

FROM LOST SPACE TO LIVING SPACE

Supporting Social Interaction in The Hague Southwest

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 Table of Contents
4 Summary
4 Personal Motivation

6 INTRODUCTION
6 The Hague Southwest
11 Research Setup

12 A CHANGING COMMUNITY IN AN UNCHANGED SPACE
14 collective spaces
18 from collective to lost spaces
23 from lost to shared spaces

24 Intermezzo: *current approaches in reshaping Southwest*

29 FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY
30 social interaction & public life
32 lost space theory
34 building-space relations

36 FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE
36 proposing design considerations
37 morphology and connections
38 building edges
40 courtyard program
42 facade design

44 CASE STUDY IN ZIJDEN AND DREVEN
46 analysis
60 neighbourhood interventions
64 block design
66 Zijden west
72 Zijden east
78 Dreven centre
84 Dreven east
91 case study findings

92 CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

94 ACADEMIC REFLECTION

96 bibliography

APPENDICES
100 I methodology
102 II case selection
104 III neighbourhood public life analysis & design
120 IX current housing projects



SUMMARY

Keywords: *Social interaction; public space; courtyards; housing redevelopment; The Hague Southwest.*

The Hague Southwest's public and communal spaces have deteriorated from social, collective spaces to underused lost spaces. But redevelopment projects in The Hague Southwest can improve spatial and social quality to better support social interaction. Drawing on the theories of Jan Gehl, Roger Trancik and Kim Dovey and Stephen Wood, this project develops design considerations on morphology, connections, edges, programming, and facades. These are applied to the Zijden and Dreven through spatial analysis and research by design. At the neighbourhood scale, centralised parking, ecological corridors, and strengthened public centres create a social base for further redevelopment. Four block designs subsequently add clearly defined, connected, and inviting shared spaces. The project concludes that design cannot create social cohesion directly but can support it by increasing opportunities for repeated encounters, appropriation and outdoor activity. Success depends on participation, management and stewardship.

PERSONAL MOTIVATION

Walking through The Hague Southwest, I was struck by the abundance of green outdoor spaces. The neighbourhoods contain many parks and courtyards, but they seem to hardly get used. After learning about the active places, they used to be, they appear to me as spaces we should invest in. With time and effort, they might again be places full of life.

Ultimately, I want this project to make a difference in the everyday lives of residents in The Hague Southwest. I believe design can help create places where people feel welcome, connected to those around them and proud of where they live. This is especially relevant in a place off ill fame like Southwest, where so many people live at a disadvantage, financially and socially.

With the upcoming large-scale redevelopment in the area, I see an opportunity not only to provide more and better homes, but also to improve the spaces surrounding them. I want to support social cohesion in a time when many people seem to be growing apart. I focus on the collective outdoor spaces between housing blocks, because I see them as opportunities for neighbours to see, hear and meet each other. I want to turn these often-underused areas into spaces that invite daily encounters and support small local communities.



figure 1: a courtyard in the Zijden neighbourhood in Southwest; grassy green, but unused.



figure 2: Southwest's location in relation to The Hague

INTRODUCTION

THE HAGUE SOUTHWEST

A city on its own

The Hague Southwest (Den Haag Zuidwest) is a post war residential area on the southern edge of The Hague. It is home to more than 70,000 residents, making Zuidwest comparable in size to a medium sized Dutch city such as Gouda. The area is made up of four districts Moerwijk, Morgenstond, Bouwlust and Vrederust, with Bouwlust and Vrederust often treated as one district because they were developed in the same expansion phase and form a single residential zone. Each of the four districts is subdivided into neighbourhoods: in Moerwijk and Morgenstond these neighbourhoods are typically named after their position within the district, whereas in Bouwlust and Vrederust they have more imaginative names derived from landscape types (Crimson Historians and Urbanists, 2021; Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning, 2025).

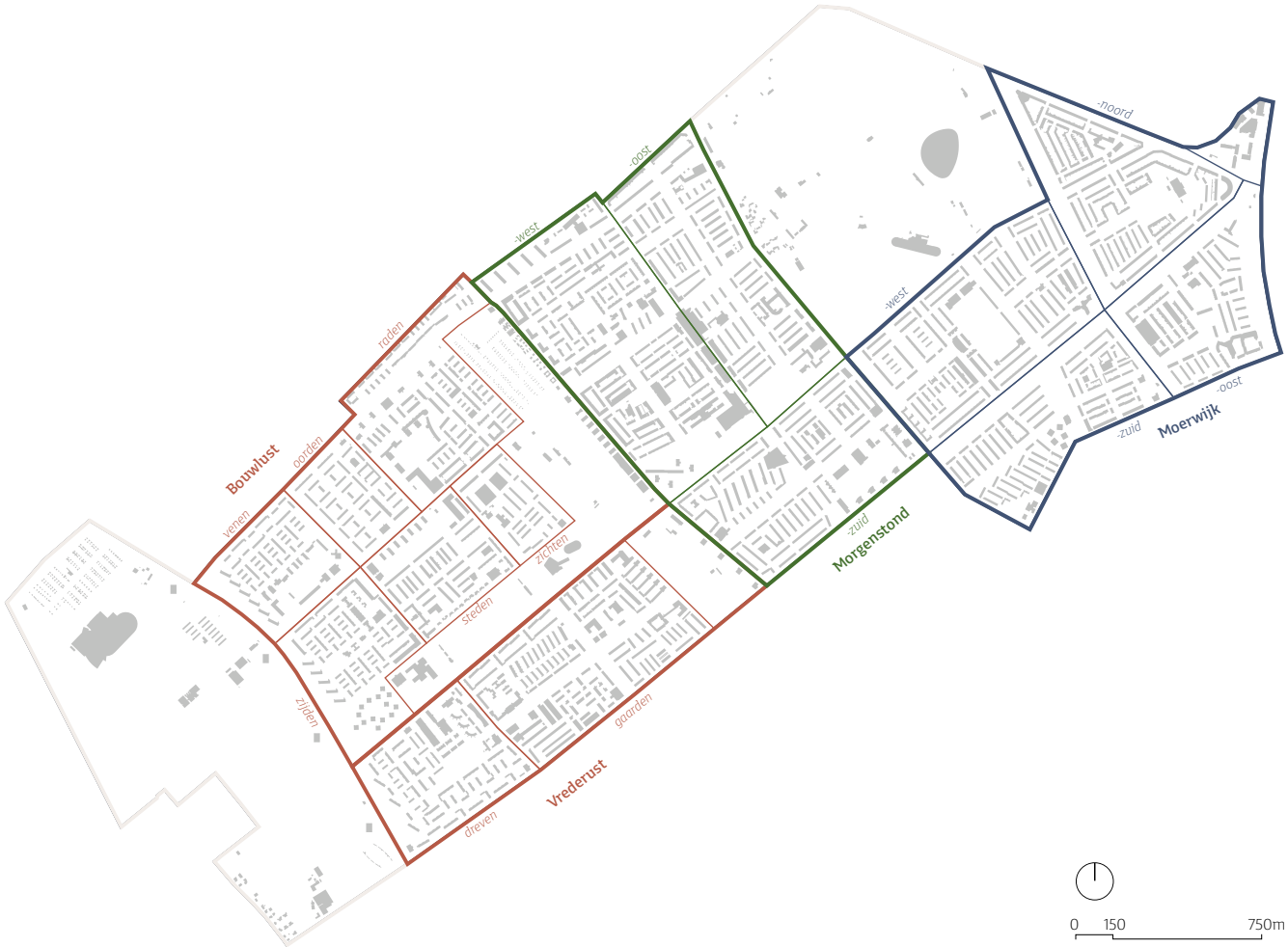


figure 3: Southwest's subdivisions and neighbourhoods

Southwest's many challenges

The Southwest area is characterised by a diverse population and relatively high concentrations of socio economic disadvantage, which is why it has become the focus of extensive, long term public investment programmes such as the RegioDeal Den Haag Zuidwest and the Nationaal Programma Den Haag Zuidwest (Government of the Netherlands, 2023; Municipality of The Hague, 2025a; Programmabureau NPZW, 2023).

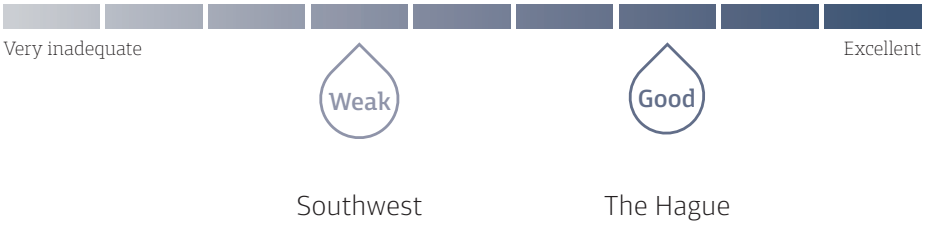
Liveability in Southwest is rated 'low', while on average liveability in The Hague is rated 'good' (BZK, 2024). In all of the Southwest neighbourhood's social cohesion scores significantly lower than the rest of the country. A study from 2023 shows that residents of The Hague Southwest rate social cohesion in the area at 4.9/10, while the average for The Hague is 5.7/10 (Programmabureau NPZW, 2025). Furthermore, only 28.6 % of residents say that they have frequent contact with their neighbours. They are also less content with the existing meeting places within their neighbourhoods. In short, compared to the Hague, Southwest is lacking behind in social cohesion, and efforts need to be made in reinforcing cohesion, including cohesion on the neighbourhood scale.

Financially the area is also under pressure. Nearly two-thirds of households in Southwest have a low income, compared with just under half across The Hague as a whole. A similar pattern is visible in the proportion of high-income households in The Hague, which is more than twice as large as in Southwest (CBS, 2026). Additionally, in 2024, 18.2% of residents aged 12 and over in Den Haag Zuidwest had low financial well being, more than three times the share in the wealthiest districts of The Hague and well above the national average.

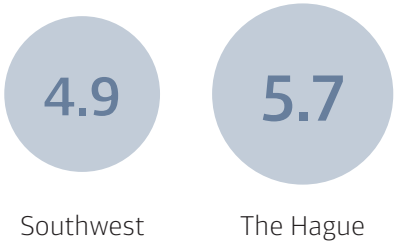
At the same time, Southwest is dealing with an ageing housing stock (Programmabureau NPZW, 2023). A majority of homes in the area is owned by one of three corporations (Hof Wonen, Haag Wonen and Staedion). Following the financial crisis and a reduction in government funding, investment in housing by these corporations has lagged behind. As a result, many homes no longer provide a safe and healthy living environment for residents. Similarly, many outdoor spaces have slowly deteriorated over time. 71% of residents are satisfied with their living environment, which is 12% less than the city average (Programmabureau NPZW, 2025). Furthermore, residents are generally not satisfied with the meeting places, whith averages ranging between 28.9% and 33.7%. And when walking through the area, you will find most public green spaces to be used rarely.

On the one hand, the underuse of these outdoor green spaces can be a result of low social cohesion. But on the other hand, this lack of outdoor quality might also be part of the reason social cohesion is lagging behind. If outdoor spaces are unattractive, ill-maintained and deteriorated, people tend to spend more time indoors, which in turn can lead to social isolation. Jan Gehl (2011) argues that the quality of the public realm can greatly influence if people stay in outdoor spaces. Attractive spaces can lead to social interactions through repeated encounters, which in turn can lead to familiarity, trust, and new bonds between neighbours.

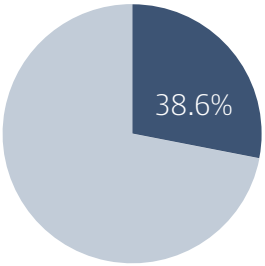
Liveability



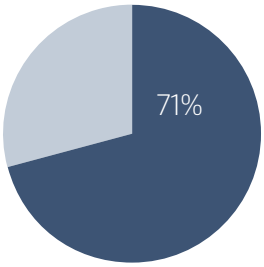
Social Cohesion Rating



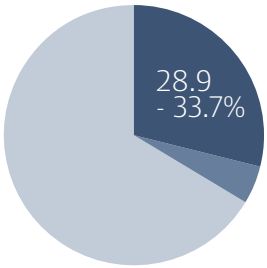
% of residents that has frequent contact with neighbours



% of residents satisfied with living environment



% of residents satisfied with meeting places



Wealth distribution

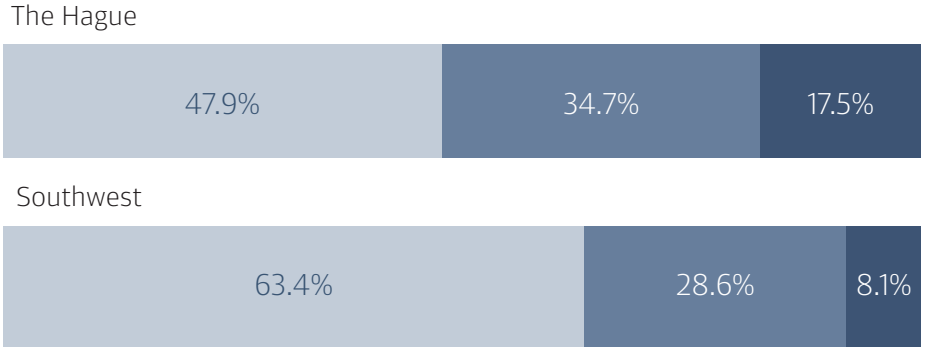


figure 3: data on socio-economic well-being in the Hague Southwest and The Hague in general (BZK, 2026; CBS, 2026; NPZW, 2025)



figure 4: a small playground in the Dreven. This entire neighbourhood will be demolished to make room for new housing blocks.

Combining Challenges with Opportunities

In the upcoming decades major efforts are underway to improve spatial quality in Southwest, often by renovating or demolishing and reconstructing building blocks. While these efforts do add quality homes into the area, their social potential is often overlooked. The reconstruction projects are mostly designed and built as individual blocks. They often feature a social courtyard space in the design, but most do not have a clear social impact on the neighbourhood as a whole. In renovation projects, collective courtyards and public space design only play a minor role. If improvements are made, they mostly consist of replanting greenery and replacing existing outdoor furniture. This does result in nicer places but could potentially have a larger impact on the neighbourhood as a whole.

Commentators on current-day urban practice observe that public space in large-scale housing projects is often shaped to meet legal or zoning requirements rather than to serve as an important social function (Bollier, 2011; Millard, 2014). Furthermore, economically driven planning sometimes sidelines spatial quality in favour of housing density and infrastructure capacity (Karssenberg & Laven, 2017). From an economical perspective this could be sensible, but from a social standpoint this leaves many opportunities unexplored. The large-scale redevelopment projects, like we have in Southwest, can offer major opportunities to redesign public space in a more integrated way, treating public space as a major part of the urban fabric instead of an afterthought.

This project, aims to redesign several building blocks in the Hague Southwest in a way that optimises the potential for social interactions in and around them.

RESEARCH SETUP

To find a way in which housing redevelopment can improve social cohesion, we must first look into how social interactions are affected by the design of buildings and outdoor spaces. This project will address the following ***main research question:***

How can redevelopment projects in The Hague Southwest improve spatial and social quality to better support social interactions?

This main question is broken down into three subsequent questions:

1. How do public and communal spaces in The Hague Southwest contribute to social interactions?

First, we will look into the role that Southwest's outdoor spaces had in social networks and how they supported social interactions. For this we will look into how they have been used in the past and are used today.

2. How does the design of outdoor spaces affect social interactions?

Next, we will research theories on how spatial design contributes to social interaction, mainly through the work of Jan Gehl (2011), Roger Trancik (1986), Kim Dovey & Stephen Wood (2015). They will offer insights into how social interactions can be understood and how the design of buildings, networks, spaces and building interfaces affect these interactions.

3. Which design guidelines can guide the design of public and communal outdoor spaces in the Hague Southwest?

From the explored theories and from practice, we will set out design considerations that should be considered when designing existing and new outdoor spaces.

In the final part of this project, these considerations will be applied to two cases, namely the Dreven & Zijden neighbourhoods of Southwest. This will offer insights into how these considerations can be used in practice.

A CHANGING COMMUNITY IN AN UNCHANGED SPACE

How do public and communal spaces in The Hague Southwest contribute to social interactions?

In The Hague Southwest, the relationship between a changing society and outdoor space that does not change with it reveals how public spaces shape everyday life. This chapter explores the changing role of these spaces in the socio-spatial networks that existed around them. We will look at the historical changes in the use of outdoor space and the social structures of the neighbourhoods they were part of.

In the first few decades after the construction of the neighbourhoods, the many public green parks and communal courtyards were very active places, with people using them throughout the day, throughout the year. The courtyards were important social spaces within Southwest's postwar neighbourhoods. The neighbourhoods were designed around the wijkgedachte, a planning ideal that relied on shared spaces, local facilities, and close-knit communities to support social cohesion. The many courtyards and parks in Southwest formed important collective spaces within the socially collective neighbourhoods.

Over time, however, these spaces somehow shifted into lost spaces. This was mainly driven by demographic change, depillarisation, and the loss of local amenities. These developments weakened the social collectives that once gave these spaces meaning, leaving many of them underused, contested, or disconnected from the people around them.

figure 5&6: the buildings on the Ridderdreef viewed from the Lozerlaan across the water in 1963 & 1990 (resp. Dienst voor de Standsontwikkeling & Kempf)





A CHANGING COMMUNITY IN AN UNCHANGED SPACE

COLLECTIVE SPACES

Life in 1960s The Hague Southwest

Post World War II, The Hague was facing an enormous housing shortage due to many houses having been destroyed during the war and the rapidly increasing population. As a way to deal with the housing shortage, major expansion plans for The Hague were designed, including the Southwest area.

The area's design was strongly influenced by the neighbourhood unit concept, or *wijkgedachte* in Dutch (Helleman, 2018). The concept implies that the neighbourhood functions as a village within the city, serving as a social protection layer between families and the anonymous city (Cultural Heritage Agency, 2015; Omroep West, 2023). Every neighbourhood had it's own parks, playgrounds, schools, shops, and the necessary public buildings within walking distance. The idea was that this clear special hierarchy positively affected interactions between family members, neighbours and people from the same district, which would result in a strong sense of community and social cohesion (Helleman, 2018).

The concept was strongly based on the post-war societal infrastructures. Within neighbourhoods this resulted in the concept being strongly based on children and mothers. Their lives mainly took place in the direct vicinity of their homes. The new neighbourhoods exhibited a strong inward focus in which public and semi-public spaces were all created to support neighbourly interactions. This inward focus was related to the strongly pillarised society of the early 1950s. People had a collectivistic world view in which social cohesion was regarded more as a given than as something that needed to be created or supported (Bax, 1995).

Already during construction some urban designers and social scientists critiqued this determinist notion of the *wijkgedachte*, including Willem Dudok, who laid out most of the groundworks for the Southwest expansion (Bergeijk, 1995). He did use the concept as an urbanistic planning principle to design and order his neighbourhoods, but he did not believe in the projected social results.

He found the concept to be too heavily based on the societal context of the 1930's economic crisis and the 1940's war and postwar euphoria (Bergeijk, 1995). He suspected that the strong sense of community resulting from these turbulent years would quickly fade and that neighbourhood concept would not hold (Bergeijk, 1995; Omroep West, 2025). On top of that, the strongly pillarised society was already showing some cracks.

figure 7: children walking in the Zijden neighbourhood (Dienst voor de Stadsontwikkeling, 1980).







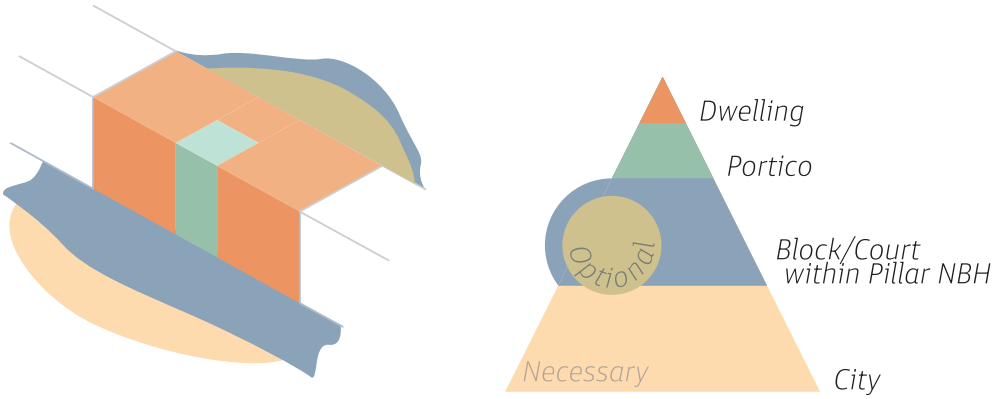


figure 10: collective courtyards act as part of the pillar neighbourhood and are used within this collective.

