by rules, social habits, daily routines, and institutional support. The interviews conducted during the analysis revealed several non-spatial barriers—such as safety concerns, lack of cycling confidence, affordability issues, and social norms around car use—which cannot be solved through spatial design alone. Because this project is framed as a spatial design assignment, these wider influences fall outside its detailed scope, yet they remain essential for turning the spatial framework into lasting everyday practice.

For that reason, I outline a concise set of supporting measures—ranging from regulatory and maintenance policies to financial incentives, cultural and educational initiatives, workplace programmes, inclusive mobility access, and health-oriented support. These measures directly respond to the behavioural and social obstacles identified in the interviews, and reinforce the spatial design by making active mobility safer, easier, more affordable, and more socially supported. In doing so, they ensure that the conditions surrounding the physical environment enable residents to adopt new mobility habits.

Together, they help create a coherent setting in which the redesigned public realm can function as intended. When spatial, social, policy, and organisational measures work in synergy—addressing both the spatial problems and the non-spatial barriers highlighted by residents—active mobility can become a natural and desirable part of daily life, allowing Zuidoost to evolve into a more equitable, healthy, and liveable district.

How Each Category Supports the Active Mobility Transition:

1. Regulatory Measures

These measures shape the everyday conditions under which residents move. Lower speed limits, restricted-access zones, and school streets create safer and calmer environments, making walking and cycling feel more comfortable and intuitive. By regulating car presence and behaviour, these policies directly reinforce the spatial ambition of shifting priority toward active mobility.

2. Maintenance & Management

Well-maintained routes build trust: when paths are smooth, well-lit, green, and reliable year-round, people are far more likely to choose active travel. These measures ensure that the redesigned spaces remain attractive and functional over time, protecting the quality and consistency of the active-mobility network envisioned in the project.

3. Financial & Incentive Measures

Financial support lowers barriers for households who might otherwise struggle to switch to active mobility. Subsidies, vouchers, and annual budgets make cycling affordable and practical, while revised parking fees discourage car dependence. This helps align personal decisions with the goals of the spatial plan by making sustainable choices economically logical.

4. Cultural & Educational Measures

Education and cultural initiatives help shift norms and expectations. When children learn to cycle confidently, adults receive training, and neighbourhood events celebrate car-free environments, active mobility becomes part of everyday life. These measures help residents embrace and use the new spaces as intended, supporting a culture that matches the spatial transformation.