Despite the question marks regarding the social results of the new neighbourhoods, the wijkgedachte was incorporated into the designs and construction raced on. In 1967 construction finished on the final neighbourhood (the Dreven) and many new residents had already moved into the very desirable neighbourhoods. The new neighbours formed a fairly monocultural group (Omroep West, 2026). The majority of people moving in were middle-class families and couples. This resulted in a naturally interconnected neighbourhood through schools and stay-at-home mothers. Social cohesion was further strengthened by the social pillars. The housing corporations, that owned the majority of homes, were all part of one of the pillars. They preferably provided housing for people from their own pillars in their own neighbourhood (Omroep West, 2025).

The characteristic abundance of outdoor, green spaces in The Hague Southwest was the result of architects' focus on nature and fresh air in new city expansions (Crimson Historians and Urbanists, 2021; Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning, 2025). It was their way to step away from the crowded and grimy inner cities they were trying to move people away from.

The communal gardens in-between the buildings are often connected via pedestrian paths to the roads. In most cases there was no direct link between homes and these outdoor spaces, resulting in a physical disconnection. They were mainly aimed as spaces for children to play in. And, because of the many families living in the area, they became much-used, lively spaces (Omroep West, 2023, 2025). The lack of distinction between public and semi-public spaces was not a problem as the neighbourhood exhibited a stronger sense of community and communal ownership (Omroep West, 2026). But if neighbourhoods would become more diverse and communities would fade, so would this sense of communal ownership, resulting in these collective spaces fading into lost spaces without clear boundaries, ownership and stewardship.

figure 8 (top): queen's day celebrations in a communal courtyard in Moerwijk (Screenshot from Omroep West, 2026).

figure 9 (bottom): woman watering plants on her balcony in Moerwijk (idem).

FROM COLLECTIVE TO LOST SPACES

Life in current day Southwest

Many of the original residents of the Hague Southwest started to move out of the area in the 1970s and 80s. Their homes were allocated to a more diverse group of residents, often from low-income classes, widening socioeconomic gaps (Crimson Historians and Urbanists, 2021). Due to ongoing depillarisation of Dutch society. The bonds that once forged a neighbourhood into a collective were also no longer there. And due to economic pressure, many of the neighbourhood centres, with local schools and amenities, closed down in favour of more centralised clusters. The inward focus, guided by the neighbourhood unit concept, was replaced by an outward reliance on centralised clusters (Crimson Historians and Urbanists, 2021). Residents were no longer part of a strongly defined neighbourhood but of the city as a whole. The protective neighbourhood layer between residents and the anonymous city disappeared.

The communal outdoor spaces now had to cater to the wishes and wants of a more diverse people living in the neighbourhoods. But instead of adapting the communal spaces to this new situation, public spaces remained static. Slowly they deteriorated, and the wijkgedachte's vision of structured community life faded, shifting focus from collective ties to individual lives (Bokhorst, 2020). This erosion weakened informal networks and neighbourhood identity. The communal places that once belonged to neighbours now belong to no one and have become unused and contested spaces. The many fences and signs show the ongoing struggles residents, corporations and the municipality still have with ownership, appropriation and stewardship (Crimson Historians and Urbanists, 2021; Helleman, 2018).

figure 11: many courtyards are openly accessible, while this is not always prefered by residents and corporations who try to limit use.


Privéterrein
Deze tuin is alleen voor bewoners
Verboden voor honden
Geen vogels voeren
Gooi geen etensresten en afval in de tuin
Voorkom overlast. Hou rekening met elkaar



The lack of a clear boundary between communal spaces owned by the corporation/residents and the public space owned by the municipality often results in situations where the ownership and appropriability of these spaces are unclear (Municipality of The Hague, 2025a). This has resulted in many of the outdoor green spaces being ill-maintained and often containing rubbish. Furthermore, the lack of boundaries prohibits effective appropriation of communal spaces by residents or building collectives.

In the past decades, planners and designers in Southwest have neglected or underestimated the social potential for these outdoor spaces. Some courtyards have been renovated, especially before the financial crisis of 2008. Many collective green spaces, especially in Moerwijk, were fenced off. This effectively created an extra barrier between residents and the courtyard, who could no longer easily access their courtyards. In other courtyards, ground floor residences were given ownership or stewardship over the part of the courtyard directly outside their home. This back garden did increase stewardship and the perception of privateness, but it also decreased courtyard use by others, so community function still declined. But in most courtyards, nothing changed, leaving these spaces as a relic of the lively spaces they once were.

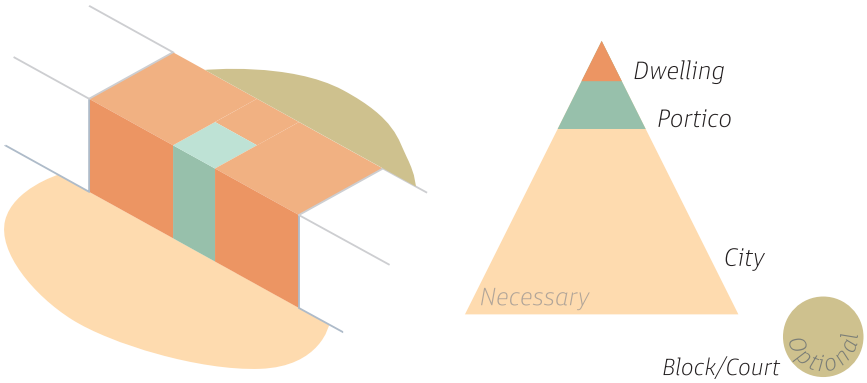


figure 13: without a external social glue, the physical structure has become functional. The courtyard has become a disconnected entity.





figure 12 & 14 (top): renovated courtyard by Vestia (now Hof Wonen) with ground floor private gardens.

figure 15 (right): renovated courtyard in Moerwijk with fencing that disconnects residents from "their" courtyard.


ESPRESSO

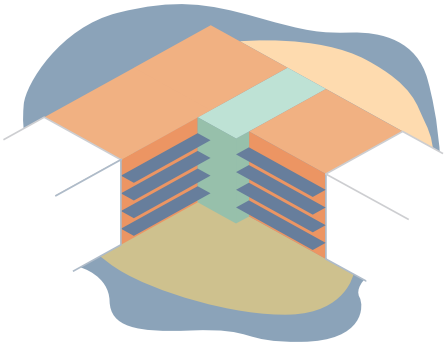
FROM LOST TO SHARED SPACES

A vision for Southwest

This chapter has explored how public and communal spaces in The Hague Southwest once supported social interaction but gradually lost this role. The neighbourhoods were designed following the wijkgedachte, making its parks, playgrounds, and courtyards part of an inward-orientated neighbourhood. The success of these outdoor spaces depended less on spatial design and more on the homogeneous, pillarised communities, local amenities and informal networks surrounding them.

As society became more diverse, depillarisation progressed, and amenities moved to fewer central hubs, the social structures of the neighbourhoods weakened. The outdoor spaces, on the other hand, mostly remained unchanged. Unclear boundaries, ownership and stewardship lead to deterioration, contested use, and less appropriation.

The historic change from collective to lost spaces does not mean that we should give up on them. It should encourage us to rethink these spaces and the way they fit into the communities around them. While there are no longer large, homogeneous communities to fill these spaces, we must find a way to form new communal bonds around them. These communities can be generated by the very buildings that surround these spaces, by creating intermittent social layers that foster regular social interaction between neighbours. Furthermore, these layers should not just be functional interstitial steps between fully public and fully private spaces. They should be broader social spaces, shared spaces.



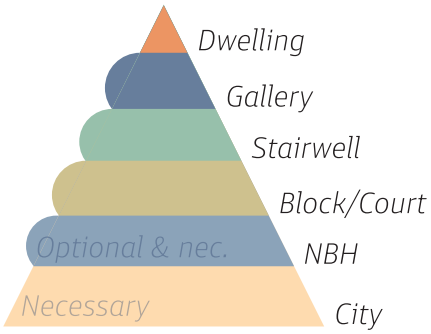


figure 16 (top): adding physical and social layers/structures to Southwest neighbourhoods could improve social infrastructure in the area.
figure 17 (left): an active courtyards during the Binnentuinen Challenge (Derivé & LMNL office, 2024)

INTERMEZZO

Current approaches in reshaping Southwest

The identified deterioration of outdoor spaces has not gone unnoticed by planners, designers and policy makers (Government of the Netherlands, 2023; Municipality of The Hague, 2025a; Programmabureau NPZW, 2023). In their vision for Southwest, the municipality, also recognise the role these places can have in supporting more social interactions in the Southwest area overall. They propose interventions to create better, more lively and socially useful courtyards, while also making public space green, climate-adaptive, safe and accessible.

While their vision aims for a better future for the whole of Southwest, the approach taken by corporations and developments is still focused on individual projects. Current-day projects are still very fragmented, inward focused and mainly aimed at creating housing. This has also been addressed by council rapporteurs for the city council, who recently released a report in which they argue that development in Southwest lacks clear order (van Bree, 2026). Subprojects are often approved before full projects are reviewed, resulting in the larger image being more of an afterthought. This approach makes housing the priority for the area's redevelopment over amenities, like schools and public spaces.

This can be illustrated further by looking into two major types of projects. Reconstruction projects in which a site is fully demolished in order to construct new, denser housing blocks. And revitalisation projects in which existing courtyards are redesigned to improve spatial quality.



figure 18: classification of projects based on the treatment of pre-existing buildings (1990-now).



figure 19: currently running projects (2026).



figure 20: recently constructed deck garden on parking in Steenzicht by Staedion

RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Most redevelopment projects in Southwest involve demolition and reconstruction of one or more building blocks. In more recent projects communal gardens are part of the new situation. This is often achieved by placing it on top of a ground-floor parking garage. While it is an effective way to solve parking solutions within individual projects, it might also affect the ecological and social outcome in unwanted ways. Would it not be possible to solve parking in a smarter way, more centralised within major projects?

By doing this, courtyards can be located at ground level. This will result in higher ecological and climate resilience potentials, as plants can grow in ground-level soil and the topsoil is open for rainwater infiltration (Oberndorfer et al., 2007). Additionally, recently constructed deck gardens usually use tall stairs to keep them publicly accessible. But do tall stairs truly make these spaces accessible, or will these create a divide resulting in intuitively private courtyards? On top of that, centralised parking reduces the need for car infrastructure throughout the neighbourhoods, which allows for streets to be design around pedestrians, cyclist and greenery. Furthermore, if less parking is needed in the future, centralised parking structures can be more easily redesigned or repurposed than decentralised block parking.

So, while these reconstruction projects do offer good-quality housing and relatively nice courtyards. There are potentially better solutions that allow newly constructed courtyards to play a larger role in the neighbourhood as a whole. If we only use deck gardens in cases where the communal garden is semi-private or parking must be located within the building block itself. We can design other blocks to be more ecological and climate resilient, while also opening up streets for a car-free, social design.



figure 21: the Binnentuinen Challenge co-creation in progress (C'MON & Walden Studio, 2024)



figure 22: an artist impression resulting from the Binnentuinen Challenge (Derivé & LMNL office, 2024)

COURTYARD REVITILISATION

In recent years the "Challenge Binnentuinen" was launched by the Innovatielab Zuidwest (a collective of Haag Wonen, Hof Wonen, Staedion and the municipality) to investigate how courtyards can move from being "just green" to becoming social spaces that contribute to residents' health, cohesion and sense of ownership (IVVD, 2025).

From February to September 2024, three design teams worked on three different areas in co creation with residents, housing associations and the municipality (C'MON & Walden Studio, 2024; Dérive & LMNL office, 2024; Studio Nadia Nena et al., 2024). The resulting designs emphasise better physical connections between courtyards and public streets, as well as programming for play, exercise, urban nature and small-scale urban agriculture. While the approaches are promising for revitalising courtyards in Southwest, they are mainly aimed at renovation or transformation projects in which current residents are not (temporarily) relocated.

We can see some similarities between the "binnentuinen challenge" approach and the garden commissions that organised activities in the 50s and 60s (Omroep West, 2023). These commissions eventually failed in part due to reduced social cohesion and sense of community. How can we make sure that these new initiatives will not fail at some point in the future? What if the money runs out? Or, what if a key community member moves? It would be wise to look into the spatial structure and ways to structurally change these courtyards to better support social interactions. This is also very relevant for cases in which buildings do change or blocks are completely reconstructed.

FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY

How does the design of outdoor spaces affect social interactions?

As established in the previous chapter, the outdoor spaces in Southwest are characterised by low levels of activity and provide few opportunities for spontaneous social interaction among neighbours.

This chapter develops the theoretical groundwork needed to understand these issues. It first introduces Jan Gehl's framework for analysing outdoor life, which distinguishes between necessary, optional, and social activities and identifies the spatial conditions that support these activities (Gehl, 2011). Afterwards, Roger Trancik's integrated approach to urban design is explained. His figure-ground, linkage, and place theories identify the main components of urban form and how they can contribute to lively, connected, and meaningful spaces (Trancik, 1986). Finally, the chapter explores the relationship between buildings and their surroundings using Kim Dovey & Stephen Wood's interface theory, focusing particularly on how building interfaces and transitional spaces influence outdoor activity and social interaction.

Together, these perspectives form a theoretical framework that will offer a better understanding of the spatial shortcomings of Southwest's existing design. Furthermore, it provides a set of theory-based considerations for the future transformation of these spaces. These considerations will be grouped and structured so that they can guide the subsequent analysis and design phases of the research.

SOCIAL INTERACTION & PUBLIC LIFE

Introducing Jan Gehl's Public Life Theory

To examine how Southwest's outdoor spaces can be designed as more social spaces, we must first understand the activities that can occur in them. For this we will turn to Jan Gehl's (2011) 'public life' theory, which he proposed in his book "Life between Buildings".

Gehl views the city as a stage for community life, in which urban designers and architects create the spatial conditions that enable social interaction and support the development of social networks. This is summarised in his goal to increase public life. Central to this approach is the concept of public life, which encompasses the human activities that occur in shared outdoor spaces, including streets, squares, parks and, for our purposes, Southwest's courtyards. Gehl divides these activities into three categories: necessary, optional, and social activities.

Necessary activities are those things people need to do, like commuting and grocery shopping. These activities are largely unrelated to the environmental qualities, like climate comfort or attractiveness.

Optional activities are things people only do when they desire to do so, like sitting, strolling, playing and picnicking. These activities rely more on outside conditions. If the environment is inviting enough, they can occur. If conditions are generally poor, their likelihood decreases.

Social activities result from the previous types of activity. They occur when people meet and socialise. Examples are talking, greeting neighbours, playing together or even just seeing or hearing others.

These types of 'activities' cannot be directly designed, but they can be encouraged by lengthening and multiplying the necessary and optional activities so that social activities are more likely to occur. It is a somewhat optimistic approach, based on possibilism. Basically, good design makes sure that there are many ways in which social interactions can happen. It will not necessarily lead to a tight-knit community, but it could very well lead to a casually interconnected community. A designer should design buildings, streets, parks and squares in such a way that they not only support necessary activity but also increase the probability of social activities happening. This is often achieved by combining necessary activities with optional activities.

Even though Gehl focuses mainly on life in public spaces, his principles can also be applied to the communal spaces that exist throughout Southwest area. So, for this project we will extend his understanding of public life to also include life in semi-public spaces.



figure 23: necessary activities are independent of the conditions in which they occur. optional activites do depend on outdoor conditions. Increasing the conditions, increases the occurence of optional activities and the resulting social activities (Gehl, 2011).

LOST SPACE THEORY

A layered approach to recognise lost spaces

To further understand the spatial issues in Southwest, the next subsection turns to Roger Trancik's critique of modernist urban design. His concept of "lost space" offers a useful lens for understanding how poorly structured residual spaces can weaken the public realm and social life.

In "Finding Lost Space", Roger Trancik identifies an abundance of anti-spaces in contemporary cities, or as he defines them, "lost spaces" (Trancik, 1986). These are spaces like surface parking, leftover land around buildings and backsides of buildings. He argues that these anti-spaces weaken public life and disconnect people, buildings and activities from each other. He contrasts these spaces with well-defined, connected public spaces that form a coherent public realm and link public, semi-public, and private domains. Even though Trancik focuses mainly on areas near urban cores with a relatively high density, his theories can also be applied to lower-density post-war neighbourhoods, like The Hague Southwest, to address the smaller 'lost spaces' that are found there in the form of strips of greens and unused spaces between buildings.

For identifying and redesigning these spaces, Trancik creates an approach incorporating three existing theories.

Firstly, he applies ***figure-ground theory.*** By mapping patterns of solids and voids we can define urban rooms and continuity. If the urban fabric is too fragmented, urban rooms get lost in an ill-defined void.

Secondly, he applies ***linkage theory*** to identify how movement and networks connect spaces through paths, axes, other infrastructure and visual links. If a space is not (well-)connected to other spaces, it will be used less.

Finally, he applies ***place theory***. A space will become a place by incorporating the cultural, historical and natural context of a space. Urban designers should incorporate social and cultural values, visual perceptions of users and the control individuals have over their immediate public surroundings into their design. In the case of Southwest these can be viewed in terms of the (perception of) ownership, appropriation and stewardship of collective spaces.

Roger Trancik's threefold theory (figure-ground, linkage, place) is a useful framework to read the physical structure of space, with his notion of 'place' closely related to Gehl's focus on public life. His approach has demonstrated scientific relevance through application to urban downtown centres, historic cores, and high-density Asian cities (Cornell AAP, 2023; Trancik, 1986). His theory has been applied in city centres and waterfront areas several times. However, it has not been applied systematically to post-war social housing areas, such as The Hague Southwest.

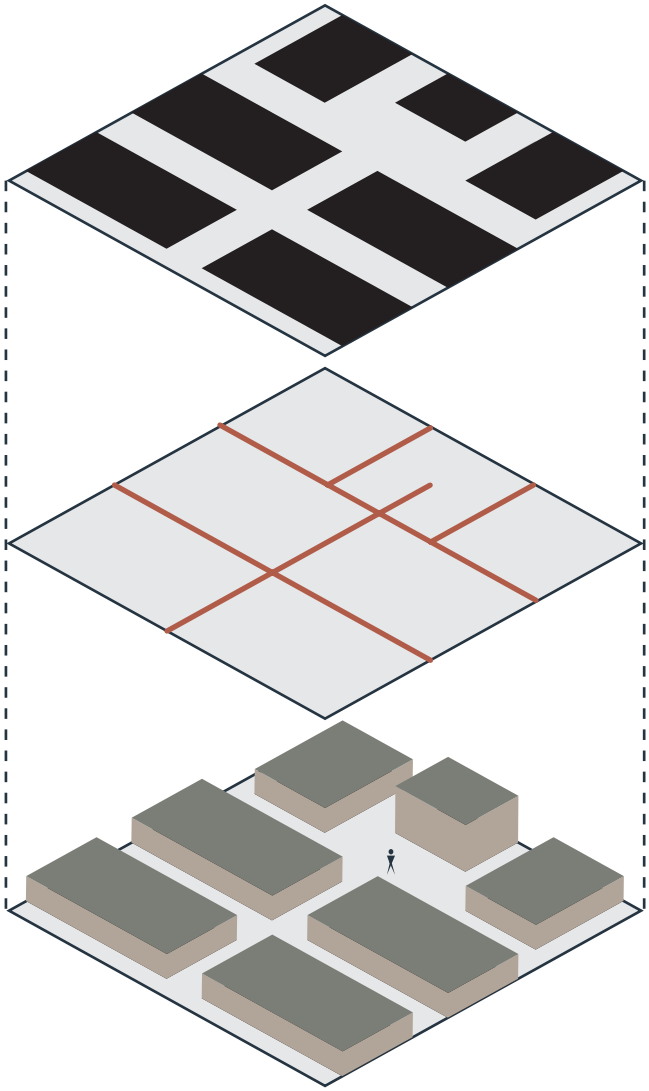


Figure ground theory maps the relationship between building mass and open space. It shows the textures and patterns of the urban fabric and identifies spatial order, but it lacks three dimensionality.

Linkage theory strongly analyses connections and movement between spaces. It does undervalues spatial definition, so it needs to be paired with other theories.

Place theory emphasizes the importance of social, historic cultural values in the urban fabric. It applies a more contextual, human perspective onto urban analysis.

figure 24: layering all three approaches results in a clear understanding of solids and voids, important connections between them, and of the social, historical and cultural context of a design.

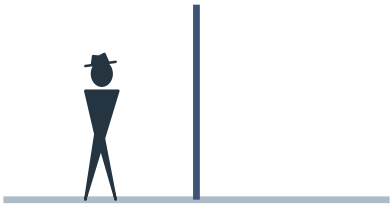
BUILDING-SPACE RELATIONS

Using interface theory to connect private to public.

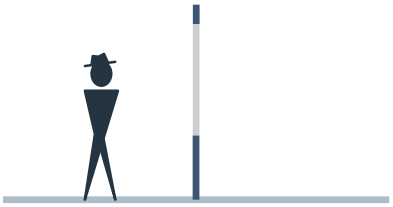
Trancik's approach strongly emphasises the morphology of urban space through figure-ground and linkage theory (Trancik, 1986). While this captures the degree of enclosure created by urban form and the connections between outdoor spaces, it does not fully address the texture of urban edges or the relationship between outdoor and indoor (private) space. Gehl partly responds to this by focusing on thresholds between public and private realms and by advocating soft edges such as stoops and front yards (Gehl, 2011). Nevertheless, neither theorist offers a fully systematic way of analysing urban edges. This makes Dovey and Wood's interface theory (2015) a useful next step, as it shifts attention to the spatial and social qualities of the boundaries between buildings and public space.

Kim Dovey & Stephen Wood treat boundaries between buildings and streets not simply as a line but as a socio-spatial edge that shapes movement, social life and power. Urban interfaces are the ways in which private spaces "plug into" public spaces. They propose a typology based on permeability, setback, transparency and pedestrian vs. car access. This typology enables mapping of current outdoor edges and identifying the potential for public life.

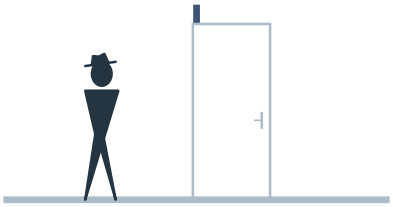
In this project, interface theory is used to classify urban edges based on their effect on social life, and this knowledge is used to evaluate the shortcomings of the design sites and to improve the sites by redesign. By doing this we can bridge the gap between the figure-ground theory and the linkage theory Trancik (1986) proposes by expanding the latter into the private domain.



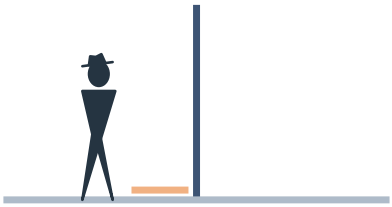
Blind facades disconnect residents from outdoor spaces and reduces sense of safety and use.



Transparent facades connect residents to outdoor spaces and increase sense of safety and use, activating a space.



Open facades allow movement between private and outdoor spaces. Increasing sense of ownership and private use of the outdoor edge.



Small semi-private setbacks allow for appropriation by residents while allowing for public-private interactions.



Large semi-private setbacks disconnect the private from the public domain. While it does increase private use, it reduces social interactions.

figure 25: different relations between private and (semi-)public spaces create different social possiblities.



figure 26: a relatively nice interface between private homes and a semi-public courtyard in the Dreven.



figure 27: a bad disconnected interface between private homes and a public street in the Zijden.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Which design guidelines can guide the design of public and communal outdoor spaces in the Hague Southwest?

PROPOSING DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

to guide social aimed design interventions

Having introduced the main theoretical perspectives, the next step is to translate the insights they offer into a set of design considerations. These considerations bring together the most relevant ideas from the literature and organise them into a structured framework that can be used in the design process. They will offer practical guidelines for designers to analyse current situations and design future outdoor spaces to be more coherent and socially supportive.

Gehl has taught us that there are three types of activity in the urban environment. Necessary and optional activity and their resulting social activity. The requirements for the most basic form of urban life, necessary activities, are relatively low. As long as space is part of daily routines (like a street), it will result in daily life. However, the public life generated through necessary activities is limited, because these activities are often functional and quick, leaving little time for social contact (Gehl, 2011).

For a larger social impact, the main focus should be on increasing the potential for optional activities. These are more design-dependent and can substantially lengthen the time people spend outdoors. And the more people enjoy staying somewhere, the more they will stay there and the more they will meet and interact (Gehl, 2011). So, our main focus should be on creating high-quality spaces that people can and want to stay in. Additionally, it would be beneficial to improve places where necessary activities already occur to make them also more suitable for optional and social activities.

To help designers, this chapter will set out a number of design considerations, related to morphology, connections, edges, programming and facades. These design considerations are not a fixed checklist that must be followed in every situation. They each should be considered, using the spatial context, scale and intended users, resulting in a clear reasoning on how they are or are not used. Some considerations present more fundamental conditions, ignoring them is very likely to weaken the accessibility, legibility, or social potential of a design. The considerations should also be used in relation to one another, as following one may sometimes limit or improve the possibilities of another. Their purpose is therefore not to present one correct design solution but to support informed and contextual design decisions.



figure X: the basic layout of the consideration cards that will follow in this chapter

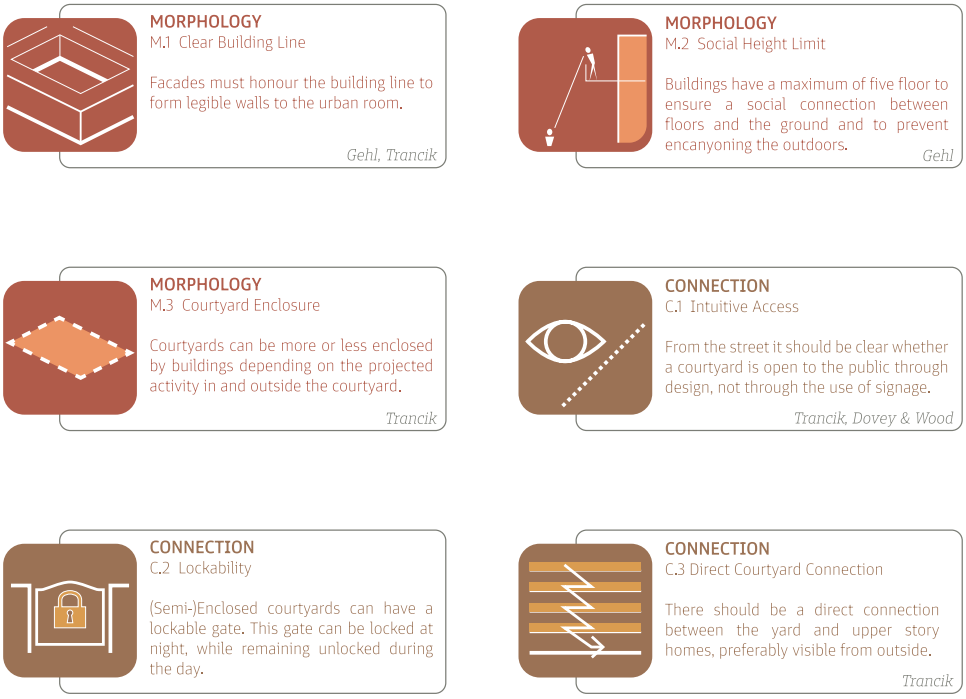


figure 28: design considerations regarding building morphology and spatial connections.

MORPHOLOGY & CONNECTIONS
Shaping urban rooms

The morphology of buildings in a neighbourhood should be designed in a way that produces clearly legible urban rooms(Trancik, 1986) . According to Trancik, this requires well-defined edges, typically formed by building facades in denser urban settings, but potentially also by walls, fences, or landscaping. Such enclosure helps give outdoor space clear dimensions and spatial identity, which results in urban rooms. Gehl further emphasises that the surrounding built form should remain at a human scale and within a height range that supports social interaction (Gehl, 2011; Gehl et al., 2006) . This is especially important in courtyards and other shared spaces, where enclosure and comfort are closely linked.

Beyond morphology, the spatial organisation of a neighbourhood should ensure clear and intuitive connections between its outdoor spaces. Spaces need to be accessible in a straightforward way, whether they are public, semi-public, or reserved for a specific group of users, like residents of a single block (Trancik, 1986). In some cases, shared spaces may need to be lockable for practical or safety reasons, but this should not undermine their role to the surrounding homes and blocks. Courtyard spaces that are for a specific group of users should have direct user-courtyard connections, as they reinforce everyday use and strengthen the link between private and shared space. In this way, connected and well-defined spatial sequences can help prevent outdoor areas from becoming isolated or underused.

BUILDING EDGES
Bridging the private and public

Well-defined and well-connected urban rooms should form the basis of the urban fabric, but proper care should be given to the transition from public to private space (Dovey & Wood, 2017; Gehl, 2011; Gehl et al., 2006; Trancik, 1986). Rather than creating abrupt boundaries, these domains should be connected through gradual transitions. The ground-floor edge is especially important because it forms the everyday interface between buildings and public space and is experienced most directly by pedestrians (Gehl et al., 2006). In this context, the edge should be understood not as a hard boundary, but as a layered interface that can support privacy, access, and social interaction.

People tend to prefer staying at the edges of spaces, where they can observe their surroundings while retaining a degree of privacy (Gehl et al., 2006). To support this edge effect, residential edges should provide sufficient depth for sitting, standing, or other forms of use. A minimum depth of approximately 1.5 metres can create a usable layer between the building and the public realm, while also offering a layer of privacy for adjacent homes. Slight elevation, low walls, planting, or other forms of partitioning can further establish privacy and ownership, provided that they do not obstruct visual connections. Residential edges should also be visually distinct from the surrounding public space, helping to communicate their relationship to individual homes or shared residential areas.

Strong physical and visual connections between the edge and the buildings behind them are equally important (Dovey & Wood, 2017; Gehl et al., 2006). Semi-public edges can reinforce this activity through fixed elements such as benches, planting, or public art. Shared entrances and galleries should likewise be designed as social spaces instead of purely functional spaces, providing opportunities for residents to sit, meet, and linger both inside and outside.

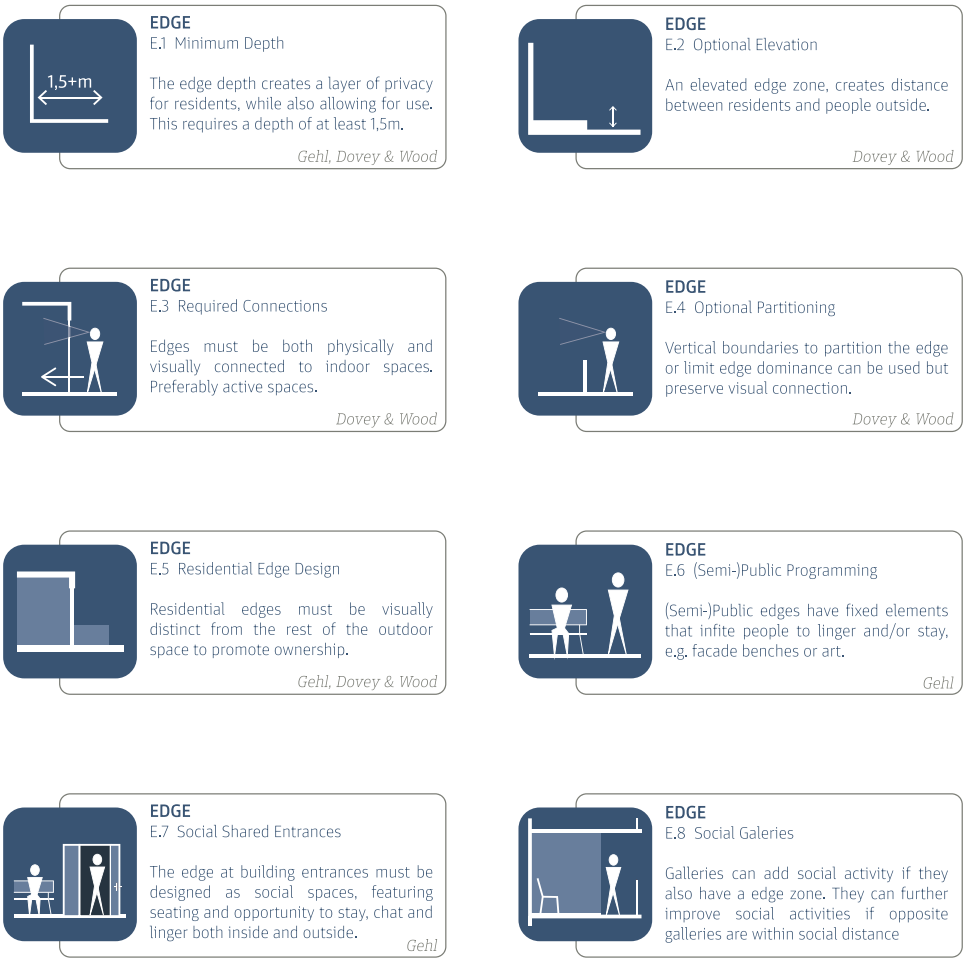


figure 29: design considerations regarding building edges.

COURTYARD PROGRAMMING
Creating active outdoor spaces

Once the edges of the urban rooms have been designed, the focus will shift to the activities and elements within the outdoor spaces. Gehl argues that public spaces should provide opportunities for people to meet, stay, and linger, instead of just being functional spaces (Gehl, 2011; Gehl Institute, 2018). These opportunities can be created using a combination of fixed and flexible programming. Fixed elements, such as seating, play equipment, sports facilities, and walking routes, provide clear invitations for specific activities. Flexible spaces, by contrast, can accommodate different uses and be adapted to the changing needs of residents.

When designing large scale courtyards, it is necessary to subdivide this large urban room into smaller rooms. These smaller rooms should not have dimensions over 35 meters (Gehl, 2011). From about 35 meters we can verbally communicate to a person, this is enough for brief exchanges, but to have a genuine conversation the distance must be reduced to 7,5 meter or less. To allow for somewhat meaningful social interactions, spaces should not be larger than 35 meters, and dimensions over. A successful courtyard should combine a larger, flexible central space with smaller programmed areas along its edges. The central space can support informal and changing activities, while seating, play areas, sports elements, or other fixed features provide additional activity nuclei. Paths should connect these rooms to one another and to individual entrances, while planting, low hedges, changes in elevation, or other spatial elements can provide definition to courtyard rooms without blocking visibility.

Finally, the attractiveness and comfort of these outdoor spaces should be considered. Outdoor spaces should offer a varied microclimate, with areas of both sun and shade, as well as good lighting, visibility, and opportunities for natural surveillance. Trees, green spaces, water features, and permeable surfaces improve air quality, reduce heat stress, and support biodiversity, which makes public spaces more comfortable, inviting, and resilient (Gehl, 2011; RIVM, 2025, p. 86). These conditions increase the likelihood of people staying longer, meeting others, and engaging in optional and social activities. Vegetation can add comfort and identity but should not obstruct views. Shrubs and hedges should remain relatively low, while tree canopies should be raised enough to preserve visual connections (Gehl, 2011; Gehl et al., 2006).

These considerations can lead to outdoor spaces that are neither over-programmed nor completely empty. The combination of flexible space fixed active rooms, clear connections, human-scale, and a comfortable microclimate allow residents to appropriate the courtyard in different ways while ensuring that it remains inviting and socially active.

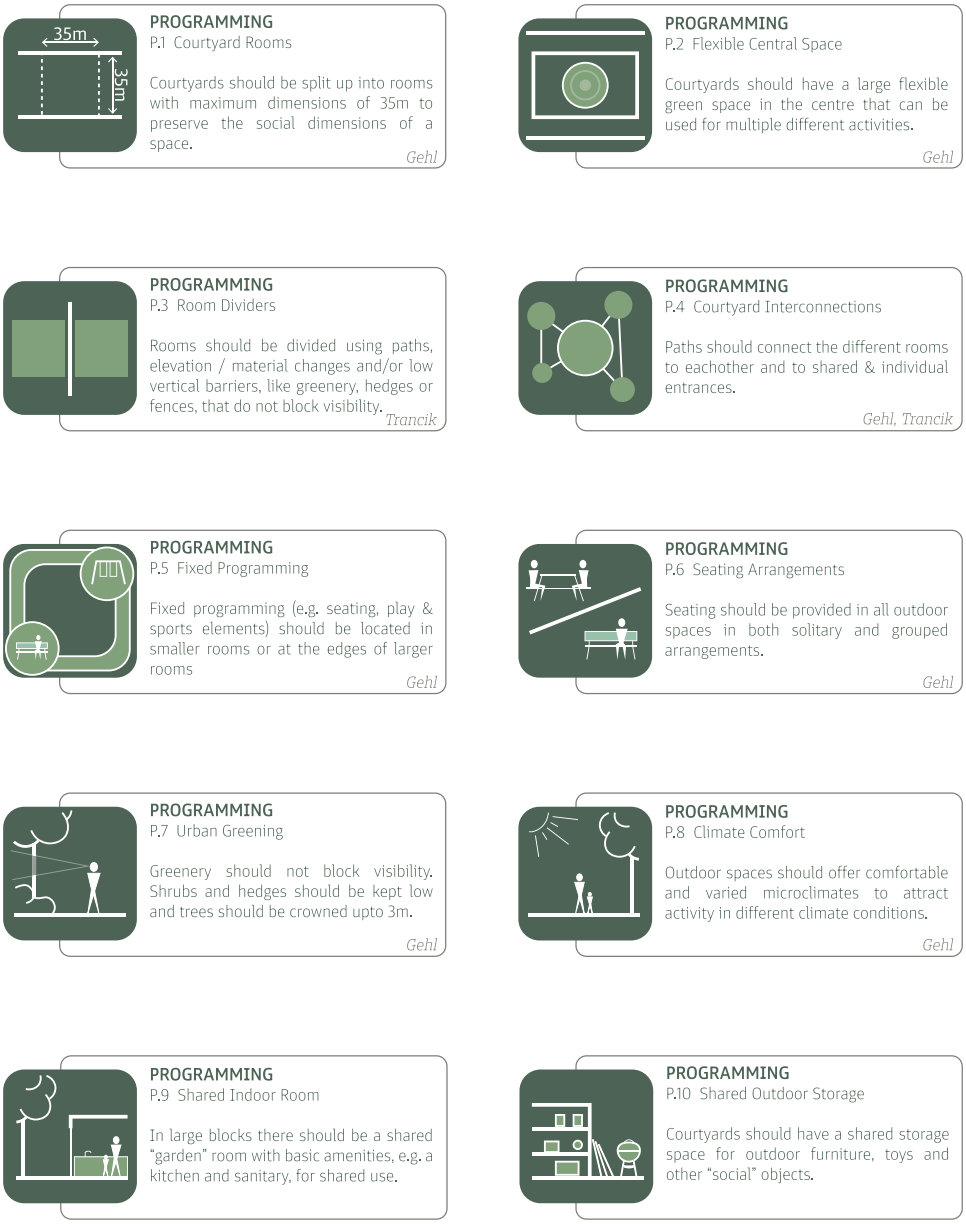


figure 30: design considerations regarding courtyard programming.

FACADE DESIGN
Designing the urban walls

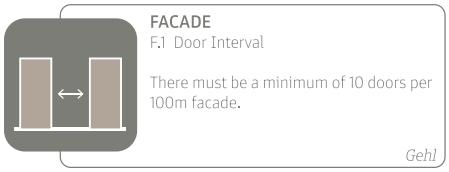
The design of facades plays an important role in shaping the relationship between buildings and the surrounding space. Dovey & Wood's work on urban interfaces shows that facades are not just surfaces (Dovey & Wood, 2015). Facades form spatial and social connections between interior space and outdoor space. Impermeable interfaces, like blank walls, garage doors, and parking structures, interrupt these connections. Permeable and visually interesting facades, on the other hand, can improve legibility, support natural surveillance, and add to the pedestrian experience. Gehl also stresses the importance of the ground-floor facade as the part of the building encountered most directly at eye level.

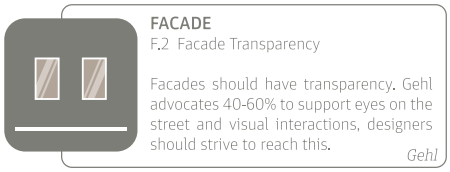
Doors, windows, transparent surfaces, entrances, and visible indoor activities can encourage people to slow down, observe, and interact with their surroundings (Gehl, 2011, 2006; Gehl et al., 2006). Facade design should include frequent entrances and openings, to avoid long, uninterrupted, blank walls and activity to the edges. Additionally, facades should offer visual connections to the spaces behind them. Residential facades should balance transparency with privacy, resulting in moderately transparent facades. Commercial and communal uses can support more transparent facades, contributing to a more active facade. Studies found substantially more stopping and stationary activity in front of active rather than passive facades, which can lead to more social activity along these facades (Gehl et al., 2006).