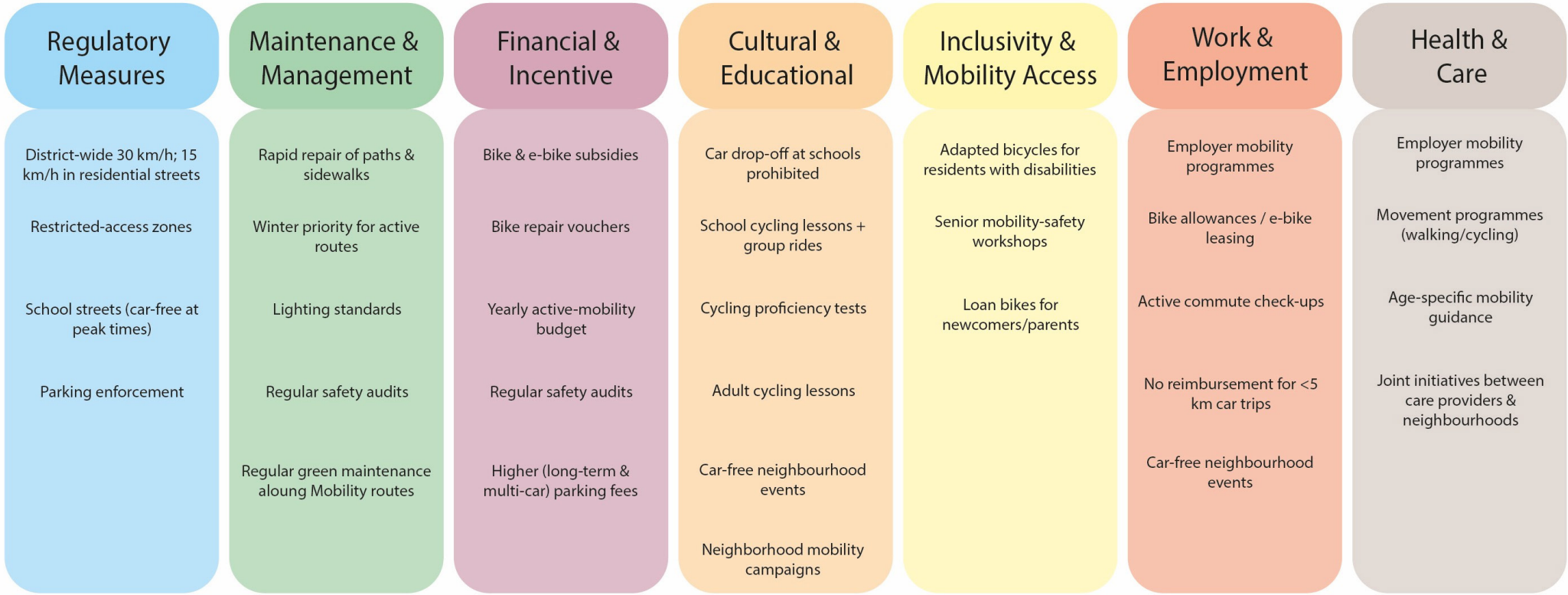


Image 144: Suggestions for additional meassures

5. Inclusivity & Mobility Access

Not all residents have the same physical abilities, resources, or opportunities. Providing adapted bicycles, workshops for seniors, and loan bikes ensures that everyone can participate in active mobility. This prevents the spatial design from benefiting only certain groups and ensures the project contributes to a fair and accessible mobility system.

6. Work & Employment Measures

Commuting habits are strongly shaped by workplace policies. When employers support cycling and walking—through facilities, allowances, leasing schemes, and reimbursement rules—daily travel patterns shift. These measures extend the impact of your spatial network into daily life, making active mobility attractive not only locally but also for work-related trips.

7. Health & Care Measures

Healthcare providers play a key role in motivating behaviour change. When active mobility is encouraged in preventive advice and integrated into care programmes, residents receive credible guidance that frames walking and cycling as part of a healthy lifestyle. This strengthens the project's ambition by linking spatial design to wellbeing and long-term health benefits.

8.3 Contribution to Other Urban Challenges

Although the scope and core focus of this project lie firmly within the mobility transition, the design inevitably reaches beyond mobility alone. Because the spatial interventions are centred on reallocating space, improving active-mobility routes, and reshaping the public realm to support walking and cycling, many of these measures naturally intersect with other major urban transitions. Even though the project was not deliberately framed around these wider themes, the resulting spatial choices inherently contribute to broader issues such as the energy transition, climate adaptation and ecology, social cohesion and inclusivity, public health, the local economy, and the quality of housing and densification.

In this chapter, these wider transitions are briefly introduced—not because they were the primary focus of the design process, but because the mobility focused interventions organically produce co-benefits that strengthen the resilience, liveability, and everyday functioning of the district. The following sections outline how each of these contemporary challenges is indirectly supported through the spatial measures developed in this project.

How the project contributes to each wider urban challemge:

1. Energy Transition

The project as a whole supports a modal shift away from private car use by redesigning streets, redistributing space, clustering parking at the edges, and prioritising walking, cycling, and shared mobility throughout the district. This structural shift reduces the number of motorised trips and the energy required to support them. Newman and Kenworthy (1999) demonstrate that cities with higher shares of active and sustainable transport modes consume significantly less transport energy per capita.
By enabling this modal shift across the neighbourhood, the project contributes to a more energy-efficient mobility system.

2. Climate Adaptation & Urban Ecology



Replacing parts of the hardened streetscape with greenery, permeable surfaces, and shaded movement routes improves resilience to heat and flooding while strengthening ecological continuity. Green infrastructure is proven to moderate temperatures, enhance stormwater infiltration, and support biodiversity (Gill et al., 2007).
Through these mobility-driven spatial changes, the project helps create a more climate-resilient and ecologically functioning district.