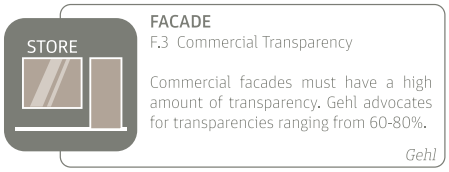
To further break up the monotony of large facades, variation in facade rhythm, vertical articulation, niches, recesses, balconies, columns, and material details can make buildings more visually interesting and help break down the perceived length of a block (Gehl et al., 2006; Jacobs, 1995).

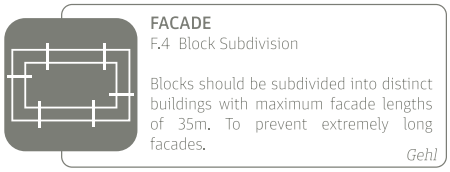
While these facade considerations do affect the probability of social interactions in urban projects, they operate more on the architectural scale. The considerations regarding entrance frequency, facade transparency and building subdivision will be used in the upcoming analysis and design section as general preconditions while the more detailed considerations on architectural expression fall outside the scope of this design project.

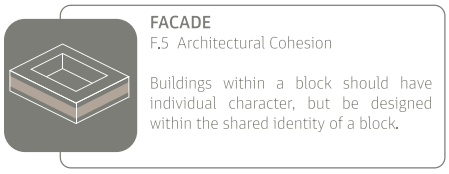
This chapter translated the theoretical perspectives of Gehl, Trancik, and Dovey and Wood into a set of design considerations. Together, these considerations show that outdoor spaces can support social interaction by considering morphology, connections, edges, programming, and façades. No single consideration can create social interaction by itself. Their value lies in how they work together to create socially active environments. In the following chapter, these considerations will be applied to the project sites in The Hague Southwest, where they will guide the development of future design interventions.

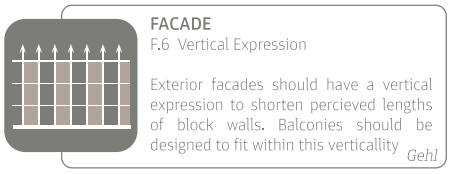


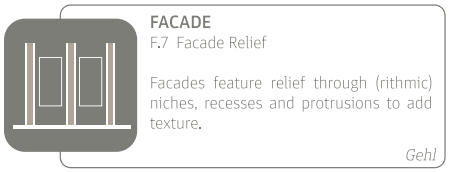


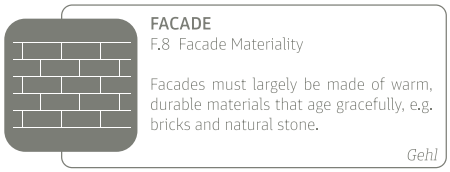












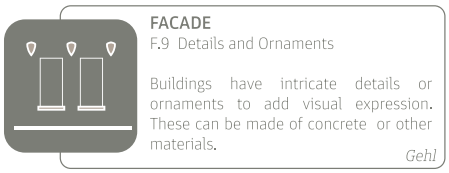


figure 31: design considerations regarding facade design.

CASE STUDY IN ZIJDEN & DREVEN

Applying the design considerations in the redevelopment of the Zijden en Dreven neighbourhoods in The Hague Southwest

The previous chapters showed how the public and communal spaces of The Hague Southwest were originally part of a collective neighbourhood structure, but gradually became disconnected from the changing communities around them. The theoretical framework subsequently explored how urban design can respond to this problem. Based on the work of Gehl (2011), Trancik (1986), and Dovey and Wood (2015), a set of considerations was developed concerning morphology and connections, edges, programming, and facades.

This chapter applies these considerations to two case studies in The Hague Southwest: the Zijden and Dreven neighbourhoods. Both neighbourhoods are located along the southern edge of Bouwlust and Vrederust and contain characteristic post-war housing structures surrounded by extensive outdoor spaces. The analysis looks into how these spaces currently function, how they relate to the surrounding buildings and if they support optional and social activities. This analysis establishes a basis for the design interventions developed in the final parts of this chapter.



figure 32: location of the Zijden and Dreven neighbourhoods.

ANALYSIS
of the Zijden & Dreven

The Zijden en Dreven neighbourhoods were developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s and were the last additions to the Southwest area. While their appearance is quite different their layouts were designed with a similar logic. Both were designed using a stamping, a technique in which a number of buildings form a spatial unit, which is repeated (stamped) multiple times throughout the neighbourhood. Along the Erasmusweg and Lozerlaan a semi-porous composition of longer blocks was used to form the edge of the Southwest area.



Figure 33 areal photograph of the Zijden (Haags Gemeentearchief, 1982)



Figure 34: areal photograph of the Dreven (Haags Gemeentearchief, 1982)

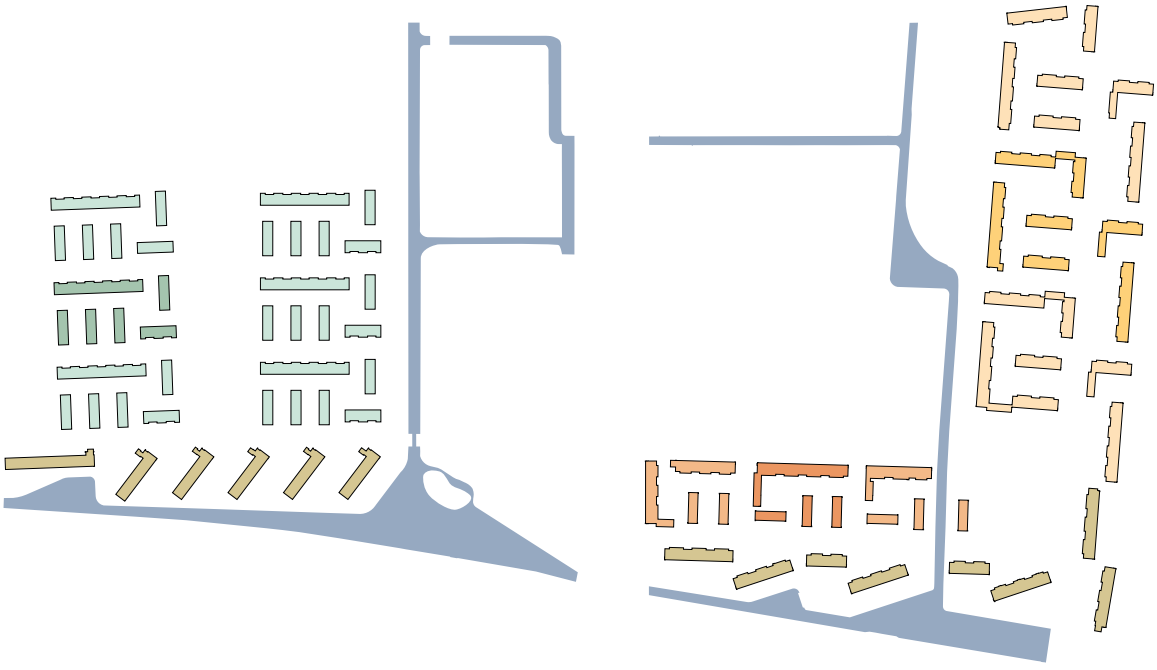


Figure 35: the neighbourhood buildings grouped in similar stamps.



Figure 36: buillding typologies in the Zijden en Dreven

Building typologies

The neighbourhoods consist predominantly of portico apartment buildings. They are present in all of the urban stamps. In some cases, there is also row housing. In addition, the Zijden has gallery apartments along the south edge, and the Dreven has apartment towers located on at three of the area's corners. The remaining buildings are mostly (former) schools and garage units.







figure 37-39: clockwise from upper left, row homes with private gardens along the Landzijde; view accross the water from the Melis Stokezijde; and the Lagezijde.









figure 40-43: clockwise from upper left: garage boxes on the Gravendreef; row homes along the Ridderdreef; the backside of a portico block along the Ridderdreef; former shopping area on the Dreef.



Figure 44: current redevelopment plans in the Zijden and Dreven.

Current plans

The ongoing efforts to transform Southwest are also taking place in the Zijden and Dreven. In the Dreven ambitious plans are underway. Staedion, the housing corporation that owns the neighbourhood, is planning to substantially increase the number of homes by predominantly demolishing existing buildings and rebuilding new, denser blocks. In total, the plan is to add 1.600 extra homes in the area, on top of renovating or rebuilding the existing 1.100 homes. This comes down to a densification of about 270%

Demolition has already started on the northside of the shopping centre, following the approval of the new building designs. For the east part of the neighbourhood, development is scheduled to begin this summer.

In the Zijden, which is owned by Hof Wonen, plans are less ambitious. At the moment, the portico buildings within the urban stamps are being renovated. For the rest of the housing in the neighbourhood, no plans have been made yet.

The renovated portico buildings limit the potential for further densification in the neighbourhood. Additionally, the densification objective for Bouwlust-Vrederust as a whole has already been fulfilled, making densification in the Zijden unnecessary.





figure 45 & 46: in the Zijden, portico flats are being renovated, while plans for the row homes have not been published yet.





figure 47 & 48: the buildings north of the Dreef (shopping street) have been or are being demolished, for the construction of new city blocks.

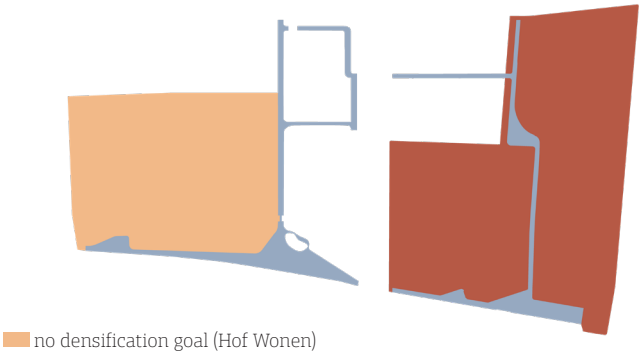


figure 49: in the Zijden there is no set goal for densification. In the Dreven there is a goal set by the housing corporation of ca. 270%, increasing the number of homes from ca. 1.100 to 2.700.

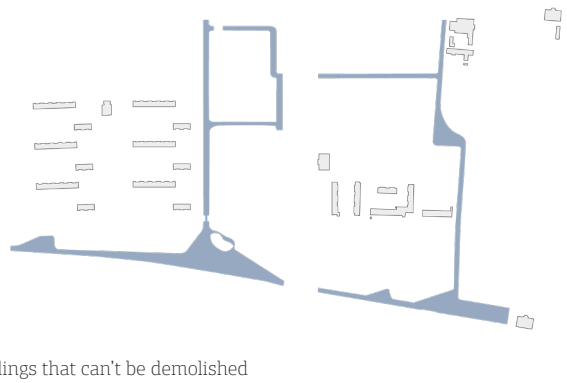


figure 50: the buildings being renovated cannot be demolished, which limits densification and reconstruction possibilities in the Zijden.

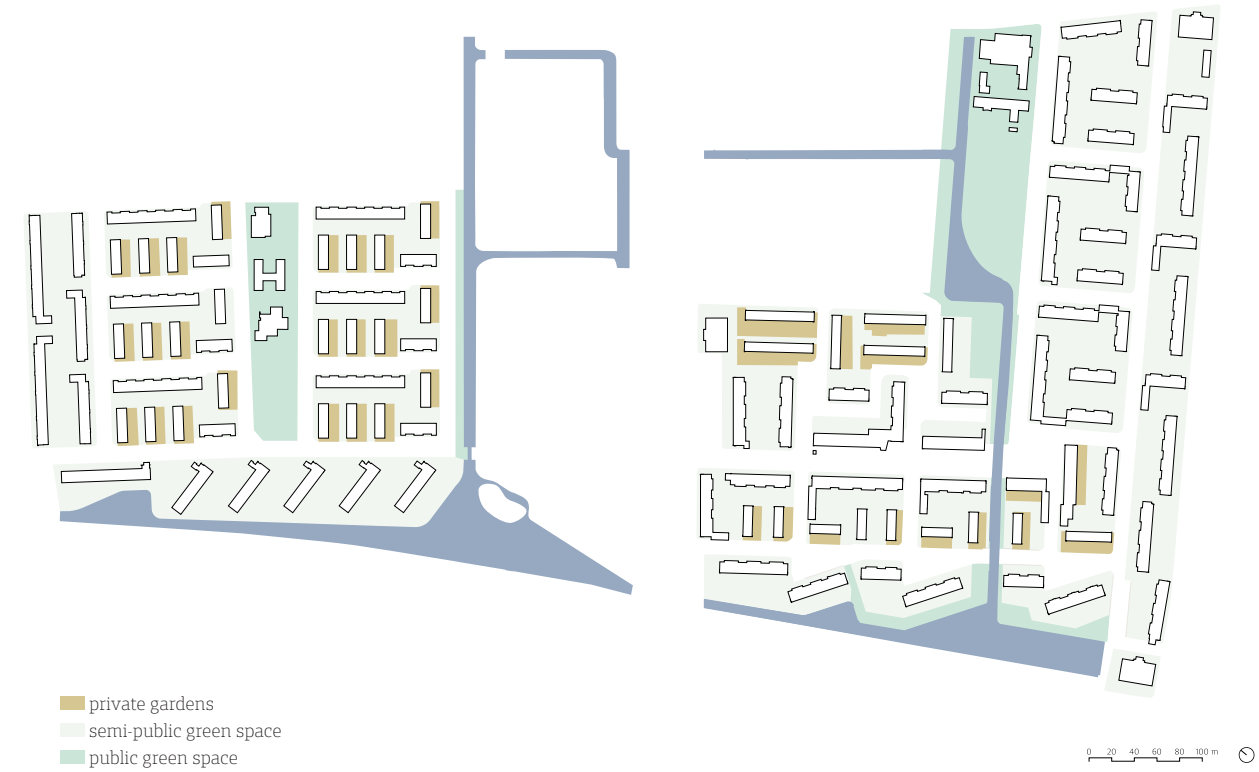


Figure 51: classification of outdoor spaces in the Zijden and Dreven.

Outdoor spaces

When looking into the outdoor spaces we see that only some of it is private. Each row house is accompanied by a private rear garden, most often enclosed by a tall wooden fence. However, they only constitute a minority of the overall outdoor space. The neighbourhood is largely characterised by semi-public courtyards and other green spaces surrounding the buildings.

Both areas also feature public spaces. In the Zijden this is the central green area, with parks on either end, although both are relatively low-quality, due to limited maintenance. In the Dreven, the Page park is located along the singel (central waterway). It features a Cruyff Court and is overall well-maintained. Because of this it attracts fairly many visitors. Additionally, the Dreven has several commercial units along the Dreef that attract activity, especially due to the health care clinics.

Even though it is not truly public, the "mengelmoestuin" does attract activity within the Dreven. The shared vegetable garden was initiated by local residents, and it attracts both active users and visitors. Because of this, the surrounding courtyard is the most lively and socially active courtyard in the neighbourhood.



figure 52: streets in the Zijden form a huge, paved surfaces throughout the neighbourhood that do not attract public life.



figure 53: streets in the Dreven are similar, but have a lot more cars parked on them. This again results in a space that does not attract public life.



figure 54: most of the collective green space behind portico blocks does not have paths, making them feel disconnected from the homes.



figure 55: in the Dreven, most collective green space does have paths, making them used more often for walking through, but still there are few people staying.



figure 56: row homes in the Zijden are accessible through a collective green space with a path, often the most striking feature is the mismatched fencing.



figure 57: row homes in the Dreven are also accessible through the collective space, although due to its dimensions, this feels a lot more public.



Figure 58: sightline mapping from any part of the central green area in the Zijden, showing the neighbourhoods very porous structure.
The total yellow dotted area is roughly 145.000 m2 in size. From the central area 72.000 m2 of this area is visible (including the central area itself). Especially around the southern edge of the park the space becomes diffuse, blending into the collective yards of the blocks.

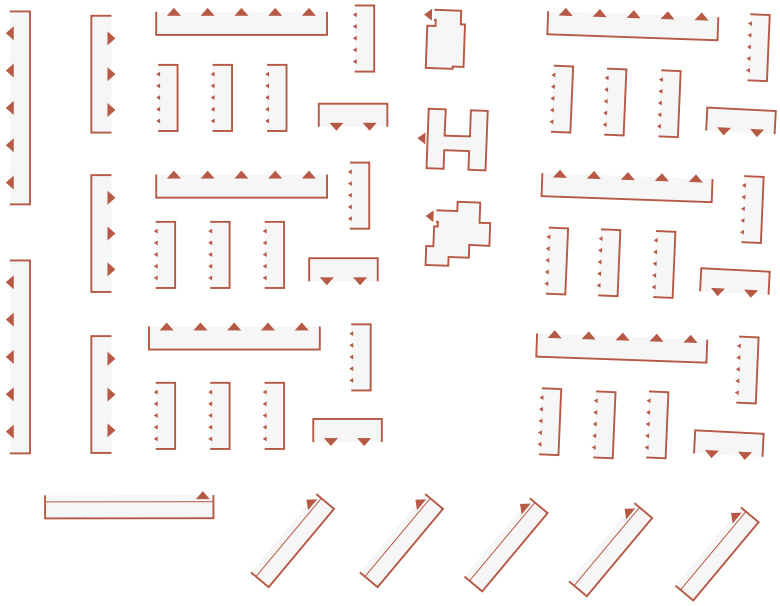


Figure 59: entrances in the Zijden. The entrances of the porch and gallery flats face the road they connect to. The entrances of the row houses all face northeast. In every stamp just one row faces the road, the others face the back of a neighbouring row or the greenspace within the block.

Building-space relationship

In the Dreven and Zijden the current spatial structure of the neighbourhoods is very porous and does not adequately create urban rooms, resulting in many lost and confusing spaces. Furthermore the orientation of the buildings does not relate to the urban layout, creating confusing spaces in which walls consist of fronts, backs, and sides of buildings. Within the redevelopment efforts of these neighbourhoods efforts should be made to solve these issues.

The adjacent figures show the Zijden neighbourhood and how the buildings inform their surroundings. The first figure illustrates the porosity of the outdoor space, through mapping the sidelines from the central park. Almost half of the neighbourhood area can be viewed from this central space, because the general layout is very open. The second figure adds the orientation of the buildings in the Zijden, showing the entrances. While the portico's main entrances are all on the roads, the row homes have entrances along paths inside the courtyard space. Because of these different orientations you can be both in front of, next to, and behind someones home at the same time, making it hard to appropriate spaces for residents. Furthermore the orientation away from the roads, leads to long strethces of blank facades with tall fences.

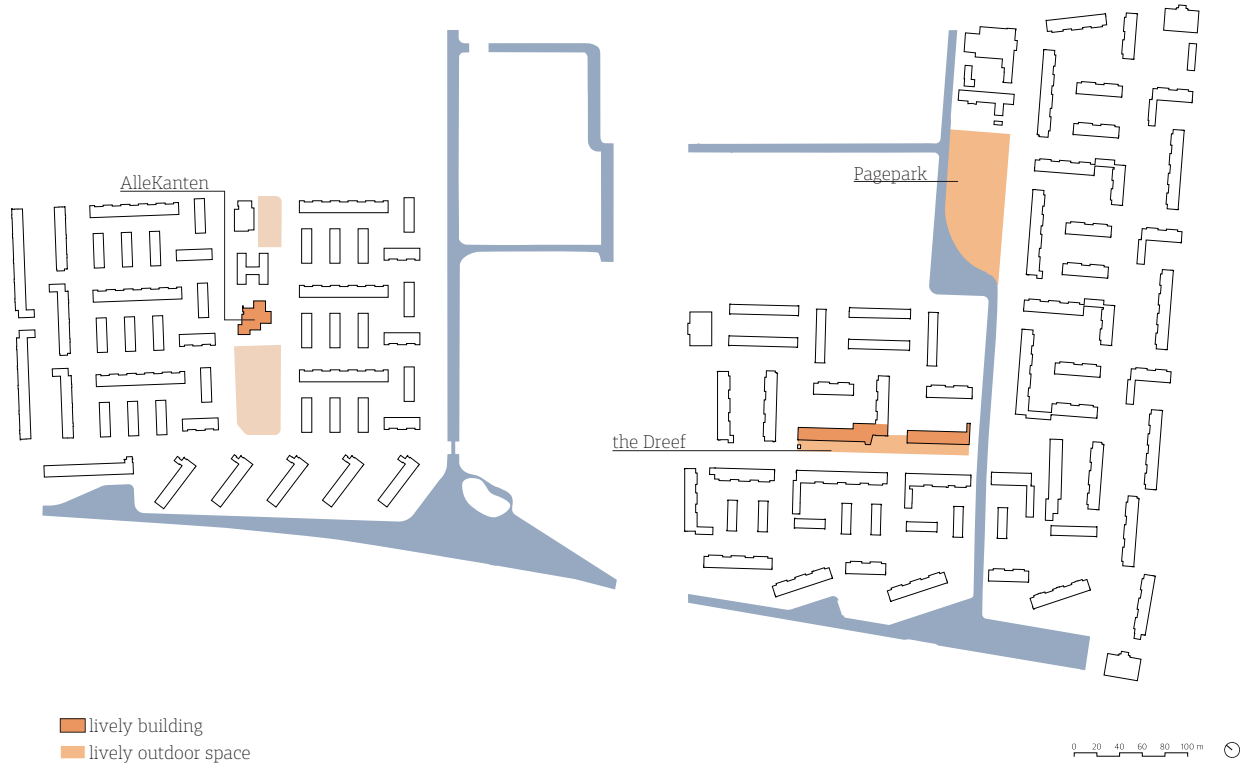


Figure 60: lively places in the Zijden and Dreven.

Active places

The main way to look into public life is to look into active places within the neighbourhoods in which residents and non-residents gather. Both neighbourhoods are relatively quiet, with only a few people that are outside. Much of the public space is dominated by the streets, which are generally wide and feature parking on both sides. Sidewalks are generally narrow and very functional. This makes the streets less suitable for optional and social activities, reducing activity.

Out of the two neighbourhoods, the Dreven is the liveliest one, mainly through its commercial units and its high quality Pagepark. While the shopping street will attract (necessary) activity independently of outdoor conditions, the park will be quiet during cold, rainy days, while being fairly busy when the weather is nice. It is relevant to note that the health care clinics in the Dreven attract many visitors from outside the neighbourhood.

In the Zijden most activity is generated by the community centre “Alle Kanten” which organizes many activities for residents in the area.

For a more indepth analysis, see Appendix III.





figure 61 & 62: during nice weather the Pagepark attracts many users.





figure 63 & 64: although there is always necessary activity around the Dreef, good weather will bring out more people to socialize.





figure 65 & 66: also during good weather, the parks and streets in the Zijden do not attract many users.



figure 67: community centre "Alle Kanten" attracts organizes many activities, resulting in a much public life surrounding their building.

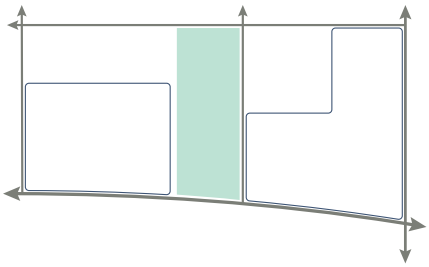


figure 68: the arterial road network is located around the neighbourhoods.

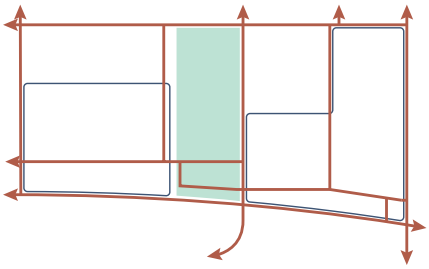


figure 69: the cycling network is on the arterials but also runs through the neighbourhoods.

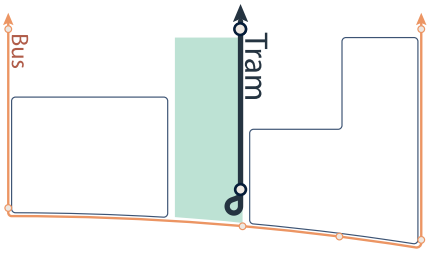


figure 70: bus and tram stops are outside the neighbourhood, but do form important access points.

Active routes

When looking at the connections into and around the neighbourhoods that add activity to the neighbourhood.

The areas network is mainly shaped by a typical post-war neighbourhood road network, with larger arterial roads going around the neighbourhoods and smaller residential roads inside the neighbourhoods. These arterial roads are fairly busy, especially the Erasmusweg (right) and Lozerlaan (bottom). But these are largely focused on cars and add little to no socially relevant activity. The interior roads, do add more social activity. But as shown before they are hardly nice places to be in, reducing them to more functional car space.

More socially relevant is the slower cycling network. Bike paths are present on the side of most roads and additionaly there are some important cycling connections running through the neighbourhoods, instead of around like the arterials.

Finally, the public transport network is adds (social) activity by transporting many people. While the busline circle around the neighbourhoods the tramline stretches right in between them. Both systems offer options to get to the Leyweg centre, and The Hague's centre, as well as the Hague Moerwijk, Hollands Spoor and Central Station. Especially the tramline is used much by residents and non-residents to get to the Dreven and Zijden.

Overall Activity

Both active places and routes add to the overall activity in the neighbourhoods and therefore add to public life.

Both the Dreven and Zijden have attractions. In the Zijden, they are the amenities in the central park. These attract some visitors, but not many.In the Dreven, there are multipleshops and amenities along the Dreef. Due to the increase in housing density (+170%), the number of shops and amenities in this area should also rise to meet the new demand, resulting in even more activity.

The cycling and car network does also generate some activity around the neighbourhood. In the future there will be some noteable changes to these networks. Due to the planned ecoduct, the Melis Stokelaan will no longer serve as an arterial but as a local road, making it moderately active. The cycling routes going through and around the neighbourhoods do add some activity. In the Dreven, there are a couple of important routes connecting to Westland and in the Zijden the east-west route to the tram stop adds activity.

Finally, there is both a tram & bus line running along the arterials. Especially the tram is used often to get to and from both neighbourhoods. Adding much activity along the main routes to and from the Dreven tram stop, especially when taking into account the proposed densification.

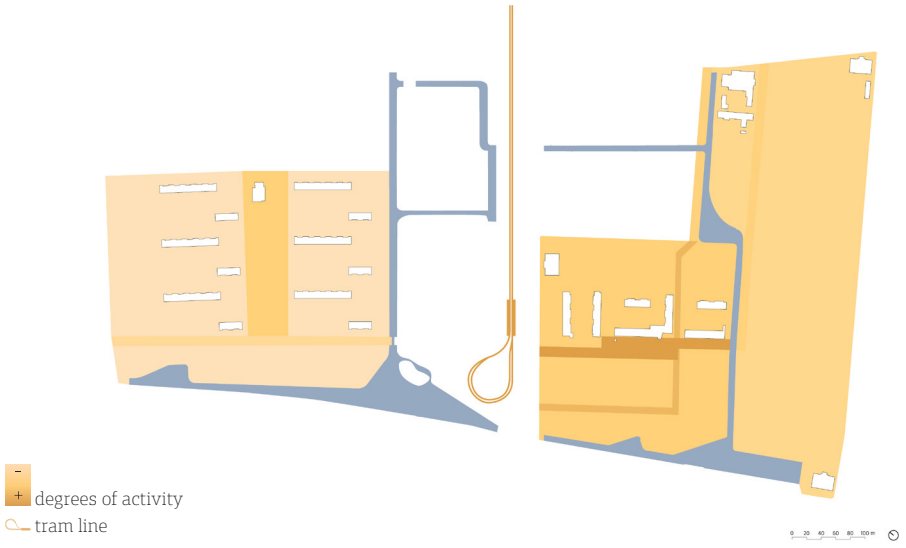


figure 71: activity throughout the Zijden and Dreven.

NEIGHBOURHOOD INTERVENTIONS

for a more social outcome

The analysis shows that both neighbourhoods contain large amounts of outdoor space, but that much of it lacks a clear spatial or social function. The porous urban structures, conflicting building orientations, car-dominated streets and unclear transitions between public, communal and private space have produced many underused, ambiguous areas. At the same time, the neighbourhoods are not fully void of social activity. The shops at the Dreef, community centre Alle Kanten and the tram stop add activity.

In the upcoming section three design decisions are presented at the neighbourhood scale. They form a response to streets, green structure and existing activity throughout the neighbourhood. The section after that will zoom in on four building blocks within the neighbourhoods. On this smaller scale, the considerations, that have previously been set out, will be applied to form socially supportive building blocks.

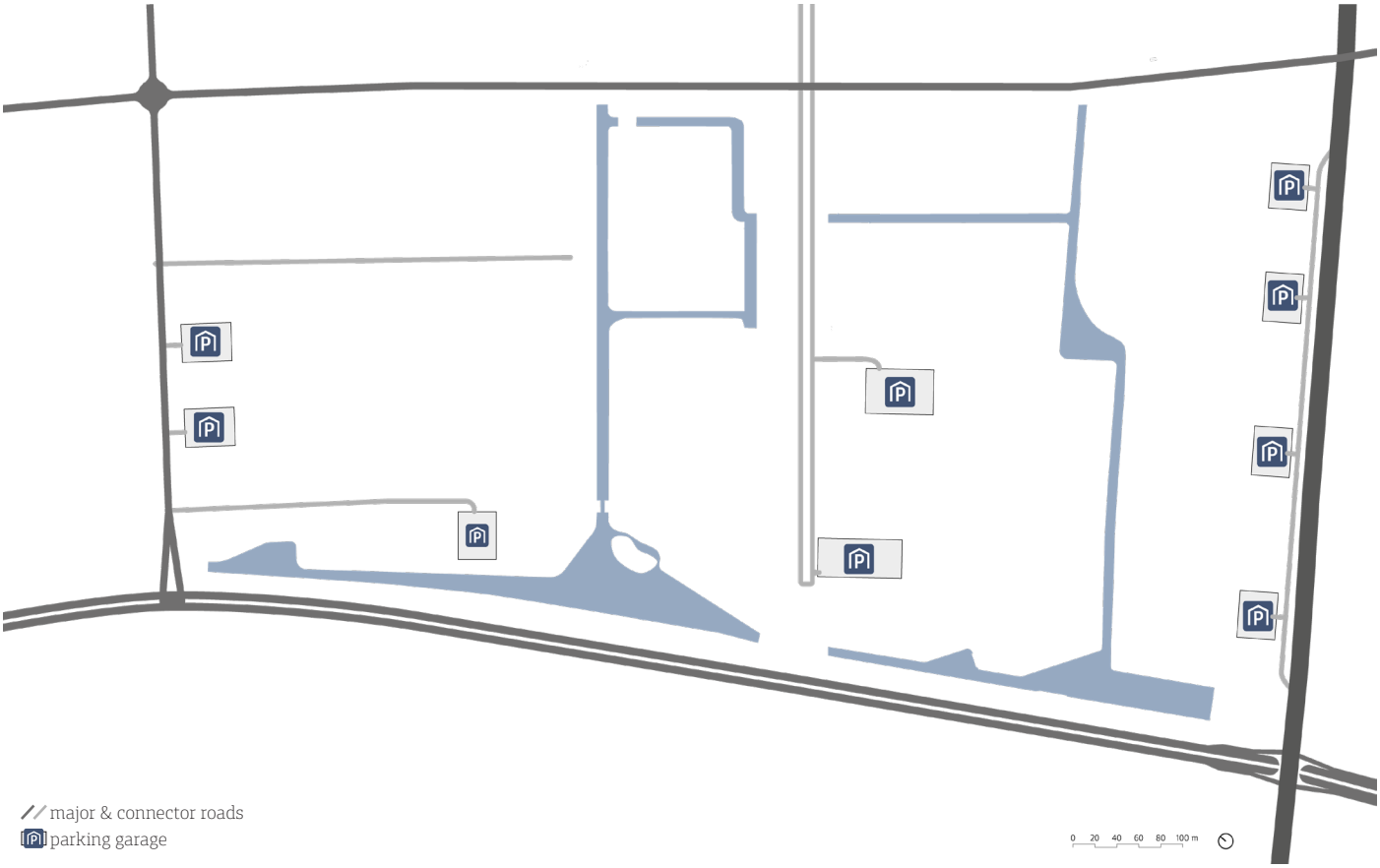


figure 72: the newly created parking garages at the edges of the neighbourhoods.

RETAKING THE STREETS through centralised parking

As shown in chapter 1, recent redevelopment projects often utilize parking beneath raised deck gardens. While it solves parking, it limits their ecological, climate-adaptive, and social potential. Because the selected cases involve two full neighbourhoods, we can concentrate parking in centralised garages, allowing streets and courtyards to be used for walking, cycling, greenery, water, and social activity. This reduces car dominance and creates better conditions for public life (Gehl, 2011; Gehl et al., 2006; Trancik, 1986).

In the Dreven, several new garages are positioned along the neighbourhood edges and connected directly to the surrounding roads, keeping the interior largely car-free. In the Zijden, the existing street and ecological structure requires one of the garages to be accessed through the neighbourhood. The other garages are again accessible from outside the neighbourhood This strategy keeps these neighbourhoods' accessibility, while freeing most streets from cars, except occasional use for emergency and delivery vehicles. A detailed comparison of the alternatives, access routes, garage locations, capacities, and walking distances is included in the appendix III.

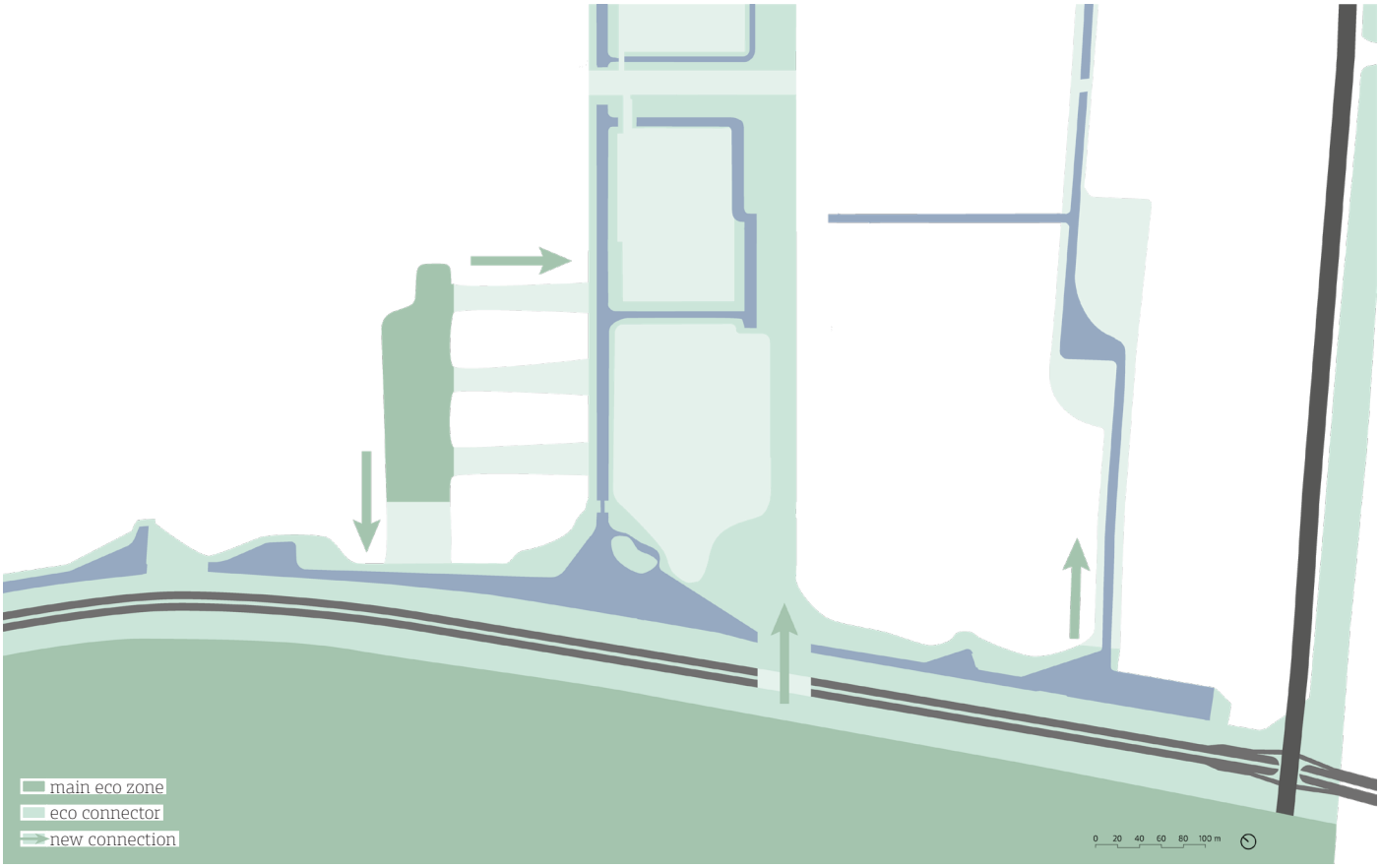


figure 73: new ecological connections run through the neighbourhoods making them part of the larger ecological netwerk.

EXPANDING ECOLOGY
by integrating the neighbourhoods

The Zijden and Dreven can both contribute to the ecological structure of The Hague. Their mature trees, parks, singels, and close proximity to the Uithof are a strong basis. The planned ecoduct across the Lozerlaan strengthens this opportunity by creating a stronger connection between the Uithof and Southwest.

In the Zijden, new ecological corridors connect the ecologically valuable central park to the Uithof on the south and the existing green axis on the west. In the Dreven, the singel is strengthened as a wet ecological corridor that connects to waterways further north. The waterways' banks will be softened and planted to improve habitat quality, water ecology. If possible, as much of the ecological valuable spaces, plants and trees will be kept. Together, these interventions form a green-blue network that supports biodiversity while also improving the quality and climate resilience of the neighbourhoods. A more detailed analysis of the existing ecological structure, water quality, and alternatives is included in the appendix III.

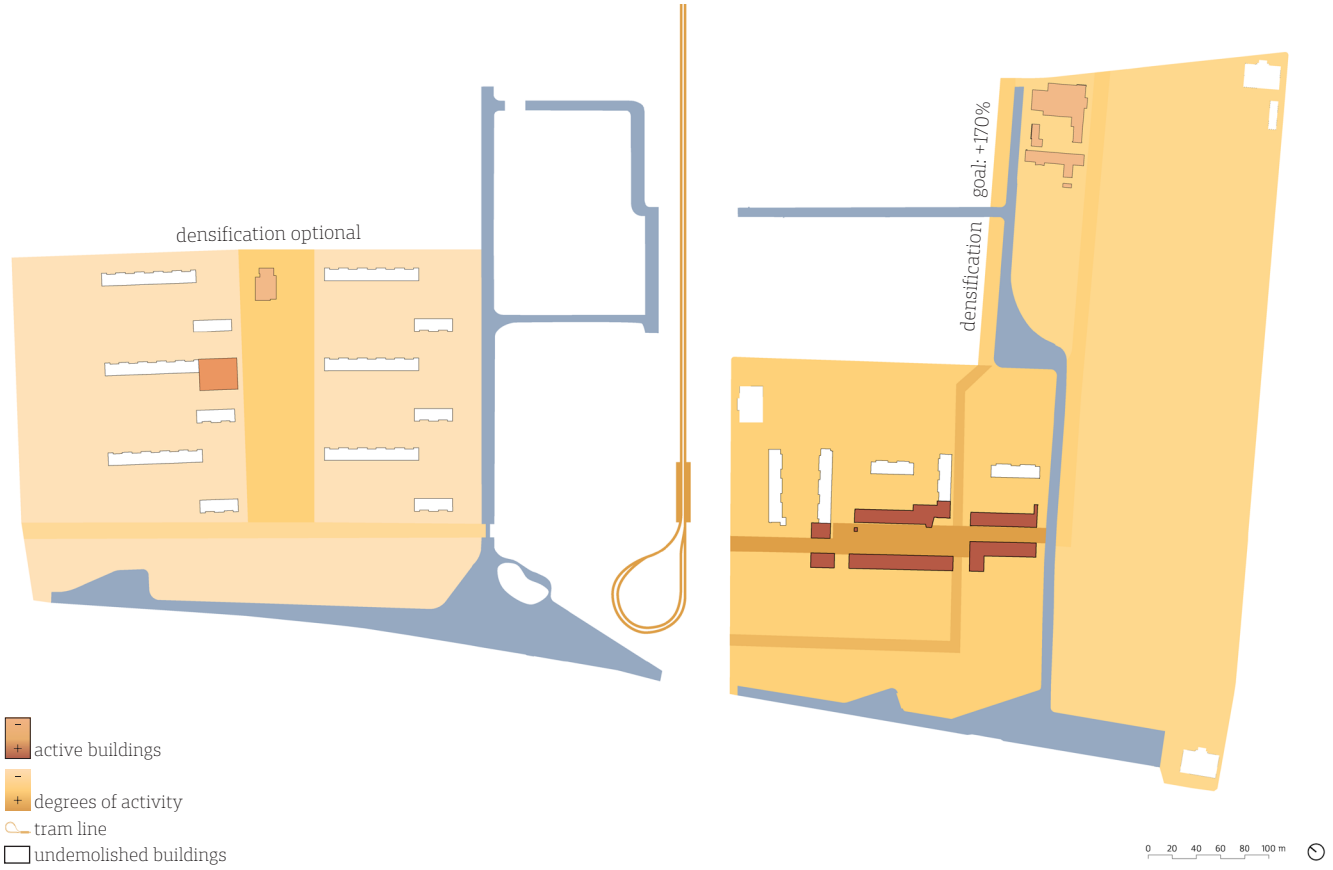


figure 74: by moving the activities in the Zijden to a new building and keeping existing shops in the Dreven, the present activity can be kept. In the Dreven the centre can even be expended on due to the increase in density

ADDING TO EXISTING ACTIVITY by investing in existing centres

Both neighbourhoods already have an active public space with amenities and everyday activity. Investing in these places creates opportunities to add activities and combine existing necessary activities with optional and social activities. Instead of dispersing new amenities throughout the neighbourhoods, the design concentrates them around the existing centres, increasing the likelihood that different users and activities encounter one another.