3. Social Cohesion & Inclusivity



Walkable environments with transparent ground floors, active frontages, and socially legible public spaces encourage casual encounters and strengthen informal social networks. Human-scaled streetscapes and pedestrian-oriented movement patterns are closely linked to higher levels of social interaction and inclusivity (Gehl, 2010).
These qualities enable the project to indirectly support stronger social cohesion and more inclusive everyday environments.

4. Public Health & Well-being

Comfortable, safe, and well-lit routes for walking and cycling help residents integrate physical activity into daily routines. The World Health Organization (2017) shows that regular walking significantly reduces the risk of non-communicable diseases and improves mental well-being.
By improving the conditions for everyday active movement, the project contributes to healthier behaviours and safer outdoor experiences.



5. Local Economy & Everyday Life

By improving access to neighbourhood sub-centres and making streets more walkable, the project increases foot traffic and strengthens visibility for local amenities. Walkability is strongly associated with higher local economic performance, more vibrant street life, and healthier small-business ecosystems (Speck, 2012).
These spatial conditions support a more resilient and lively everyday economy.



6. Housing Shortage

The project directly addresses the Dutch housing shortage through targeted densification around neighbourhood sub-centres and along major active-mobility corridors. These locations provide strong access to daily amenities and mobility options, making them well-suited for new residential development. This approach aligns with Dutch national housing policy, which emphasises that effective and sustainable housing delivery depends on concentrating new homes in well-connected, high-accessibility areas (Ministerie van BZK, 2022).
By applying this principle spatially and concretely within the district, the project supports the urgent need for additional housing while maintaining liveability and sustainable mobility patterns.



9.
Conclusion

The project demonstrates how redefining spatial priorities—from car infrastructure toward active mobility—can fundamentally reshape daily life in Amsterdam Zuidoost for four different user groups. For active-mobility users, the transformation creates a clear, continuous, and comfortable movement network. Public-space users gain greener, quieter, and safer environments, while local facility users experience shorter and more intuitive access to everyday amenities—reflecting the project's ambition to strengthen local proximity and everyday accessibility, key ideas derived from the 15-minute city. Car users, however, face a deliberate reduction in direct convenience as parking is removed and driving no longer dictates the structure of the district.

This shift is not merely a matter of prioritising other modes—it is an active redistribution of space away from the private car to directly strengthen conditions for the other three groups. Historically, the car has been over-prioritised in Zuidoost, consuming street space, degrading public areas, fragmenting routes, and suppressing safety and comfort for non-drivers. In other words, car dominance has not only received disproportionate space, but has actively hindered walking, cycling, public life, and local access. Rebalancing this system is therefore both necessary and fair: reducing the car's spatial, visual, and environmental pressure is what allows the other groups to gain in comfort, safety, and accessibility. This redistribution lies at the core of the project—a corrective step toward a healthier, more balanced urban environment.

At the same time, spatial interventions alone form only part of the solution. The transition toward active mobility also depends on behavioural, cultural, and organisational factors that extend beyond the physical design. For that reason, I provide a concise list of supporting measures that complement the spatial framework. These measures are not elaborated in full detail—as the project centres on the physical and spatial realm—but are included because they help illustrate the broader conditions needed to make the spatial transition successful.

Although the actual effects remain to be seen, experiences from comparable cities show that similar strategies—continuous cycling networks, car-light zones, and greener public spaces—lead to measurable shifts toward active mobility and clear improvements in public-space quality. Higher levels of active-mobility use, safer crossings, quieter streets, and more vibrant local centres are all proven results in cities that have taken similar steps, demonstrating that such spatial changes can catalyse broader transformations in mobility behaviour and urban quality.