In the Dreven, the expected population growth increases the demand for shops and amenities. The existing shopping centre can be expanded into a more complete neighbourhood centre where residents can meet their daily needs. This can create a lively centre attracting residents and visitors throughout the day.

In the Zijden, the functions currently housed in the former school buildings will be combined within a new multifunctional building along the park's edge. This reduces the built footprint inside the park, creates a more active interface and releases more space for ecology and public use.

Further analysis of both interventions is included in the appendix.

BLOCK DESIGN

considering a optimal social outcome

Now we have established a neighbourhood-scale structure for parking, ecology, and public activity, we can move on to the scale of individual urban blocks. Four subcases have been selected, two in each neighbourhood. the selected subcases all fall within a distinct part of the neighbourhood. From left to right we will call them: Zijden West, Zijden East, Dreven Centre and Dreven East.

These can show how the design considerations can respond to different spatial contexts and development objectives. For each block, the design is explained step by step, beginning with its morphology and connections before addressing edges and programming.

The building assignments for the Zijden en Dreven is very similar. The majority of buildings in both areas need to be redeveloped or reconstructed to replace and add quality homes. While this is the redevelopment's main objective, efforts should also be made to reduce the neighbourhoods porosity and reorient entrances to create better defined urban rooms and to create clear connections between homes and outdoor spaces.

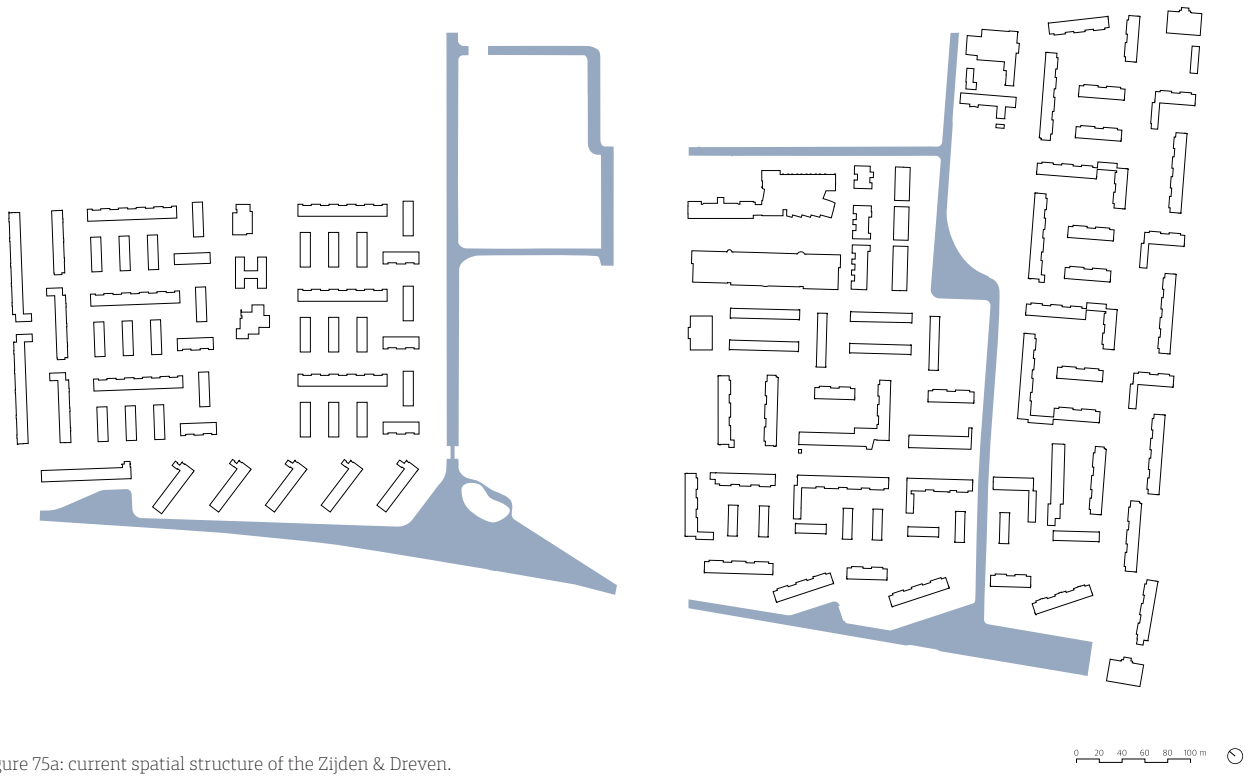
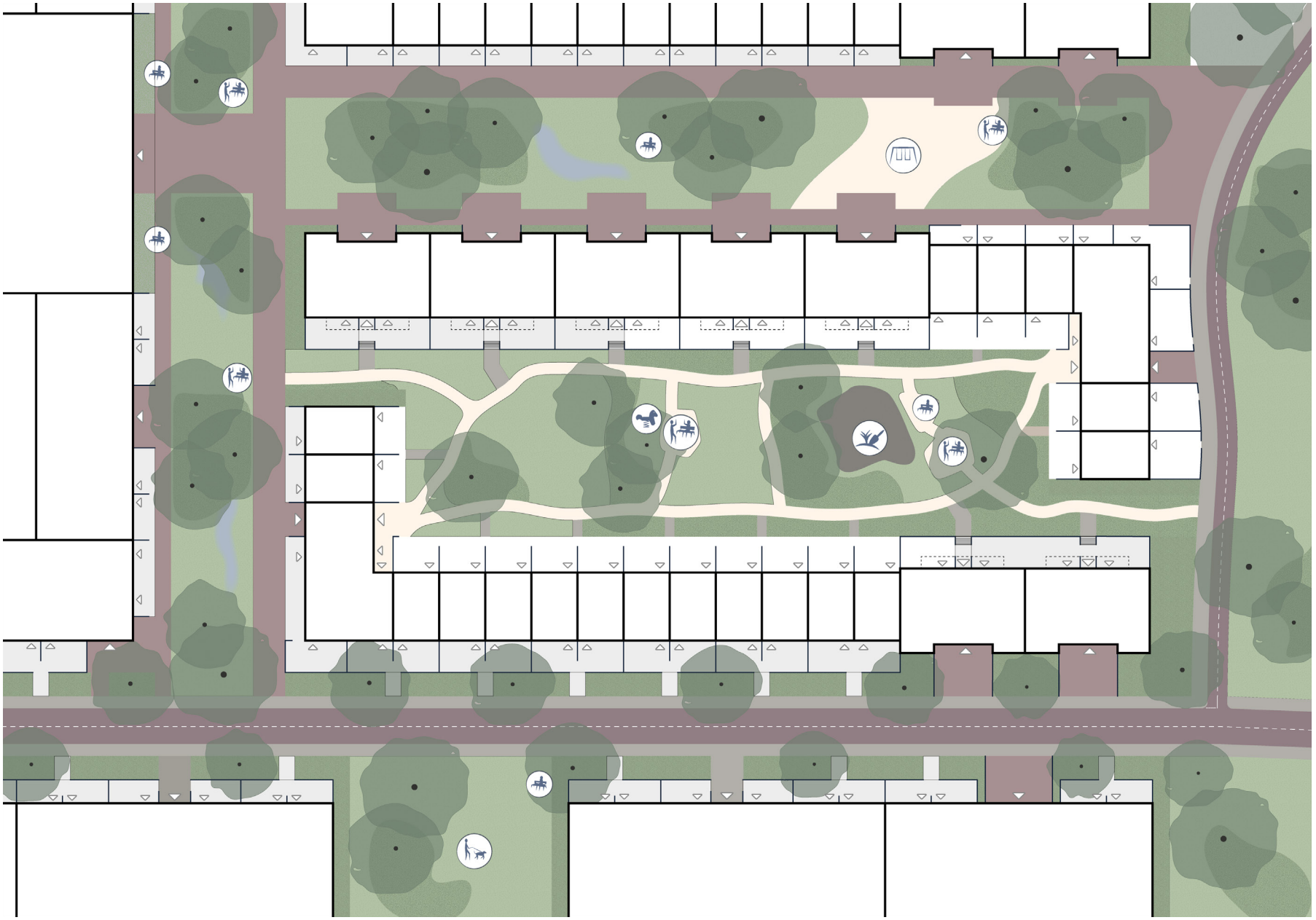


figure 75a: current spatial structure of the Zijden & Dreven.



figure 75b: the new spatial design for the Zijden & Dreven with the selected subcases highlighted. from left to right: Zijden West, Zijden East, Dreven Centre and Dreven East.



building
entrance
edge zone
cycling street

paved surface
aggregate pavement
grass surface
tall grass/shrubs

small playground
large playground
solitary seating
meeting place w/ seating

vegetable garden
dog park

0 5 20m

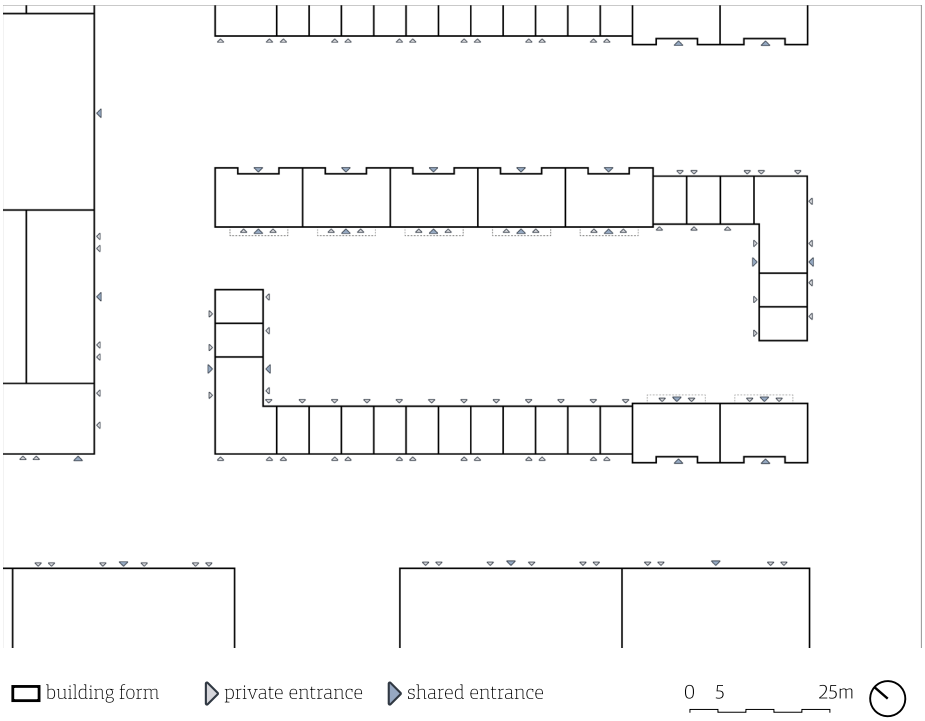
DESIGN OVERVIEW ZIJDEN WEST

Morphology and Connections

Zijden West experiences relatively moderate public pressure. Its housing density, and therefore its number of residents, is relatively low. The area also contains only a few amenities, including a day-care centre and physiotherapy practice, which are unlikely to attract many people from outside the neighbourhood. The main necessary activities on the streets will therefore consist of residents travelling to and from their homes, alongside people using the cycling route south of the neighbourhood to reach the tram.

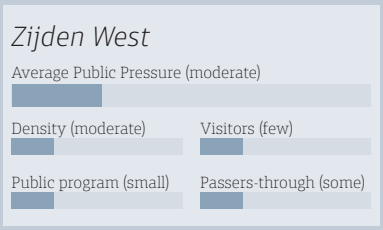
As most people using the outdoor spaces will be local residents, the relatively open neighbourhood structure can be maintained, with communal spaces flowing into the surrounding public space. However, the row homes need to be reoriented to create more coherent and better-defined outdoor rooms that more clearly express shared stewardship. The new row homes will form a continuous wall around the courtyard without major deviations, while also providing a clear building line along the streets. In this way, the buildings create clearly defined rooms and corridors (M1&3). The height of new construction in the area will remain limited (M2). Apartment buildings can vary between four and five storeys, while row homes will consist of two or three storeys, with an optional gabled roof.

Direct access to the courtyard is created through doors in the courtyard façades or interconnected hallways that provide access to both the street and the courtyard (C3). This allows residents of the upper-storey apartments and corner buildings to access the courtyard easily. The semi-enclosed building form intuitively separates the interior courtyard from the exterior public space (C1). Consequently, non-residents are more likely to perceive themselves as guests while still being able to move through the space. Given the relatively low public pressure, it will probably be unnecessary to lock the courtyards (C2).





Estimation of the public pressure:

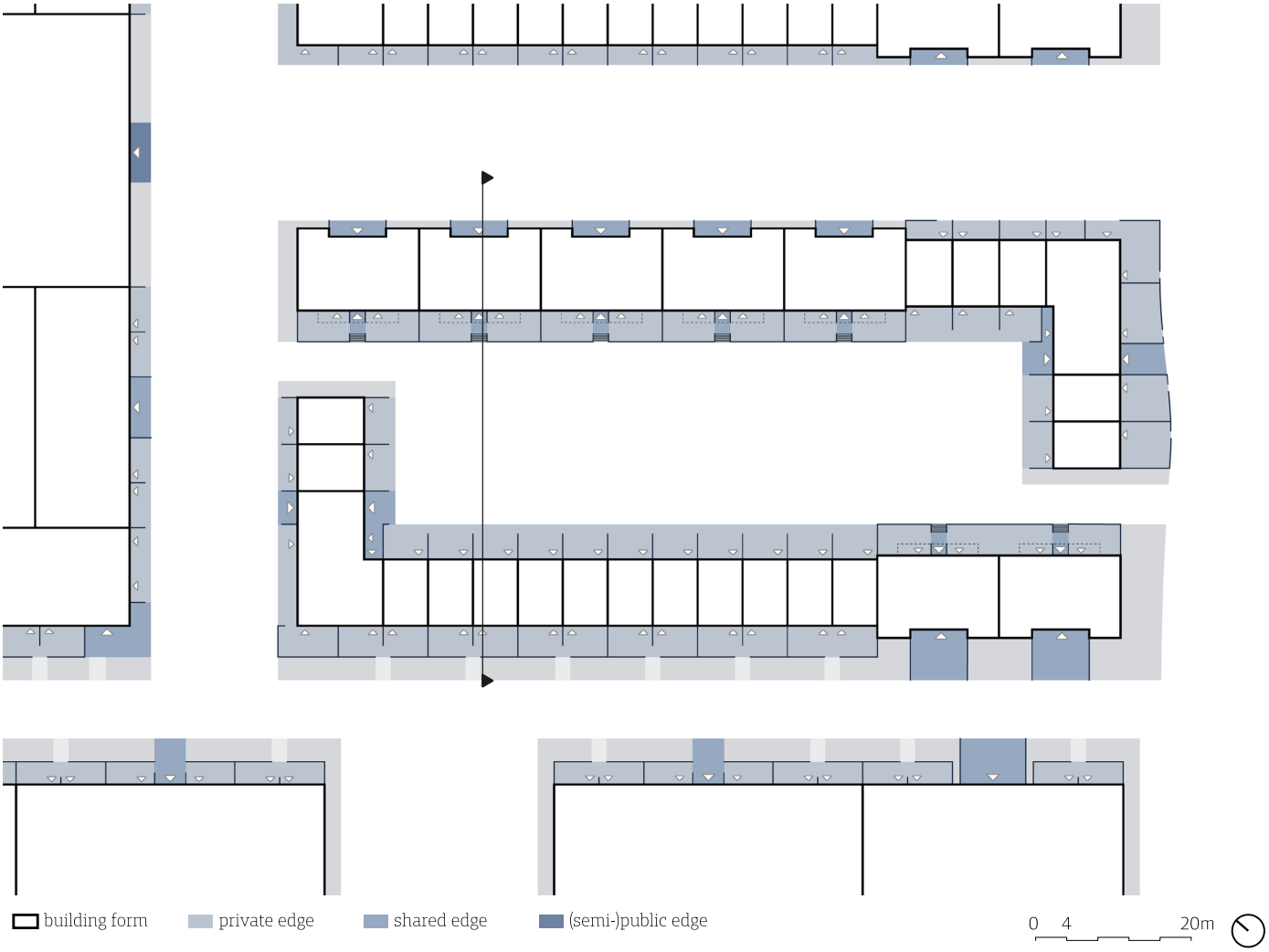


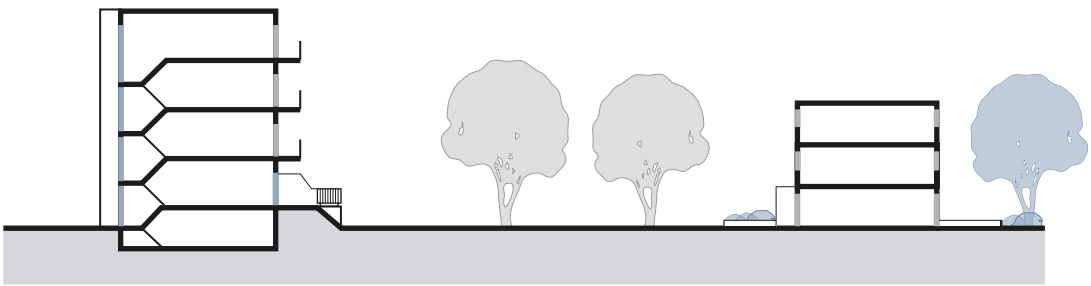


Old versus new typology.



Buildingtypes:
apartments (white), row homes (blue)


building form
private edge
shared edge
(semi-)public edge
0 4 20m



Edges

The edges serve as transitional zones between the private and public domains, or between the private and shared domains. Their form differs depending on the type of transition and the public pressure on the adjacent space. In all cases, the edge should be visually and directly connected to the adjoining homes (E3). It should also be distinct from the street it borders (E5). This can be achieved by using different materials or allowing residents to design and appropriate their own edge zones.

Along the busier cycling routes, the edges of row homes are generally deeper (E1) and include a low barrier that clearly marks where the public domain ends (E4). Along the quieter living streets, the edges are shallower, as these streets will primarily be used by local residents travelling to and from their homes on foot or by bicycle. Along the courtyard, the row homes have a more uniform edge. A deeper edge supports regular use and appropriation by providing space for outdoor furniture. Short dividers between neighbouring residents offer additional privacy by limiting direct views from one edge into another (E4).

The existing portico apartments limit the possibility of creating fully considered edges, particularly on the street side. Because the ground floor is slightly raised and lacks direct access at the front of the building, these edges will largely remain as they are. The main change will concern the design of the shared entrances. The narrow portico entrances do not effectively support lingering and social interaction, but the space immediately outside them potentially can (E8). Along the busier cycling street, more space should therefore be dedicated to these shared entrance areas. Along the living streets, the streets themselves can become part of this social space.

At the rear, the raised ground floor currently creates a disconnect between residents and the courtyard. The newly created rear entrances help to reduce this disconnect to some extent. Further activity can be encouraged by allowing ground-floor residents to appropriate the edge behind their building. To create a comfortably accessible edge while limiting the extent of reconstruction, the edge zone is raised to the level of the interior floor (E2). This requires a safety barrier along its exposed sides. The barrier should preserve the visual connection between the edge and the courtyard as much as possible (E4).