In conclusion, this project illustrates that reallocating space in Amsterdam Zuidoost offers a realistic and promising pathway toward a healthier, safer, and more equitable district. By prioritising active mobility, strengthening local proximity, supporting the transition with targeted measures, and reducing car dominance, the proposal contributes not only to the mobility transition but also to wider urban challenges such as climate adaptation, social cohesion, and spatial justice. If implemented successfully, the emerging improvements within the pilot area can trigger a ripple effect—encouraging surrounding neighbourhoods to adopt similar mobility habits, increasing local activity flows, and making future redevelopment of adjacent areas more feasible and socially supported. In doing so, the project gradually builds a more complete, accessible, and locally oriented urban network that aligns with the principles of the 15-minute city, and can eventually be expanded to comparable areas in Zuidoost, including the southern districts. In this way, the principles developed here can guide other urban districts seeking a more balanced and future-proof environment—one where active movement, local accessibility, and high-quality public space form the foundation of everyday urban life.

10.
Reflection

Strengths and limitations of the project

Strengths of the project

The main strength of this project is its clear and coherent design framework, in which mobility, program, and spatial quality are approached as an integrated whole. Rather than treating these themes separately, the project shows how they interact and reinforce one another. As a result, interventions aimed at improving active mobility also enhance accessibility, the quality of public space, social interaction, and social safety. This integrated way of working forms the backbone of the project.

Another important strength is the consistent application of this framework across different scales. At the neighbourhood level, thematic maps explain the overall spatial structure and logic, while zoom-ins and visualisations show how these ideas translate into the everyday use of streets and public spaces. This multi-scalar approach helps bridge the gap between strategy and design and makes the project easier to understand and assess.

The use of a strategic zoom-in area further strengthens the project. By focusing on a location with high spatial and programmatic potential, the project demonstrates how targeted interventions can have an impact beyond their immediate surroundings. This makes the broader vision more tangible and shows how abstract principles can be translated into concrete spatial choices.

In addition, the project reflects a broad understanding of liveability, in which spatial layout, programmatic mix, and patterns of use together shape the quality of the public realm. While this is not presented as a separate design layer, it adds depth to the proposal and supports the overall coherence of the design.

Limitations of the project

The most significant limitation of the project is that the anticipated behavioural change remains largely theoretical. While the design clearly makes walking and cycling more attractive, intuitive, and comfortable, it cannot ensure that residents will actually change their everyday travel behaviour. Moreover, these assumptions have not been explicitly tested or discussed with local residents. The expected patterns of use are informed by successful examples from other contexts, but this does not guarantee that similar effects will occur in this specific social and cultural setting. This uncertainty directly affects the extent to which the project's core ambitions can be realised in practice.

Closely related, and reinforcing this limitation, is the project's strong dependence on policy frameworks, governance structures, and market dynamics that lie outside the scope of spatial design. Although the project convincingly demonstrates how the physical environment can be structured to support walking and cycling, the actual functioning of these spaces depends heavily on decisions regarding regulation, management, funding, and long-term organisation. To make this dependency explicit, an additional overview of supporting measures is included in the report. This overview does not function as a fully developed policy plan, but rather indicates the conditions required for the spatial interventions to operate effectively and outlines possible directions for follow-up actions. It highlights that the design primarily creates enabling conditions, while the ultimate impact is shaped by policy choices and economic frameworks.

A further, more structural limitation concerns the restricted scope with regard to work-related functions and regional mobility systems. As these fall largely outside the project's focus, the effects of the proposed interventions on commuting patterns and broader mobility flows remain only partially visible. While this neighbourhood-scale focus is consistent with the project's objectives, it limits insight into how local interventions interact with regional networks and daily travel beyond the area.

Finally, the time horizon of the project constitutes a practical limitation. Many interventions require phased implementation and are expected to produce visible effects only in the medium to long term. As a result, direct and measurable improvements within the timeframe of the project itself remain limited, reducing the ability to assess short-term outcomes.

Opportunities and limitations of the 15-minute city concept in post-war neighbourhoods

Opportunities

The most significant opportunity for applying the 15-minute city concept in post-war neighbourhoods lies in their spatial structure and physical capacity for change. The open urban layout, wide street profiles, and large amounts of public and green space offer considerable flexibility to redistribute space in favour of walking, cycling, and staying. Compared to compact historic districts, these neighbourhoods allow for relatively straightforward restructuring of movement networks and the introduction of new connections without fundamentally altering the built fabric.

Closely related to this is the presence of strong public transport networks, often consisting of metro, train, and bus connections. This provides an important supporting condition for the 15-minute city, as active mobility can be effectively combined with public transport. As a result, everyday trips can be made more attractive without aiming for fully car-free environments. This multimodal potential strengthens the feasibility of reducing car dependency at the neighbourhood level.

A further opportunity lies in the existing distribution of sub-centres and facility clusters. While these centres do not always function optimally or offer high spatial quality, they are often strategically located within post-war neighbourhoods. By strengthening, densifying, and better connecting these nodes, proximity to daily amenities can be increased in a targeted and efficient way, reinforcing the core principles of the 15-minute city.

Finally, the 15-minute city concept presents an important opportunity in relation to spatial justice. In many post-war neighbourhoods, a significant share of residents already depend on walking, cycling, and public transport. Improving proximity and the quality of public space can therefore have a direct and tangible impact on accessibility, time efficiency, and everyday usability of the neighbourhood. While this opportunity is more societal in nature, it strengthens the relevance and urgency of applying the concept in these contexts.

Limitations

The most fundamental limitation of applying the 15-minute city concept in post-war neighbourhoods is the continued dependence on regional functions. Employment, specialised healthcare, and higher education are often located outside the neighbourhood and cannot realistically be accommodated within a fifteen-minute radius. As a result, a certain degree of car use or reliance on regional public transport remains unavoidable, limiting the extent to which everyday mobility can be fully localised.

Closely related to this is the deeply embedded monofunctional spatial structure of many post-war neighbourhoods. The historical separation of housing, work, and amenities is the result of long-term planning principles and market logics. While spatial design can challenge and gradually soften these patterns, their transformation depends heavily on sustained policy commitment, investment, and economic feasibility. As a result, structural change can only take place gradually and over a long period of time

A further limitation concerns the uneven spatial impact of interventions. Improvements tend to materialise more quickly along central routes, nodes, and sub-centres, where spatial and programmatic potential is highest. Peripheral or more residential areas often benefit at a slower pace, which can lead to temporary spatial inequalities within the neighbourhood.

In addition, while spatial interventions can contribute to improved social safety—for instance through increased activity, better visibility, and more attractive public spaces—they cannot fully prevent social tensions or perceptions of insecurity. These issues are influenced by a broader set of social, economic, and cultural factors that extend beyond the scope of urban design.

Finally, the effectiveness of the 15-minute city concept is strongly dependent on time and behavioural change. Shifts in mobility patterns and everyday use develop gradually and require long-term consistency across multiple policy cycles and investment phases. Without sustained commitment, the intended effects of the concept risk remaining partial or uneven.

Recommendations and further development

The recommendations build directly on the most significant limitations identified in the project and on the broader structural challenges of applying the 15-minute city concept in post-war neighbourhoods. They indicate how the project could be strengthened if additional time, resources, or scale were available.

The highest priority recommendation is to further strengthen participation and behavioural validation. While the project includes interviews that provide insight into experienced barriers and perceptions, the anticipated behavioural change is still largely derived from spatial logic and reference cases. By involving residents more actively in design decisions and by validating design choices through feedback loops and co-design moments, it becomes possible to better assess whether the proposed interventions truly align with everyday practices and preferences.

Closely related to this is the recommendation to test behavioural change through experiments and temporary interventions. Pilot projects, trial layouts, or temporary street transformations can offer insight into how routes and public spaces are actually used once changes are introduced. These experiments allow design and policy choices to be evaluated and refined iteratively before committing to permanent, large-scale interventions.

A further key recommendation is to strengthen the link between spatial design and supporting policy frameworks. While the project demonstrates how the physical environment can be structured to encourage walking and cycling, its effectiveness remains closely tied to decisions regarding management, enforcement, funding, and organisation. In a follow-up phase, this relationship could be made more explicit by linking design interventions to concrete policy instruments or realistic implementation scenarios.