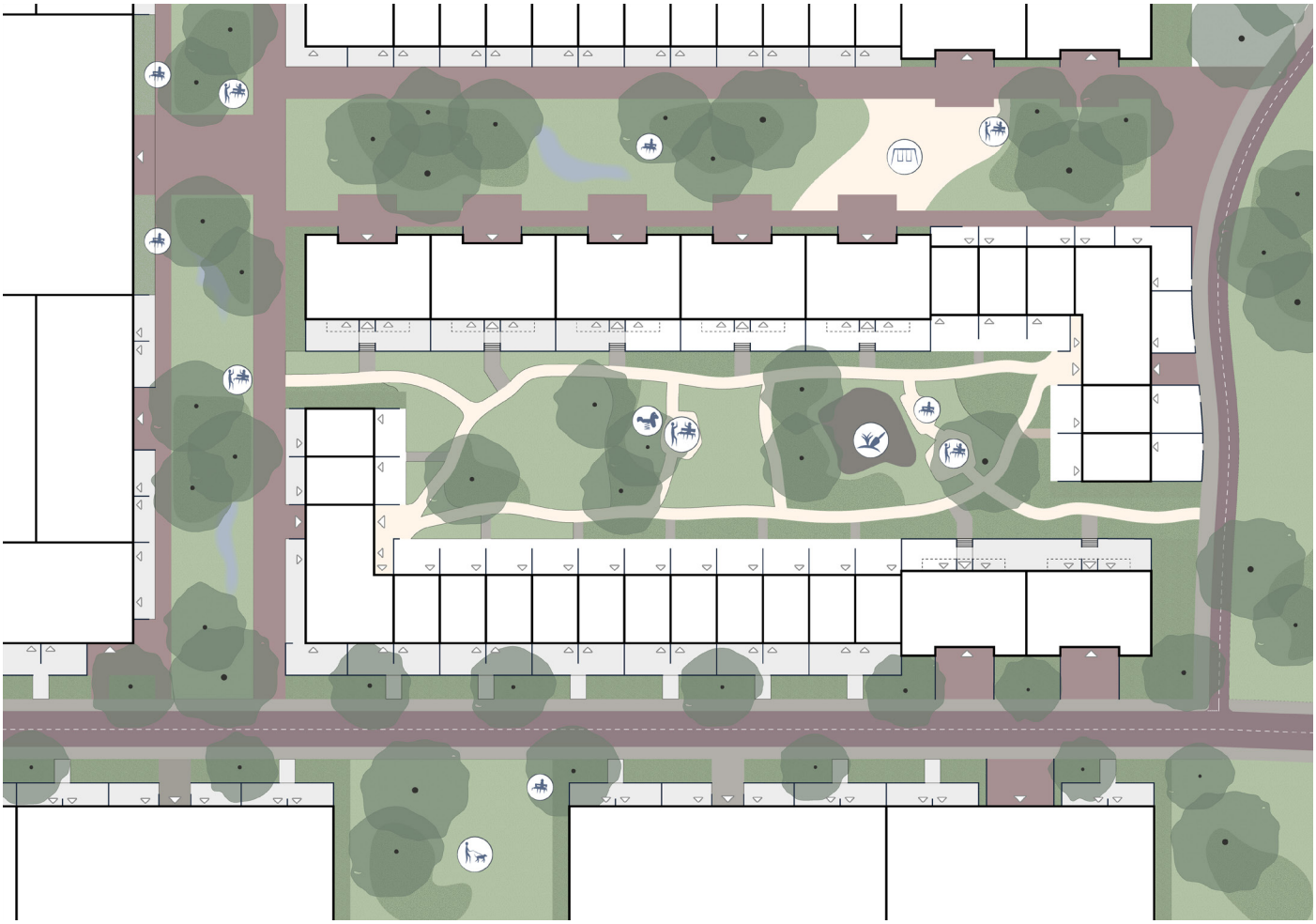
The parking garage presents another challenge, as its relatively long façade creates a less active edge. This edge should be designed to invite people to use it (E6). It should be visually appealing and offer several places to sit.

Finally, the block contains several side façades. Although these will not include entrances, they should have some transparency to provide activity and eyes on the street (E3). The adjoining edge could also be given additional depth to serve as a privacy buffer. If these edges are accessible, they should be designed as integral parts of the adjacent space rather than as separate edge zones, preventing the creation of a confusing in-between domain.





Surrounding routes:
cycling road (dark blue), cycling path (blue), living street (light blue)


building
entrance
edge zone
cycling street
paved surface
aggregate pavement
grass surface
tall grass/shrubs
small playground
large playground
solitary seating
meeting place w/ seating
vegetable garden
dog park
0 4 20m

Courtyard & Street Program

With the streets largely free of cars, except for emergency services and a few delivery vans each day, there is considerable space to work with. The cycling street can therefore have a narrower profile with a wide band of greenery along both sides. This also allows the preservation of the existing trees that line the current road. The cycling path along the park on the right follows a curved line to signal the transition from the orthogonal urban neighbourhood to the more natural, ecological park at its centre. The interior streets on the top and left side allow for the most significant redesign. Much narrower paths can be used to access the adjacent homes, while the centre offers a broad band of greenery. Occasional seating and a larger playground for older children are added (P5&3). The greenery consists of grass, both tall and regularly mown, smaller shrubs, and large trees (P7&8).

The interior courtyard mainly serves the adjacent residences. The large room is roughly 31 by 88 meters and should therefore be subdivided into smaller rooms (P1). At the centre of the courtyard is a large flexible room (P2). On one side, it includes a meeting space with a playground for younger children (P5). On both sides, the adjacent rooms are separated from the central room by vegetation in the form of tall grasses and shrubs, with additional trees (P3,7&8). The room to the left is also flexible, but thanks to the room divider, it can be used simultaneously for different purposes. The room on the right side of this relatively quiet courtyard provides space for gardening. Seating is again provided in different arrangements throughout the rooms (P6).

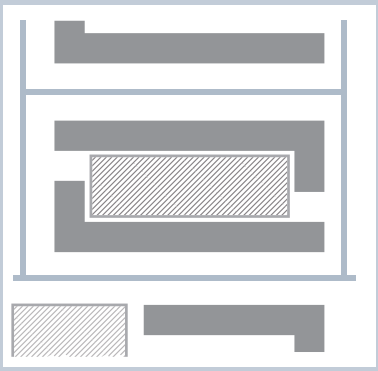
Paths connect all rooms to one another (P4), while also creating a clear border between the private edges on all sides and the shared courtyard (P3). By using a parallelogram-shaped path connecting the new corner blocks to the courtyard, a strong connection is suggested for residents without establishing a direct visual link (C3). At the same time, this slightly detaches the courtyard paths from the paths leading outside the courtyard, making it a less attractive shortcut for non-residents (C1).

Because most homes have a relatively short connection to the courtyard, and because the existing apartment buildings have storage boxes in the basement, a shared indoor room or storage space is not needed (P9&10).

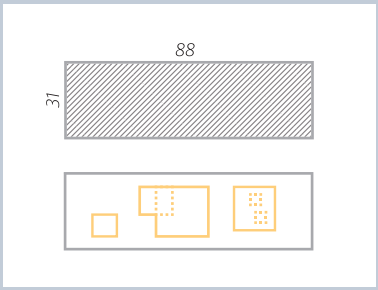


An impression of the courtyard

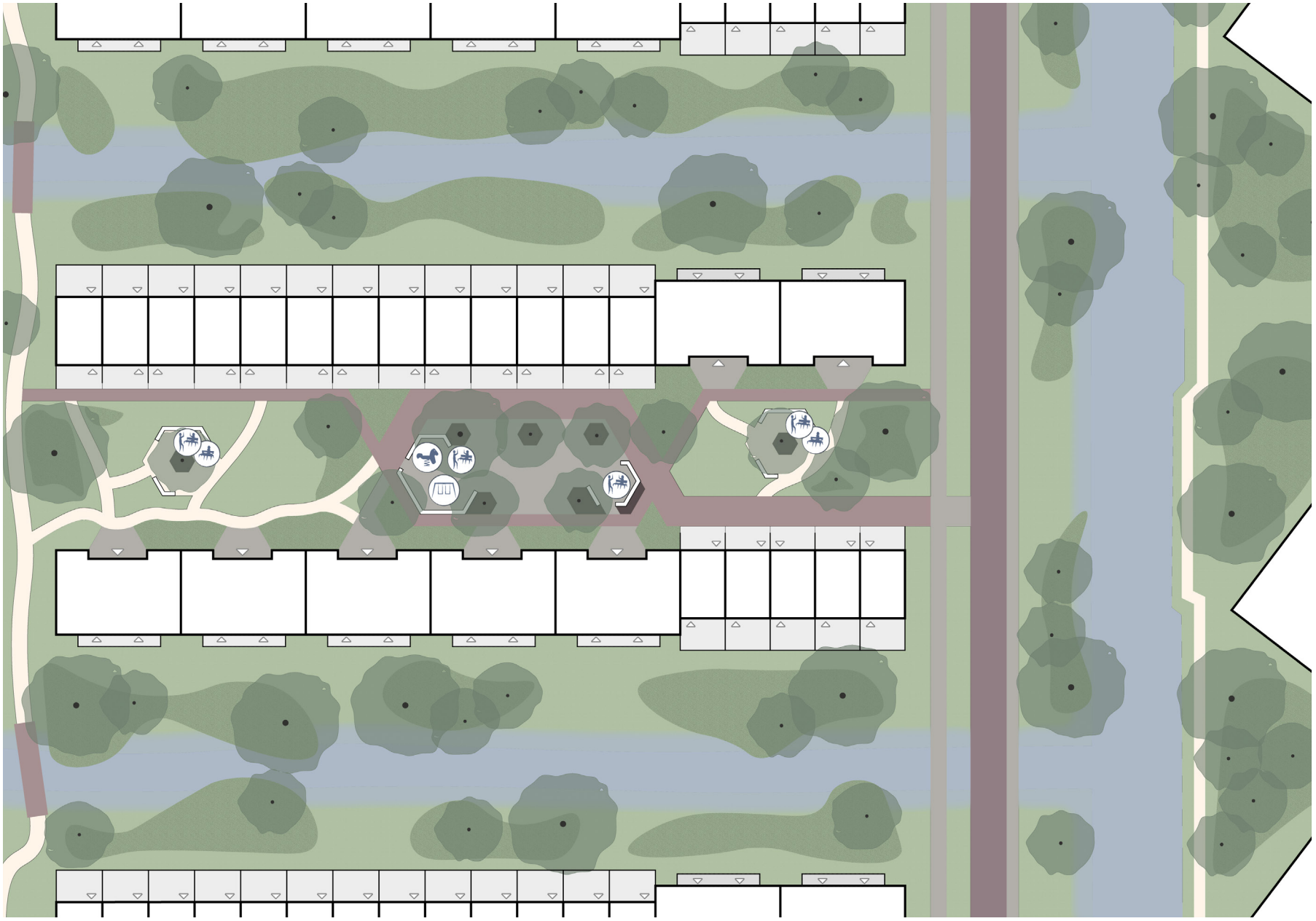




Main urban room (middle)



Room size and subdivision



DESIGN OVERVIEW ZIJDEN EAST

Morphology and Connections

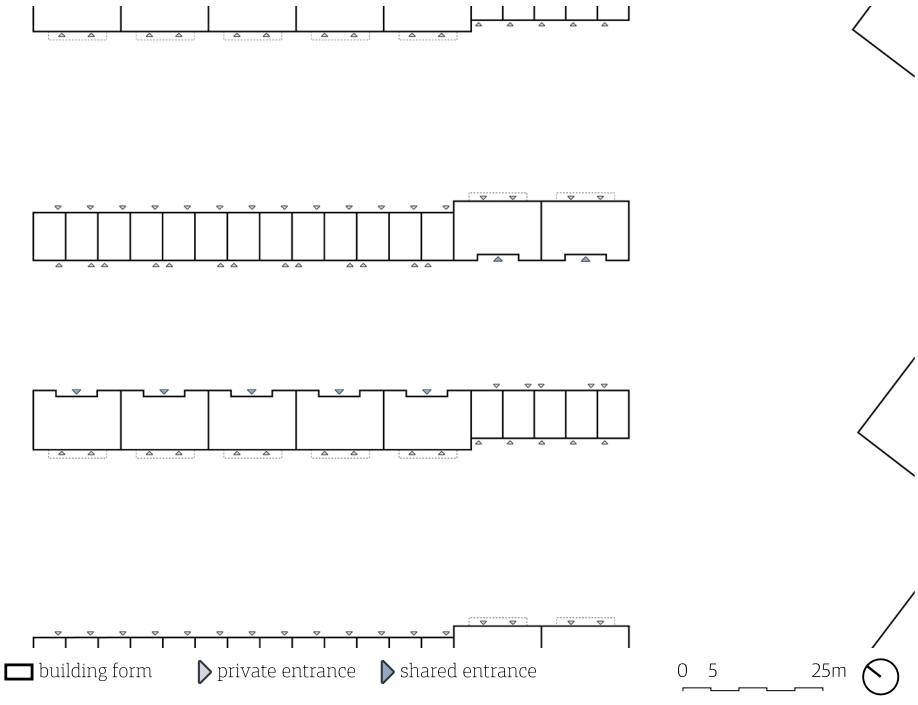
Zijden East has an even lower public pressure than Zijden West, mainly because it does not have any public programme apart from recreational walking. It also has fewer passers-by because of its adjacency to the green axis. Therefore, a similar approach is implemented, with a more open spatial structure and a reorientation of the housing to create more legible rooms.

Because parking spaces are relocated, a great deal of space is opened up. Together with the abundance of outdoor space in this neighbourhood, a choice was made to reallocate half of this space to an ecological programme to reinforce the ecological link between the Uithof and Southwest. This is why the buildings are shaped to create corridors, so that the wide courtyards can be transformed into valuable natural corridors. As a result, the public domain, formerly the street, will have to accommodate both necessary and optional activities.

Zijden East follows a relatively similar approach to Zijden West. Again, new two- to three-storey homes will be arranged continuously to form two clear walls for the urban room (M1&2). Because the original courtyards will be redesigned to create strong ecological connections to the central park and the Uithof, there is no traditional courtyard. The streets will be very calm, allowing this space to also accommodate the programme one would normally associate with a courtyard. Because it is still, in some sense, a street, and because of the ecological ambition of this area, the spatial enclosure is limited to the two clear walls (M3).

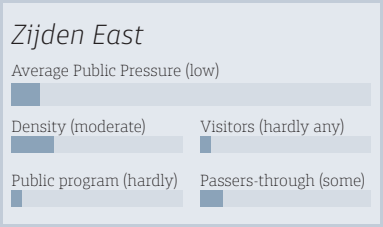
The new homes will naturally have direct access to the street. The apartments will be accessible through the existing porches (C3). On the rear sides, there is a private edge that can be accessed from the homes, but not from the former courtyard.

The street has a highly public character through its enclosure and remains open on both ends. Non-residents are free to walk through these spaces. Because of this public character and the low public pressure, access will not be restricted through design or lockability (C1&2).





Estimation of the public pressure:

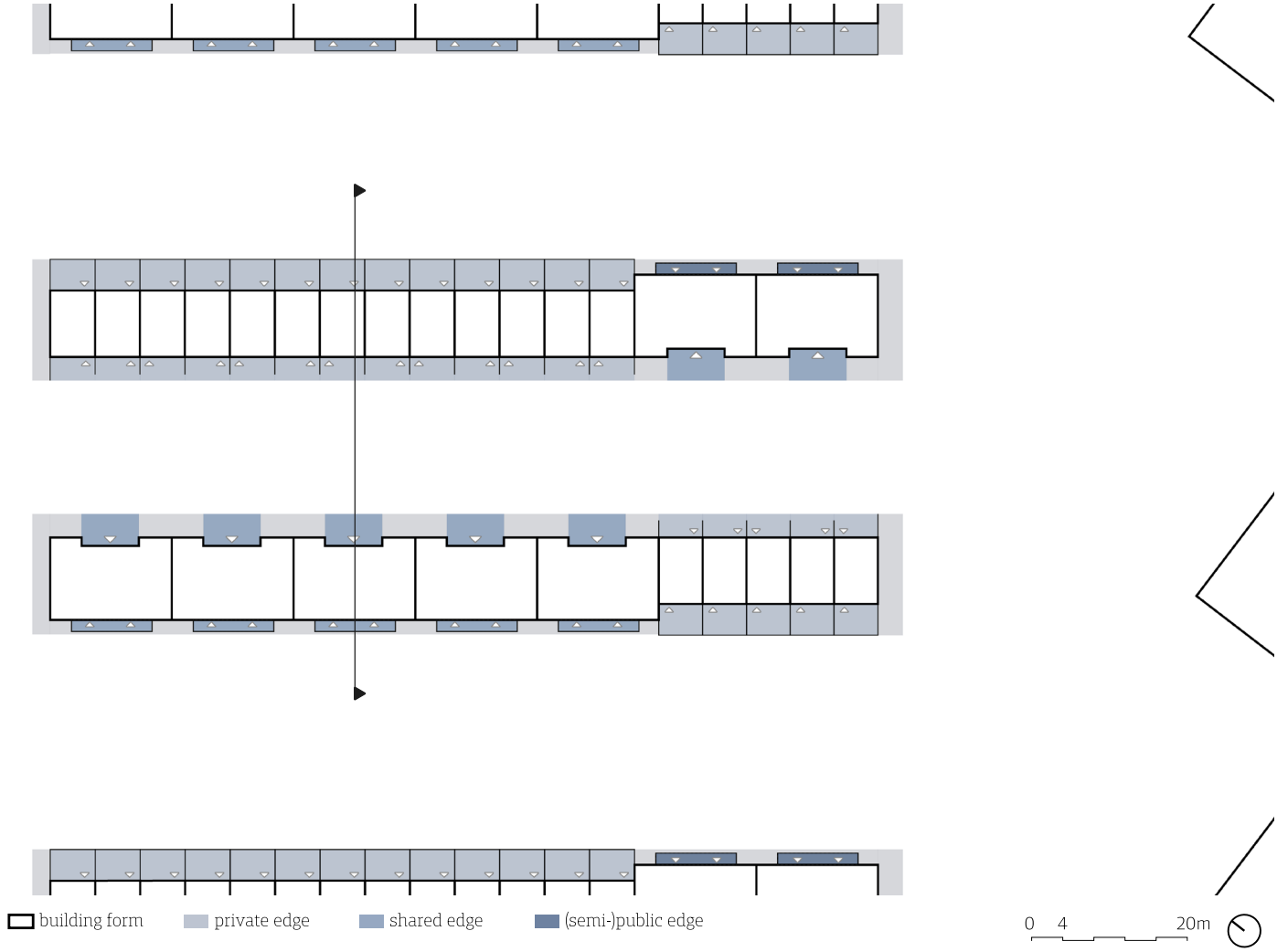


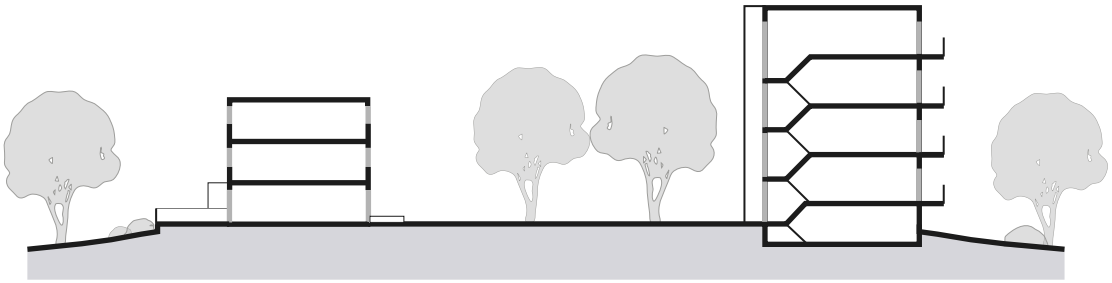


Old versus new typology.



Buildingtypes:
apartments (white), row homes (blue)


building form
private edge
shared edge
(semi-)public edge
0 4 20m



Edges

As mentioned before, the edges at the back of the buildings are fully private and disconnected from the adjacent park. Nevertheless, these should be usable spaces with a visual connection to the park, not only for residents to enjoy the view, but also to provide eyes on the park. For the apartments, which have recently been renovated, the existing balconies on the rear sides of these buildings will be retained. For the row homes, deeper terraces can be created, allowing for outdoor furniture placement (E1). A fence or wall will separate these terraces from one another and from the park (E4). These should again preserve visual connections and only interrupt them when necessary for privacy reasons.