In addition, the application of the 15-minute city concept in post-war neighbourhoods would benefit from a clear long-term perspective and phased implementation strategy. Given the monofunctional spatial structure, the continued dependence on regional functions, and the gradual nature of behavioural change, interventions should be framed as steps within a longer transformation process rather than as an immediate end state. Explicit phasing can help define priorities and manage expectations over time.

A further, more exploratory recommendation is to broaden the perspective to regional mobility and functional distribution. Although intentionally excluded from the current project scope, additional analysis of commuting patterns, public transport connections, and regional accessibility could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the neighbourhood's role within the wider urban system.

Finally, it is recommended to integrate monitoring and evaluation from an early stage. By defining indicators for use, accessibility, spatial quality, and social safety in advance, it becomes possible to assess after implementation whether the interventions achieve their intended effects and where adjustments may be needed.

Personal reflection on process

1. Introduction – Purpose of the Reflection
This reflection looks back on the first part of my graduation process. It's not about summarising results but about understanding how I worked, what I struggled with, and what I've learned so far.
During my project, I explored how Amsterdam Zuidoost can be redeveloped by giving less space to cars and more to walking and cycling – to make everyday life easier and the area more livable. What interests me is how design can make that shift from cars to active mobility visible and practical, not just as an idea but as something that could actually work in reality.
Reflecting helps me understand what kind of designer I'm becoming. It makes me look at my way of thinking and at the decisions I make – sometimes consciously, sometimes less.

2. Relation between topic and the Urbanism track
I think this project aligns well with the Urbanism track because it focuses on integrating design into daily city life. This project made me learn about how big planning ideas relate to how people actually move, meet, and feel in public spaces.
I started to see that urban design isn't just about shaping physical space – it's about translating needs and behaviours into form. That means dealing with both maps and emotions, data and people. I learned that my role as an urbanist is partly technical but also very human: trying to create places that make sense for the people who actually use them.
That realisation changed somewhat of how I work. I've become more aware that design happens inside a much larger system (political, cultural, and social). It's not just drawing something "better," it's also about understanding who benefits and what kind of life that space facilitates. The project also connects to the wider studio focus on rethinking mobility and public space as drivers for livability, which is in line with my personal interest in creating human-scaled, accessible urban environments.

3. How research and design interacted
At first, I thought it was normal to finish the research before starting to design. That felt logical, but actually it didn't work. I found out that you can only really understand a place by trying to change it – and that design itself is a form of research.
Once I realized that (with a little help from my mentors), my process became more fluid. I kept switching between analysing, mapping, sketching, and testing ideas. Every time I came up with a new idea, I learned something new about how the area works. That gave me a better grip on the real problems and opportunities.
What I struggled with was the uncertainty that comes with this way of working. There's never one clear answer. It took me a while to get comfortable with that – to realise that uncertainty isn't necessarily bad, it's part of learning. Once I understood that, I started to enjoy the process more and became less afraid to make decisions.

4. Reflection on my approach and way of working
I work best when I can explore different directions at once and slowly build them into something coherent. But at the same time, that is also one of my biggest challenge: I easily dive into too many different ideas and then lose focus.
A key moment in my project was when I decided to zoom in on one pilot area instead of treating all of Zuidoost at the same scale. Before that, I was mostly mapping and analysing the district as a whole, but it felt distant. By focusing on a smaller area, I could design more concrete interventions – things that relate to actual streets and people. It made the project much more tangible.
I also learned that structure can help creativity. When I developed six themes to organise my design ideas, I suddenly had a framework that guided me instead of limiting me. It helped me make clearer choices and keep the narrative consistent.
Another thing I learned is that drawings and maps alone aren't enough. I used to assume that if I made a clear diagram or map, people would understand what I meant. Through feedback sessions, I realised that I need to explain my reasoning, to say why I made certain choices. That's still something I'm working on, but I already notice that it makes my work stronger and more convincing.

Another challenge I faced was creating and maintaining a strong narrative throughout the project. I usually had a clear internal understanding of where I was in the process and what I needed to do next, but explaining that narrative to others was much harder. Every design intervention I developed had a clear reason behind it – I always knew why I made certain choices – but what was obvious to me was not always obvious to my mentors. Early on, I often waited for questions before explaining the reasoning, which meant the logic of my project only became clear afterwards instead of upfront. Over time, I learned that I need to articulate the "why" earlier and more explicitly so the narrative doesn't rely on people asking for clarification. Toward the end of the project, this improved significantly: the story of the project became clearer when seen from the user's perspective and when I connected the design choices more directly to redistributing urban space and to the principles of the 15-minute city.

5. Learning as a designer

I've learned a lot about how I think and what kind of designer I am. I used to approach design like problem-solving – trying to find the "right" answer. Now I see it more as exploring different possibilities.

Reflection has also become part of my design process. Instead of waiting until the end to think about what went wrong or right, I now reflect while working. I keep asking myself: why am I doing this? what am I assuming here? That kind of self-questioning helps me stay focused and avoid just designing for the sake of it.

I've also learned to use uncertainty as something productive. I don't always know where a idea will lead, but visualizing it helps me figure out what I think. Iterating and testing ideas through design has become my main way of learning.

This changed my idea of what good design is. For me now, a good design is not the one that looks finished or polished, but the one that helps others understand the situation and creates new thoughts or ideas.

6. Academic, societal, and ethical understanding

While working on this project, I realised that every spatial decision affects people's lives. Taking away car space, for example, sounds like an easy win for sustainability, but it can also change who feels comfortable using the street, or who still finds it practical to live there. That awareness grew gradually – I started to see that design choices always have side effects, and that it's my job to think about them early on.

This project made me look at design less as something neutral and more as something that always reflects a certain way of thinking. It taught me to question my own preferences – why do I want more green, or wider bike lanes? For whom am I designing that?

At the same time, I learned how easy it is to romanticize change. I often caught myself wanting to make things calmer, greener, or prettier – but that's not automatically better for everyone. Holding onto that friction between ambition and realism was one of the hardest but most valuable lessons.

7. Personal development

On a personal level, this project has shown me how I deal with complexity. I've learned that I need periods of focus where I really dive into the work, followed by moments where I step back and reflect. If I skip that balance, I lose the bigger picture.

I also grew more confident. At the start, I often doubted whether I was doing things the "right" way. Over time, I realised that there isn't one right way – you just have to keep testing ideas and learning from what happens. That mindset made me more relaxed and more confident.

Another important change is that I no longer see myself as a student trying to finish a project, but as a designer contributing to a broader conversation about the city. That might sound cliché , but it changed how I see my work – I'm not just learning skills, I'm building a way of thinking that I can use in the future.

8. Transferability

One thing I realised is that the approach I used – starting from one pilot area and developing principles that can ripple outward – can also work in other neighbourhoods. The exact design solutions are specific to Zuidoost, but the method of combining mapping, field insight, and design iteration feels transferable. It's a way of working that could be used anywhere where cities want to move from car-oriented planning to more human and local scales.

I also noticed that the value of transferability lies less in copying designs and more in replicating the process – starting from a grounded understanding of local movement patterns, and then translating them into clear design principles. What can be transferred are the logics behind my six layers: how mobility, safety, livability, and accessibility can be read together as one system. What stays context-specific are the shapes that fit the reality of each place.

This awareness helped me see my work not as a single project but as a framework that can evolve. The approach could be applied to other post-war neighbourhoods in the Netherlands that face similar issues of car dominance, monotony, and social fragmentation.

9. Looking ahead

Looking ahead, my priority now is to prepare a clear and well-structured graduation presentation with a strong narrative. I want to shift the focus from simply showing what I designed to clearly explaining why I made certain choices, and how these decisions relate to the overall goals of redistributing space, improving everyday accessibility, and supporting the principles of the 15-minute city. If I pass this phase – which I hope to – I will then refine the visuals, strengthen the text where needed, and work on adding a phasing strategy. Phasing has not been the main focus so far, but it will form an important final step toward P5. For now, creating a compelling presentation with a strong storyline and coherent visuals is the most important task.

10. Self-developed reflection questions

1. How can I use design as a way to think and learn, rather than as a way to prove or finalise ideas?
2. How can I use reflection as an active tool to stay critical of my own assumptions during design?

11. References and data sources

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