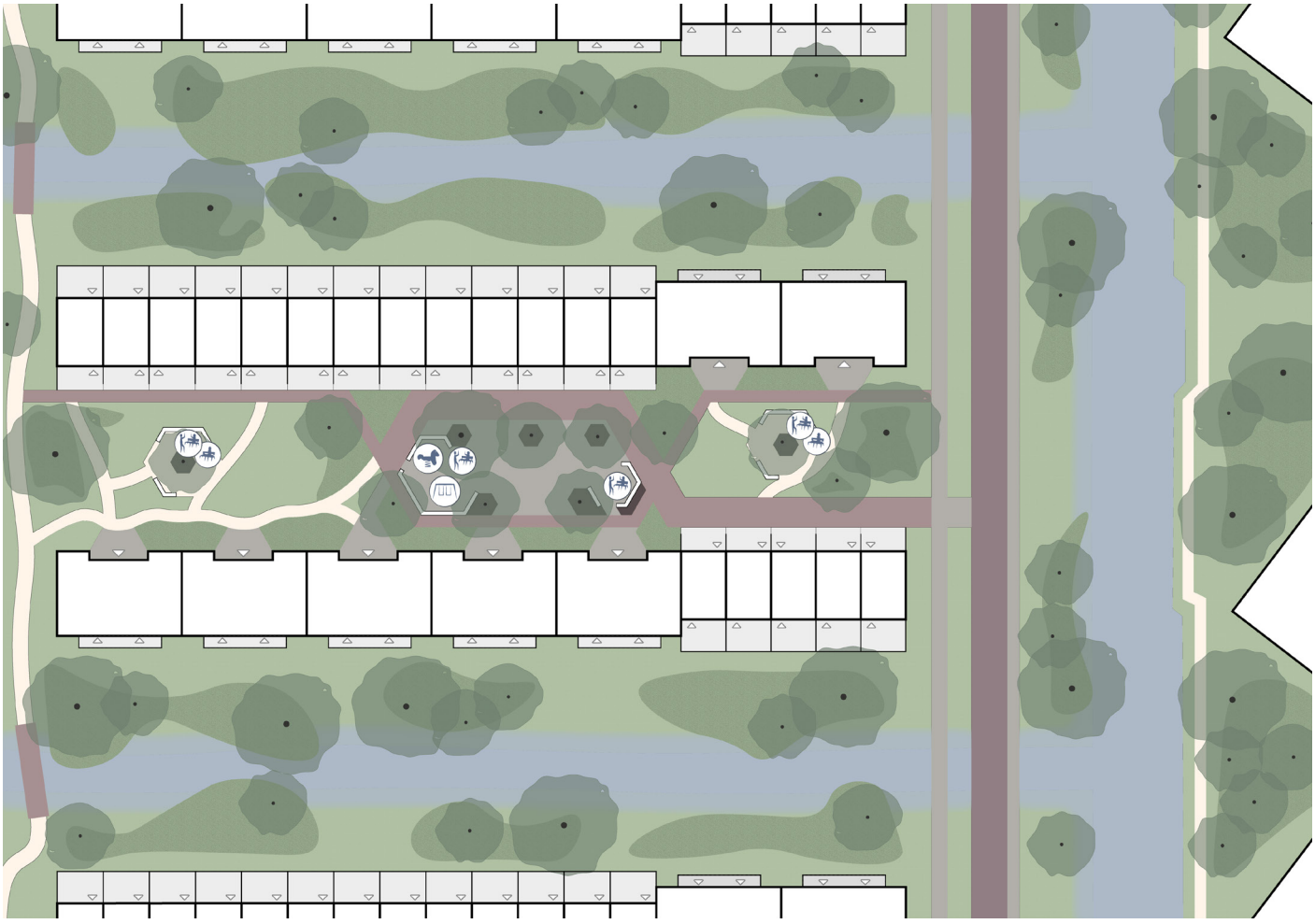
At the front, the approach is quite similar to the living streets in Zijden West, with some slight differences. The edge is slightly deeper to allow for more uses (E1), while the partitions between edges are also retained for privacy reasons (E4).

The porticos follow the same approach as the porticos in Zijden West. A prominent space in front of the building will serve as a social encounter space (E7). Finally, the side edges are considered in the same way as those in Zijden West, with some transparency (E1) and either inaccessible or accessible and fully part of the outdoor space, rather than a separate in-between domain (E1&4).





Surrounding routes:
cycling road (dark blue),
living street & park paths (light blue)


building
entrance
edge zone
cycling street
paved surface
aggregate pavement
grass surface
tall grass/shrubs
small playground
large playground
solitary seating
meeting place w/ seating
vegetable garden
dog park
0 4 20m

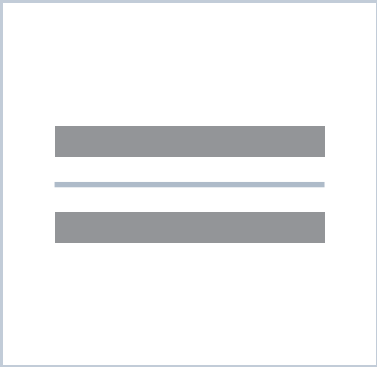
Courtyard & Street Program

As mentioned before, the space in between the buildings will not only have to function as the main route to the homes, but must also allow for regular recreational use. This space must be a street and a courtyard at the same time.

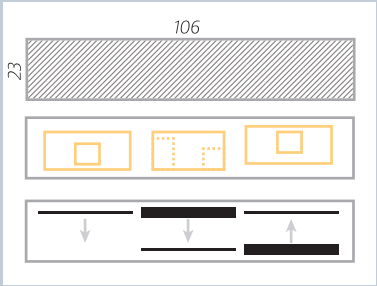
To reach the homes, intertwining wide and narrow paths make their way in from the cycling street. By switching sides twice, they divide the space into three larger subrooms (P1&3). Additionally, they establish a relationship between the portico buildings and the space in front of them (P4). Because these apartments have relatively little outdoor space, their residents rely more on the shared spaces outside than the row home residents do. The varying width of the pathways creates a barrier that is always stronger on the row home side. This creates a slight disconnection between these homes and the space in front of them. At the same time, it intuitively creates a stronger connection between the outdoors and the porticos, which are disadvantaged by their raised ground floors and less direct connections.

The path creates a central flexible space at the heart of the courtyard (P2). Again, there are two rooms on either side, each with a smaller room inside it to house fixed program (P5&6). By creating different amounts of tree canopy coverage, different climatic zones are established (P7&8), catering to different user preferences.

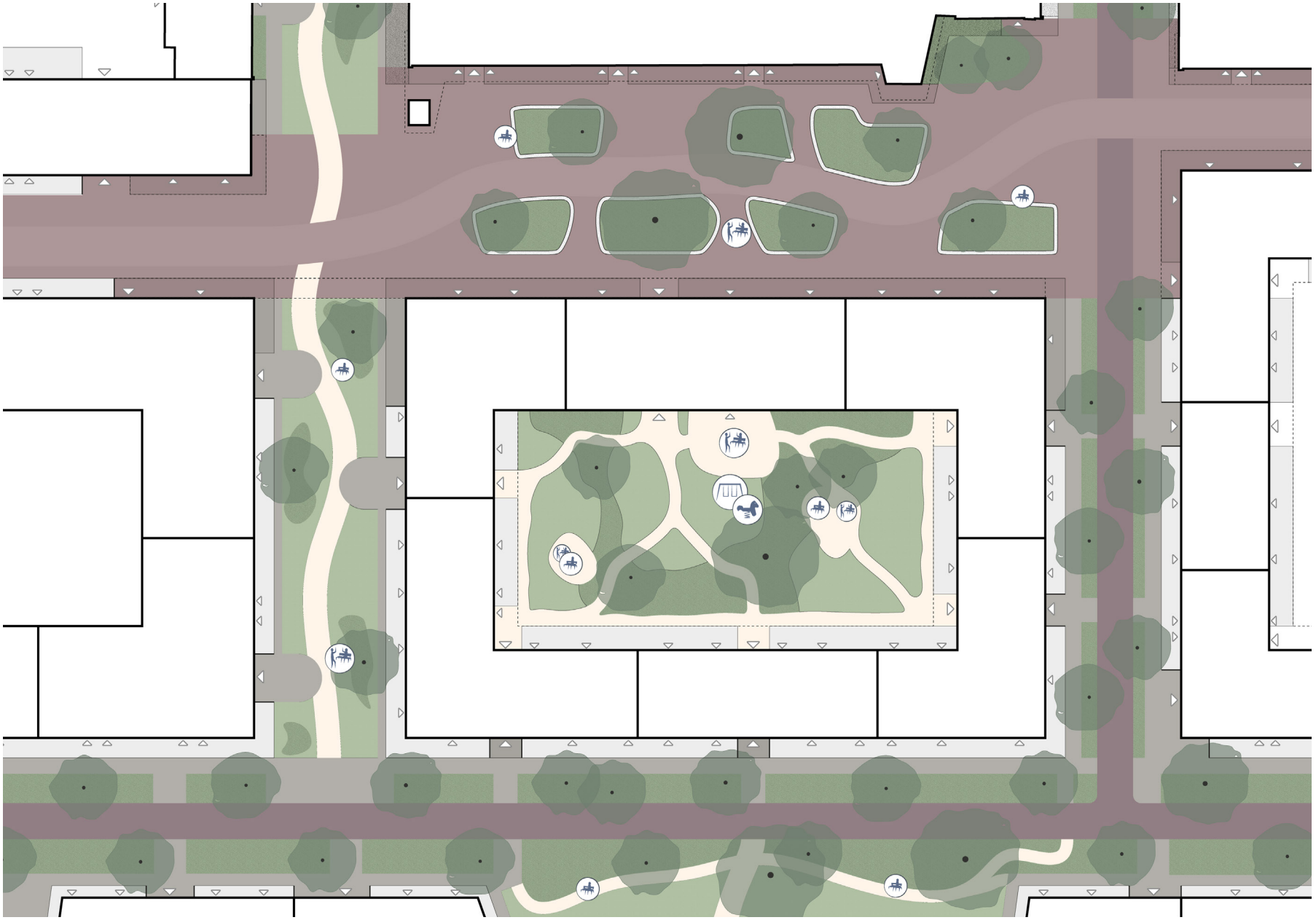




Main urban room (middle)



Room size, subdivision and path logic



building
entrance
edge zone
cycling street

paved surface
aggregate pavement
grass surface
tall grass/shrubs

small playground
large playground
solitary seating
meeting place w/ seating

vegetable garden
dog park

0 5 20m

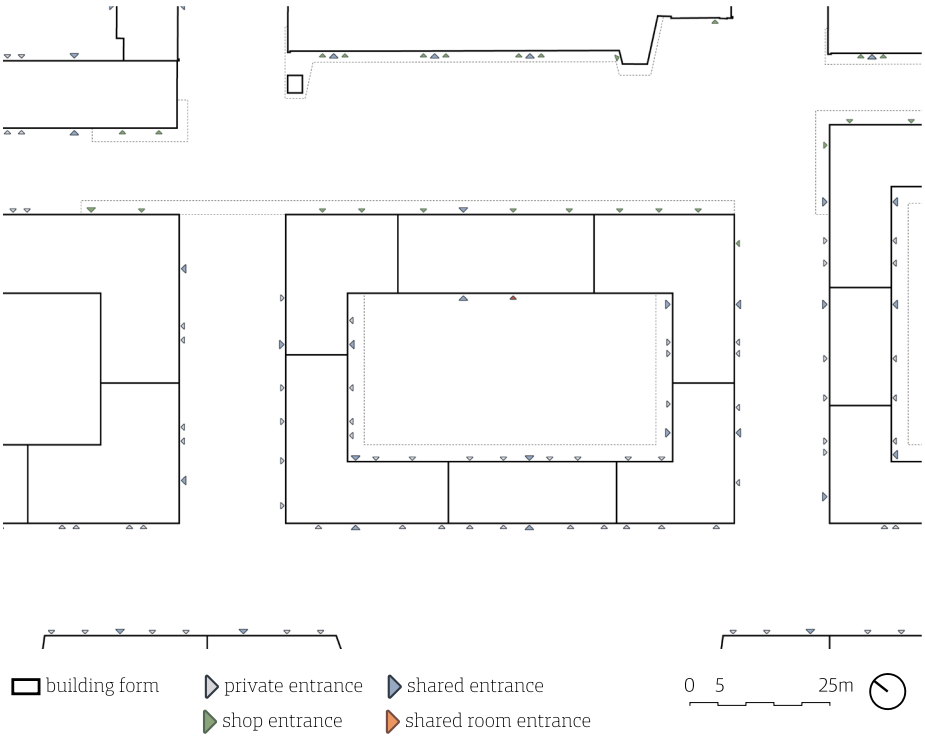
DESIGN OVERVIEW DREVEN CENTRE

Morphology and Connections

Dreven Centre calls for a different approach than the previous subcases. Public pressure in this area is relatively high, due to the higher density and the resulting larger number of residents relying on the outdoor spaces. More importantly, the area has a large public programme in the form of the shopping centre, which draws people from adjacent neighbourhoods into the centre. Furthermore, many tram users will pass through the area to go home or to reach the shops, while cyclists will pass through to travel from Southwest to the Uithof and beyond.

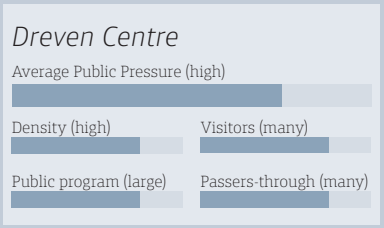
This elevated pressure could make the outdoor spaces too busy. It is therefore necessary to more clearly separate public and non-public spaces. This is mainly done by constructing fully closed building blocks with an interior courtyard (M3). The public streets and parks can host busier activities, while the courtyards offer a calmer and more protected environment. To achieve the required density, building heights reach up to six storeys, slightly above the social height limit of five storeys (M2).

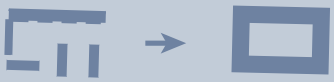
Because the courtyard is fully enclosed, it can only be accessed from the buildings themselves (C1&2). This is achieved through hallways that run fully through the buildings. These hallways, together with the associated stairways, also provide direct access from the courtyard to the upper-storey galleries (C3). This approach restricts access to residents and invited guests.





Estimation of the public pressure:

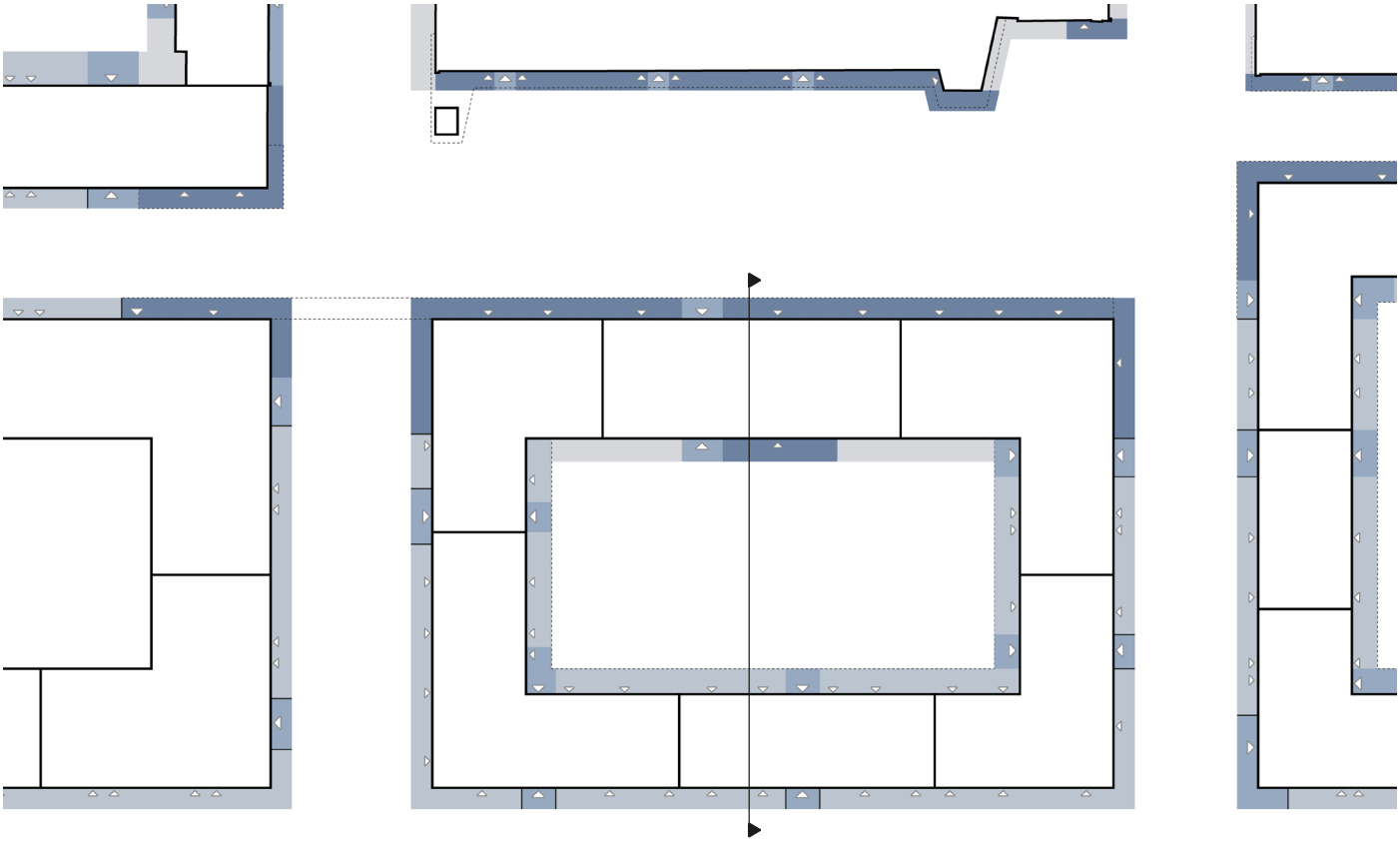




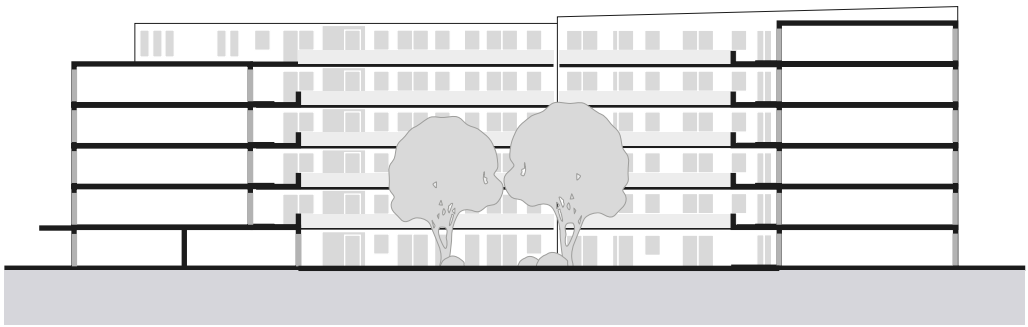
Old versus new typology.



Buildingtypes:
apartments (white), ground floor shops with apartments overhead (dark blue)




building form
private edge
shared edge
(semi-)public edge
0
4
20m



Edges

The more active and public streets of Dreven Centre require a different edge approach than the previous subcases. Surrounding the shopping area, the shops will add significant movement to the edges. These edges are, on the one hand, an extension of the street or square, but can also add life by allowing business owners to appropriate the edge at their store for shop displays, terraces, and so on. If possible, they can also include fixed elements that support optional activities, such as fixed benches along shop façades and shop sides.

More active edges are located at the shared entrances of the buildings in the area. Each building houses 25–40 apartments, generating significant activity. These shared entrances should not only allow for lingering and socialising inside, but also just outside (E6). To mark the entrance edge zone, a short partition can separate it from the adjacent edge zones (E4). This will also prevent people from walking over private edges to reach the entrance.

Because of the busier streets and the many people relying on these streets to reach their destinations, it would be undesirable if adjacent homes made a heavy claim on the streets in front of them. The edges are therefore designed to cling to the buildings rather than extend into the streets. They are generally shallow (E1) and have no partitions between the edges (E4). Some can have a slight elevation (E2), but this should be limited to avoid creating a disconnect between the homes and the streets. To avoid people using these edges as an extension of the sidewalk, they must have a clear border. This can be achieved by using a different material.

On the inside of the blocks, the approach is somewhat similar. The edges are a bit deeper to allow for more uses and to match the depth of the overhead galleries (E1). Again, they cling to the edges of the courtyard to limit intuitive ownership by the ground-floor residents.

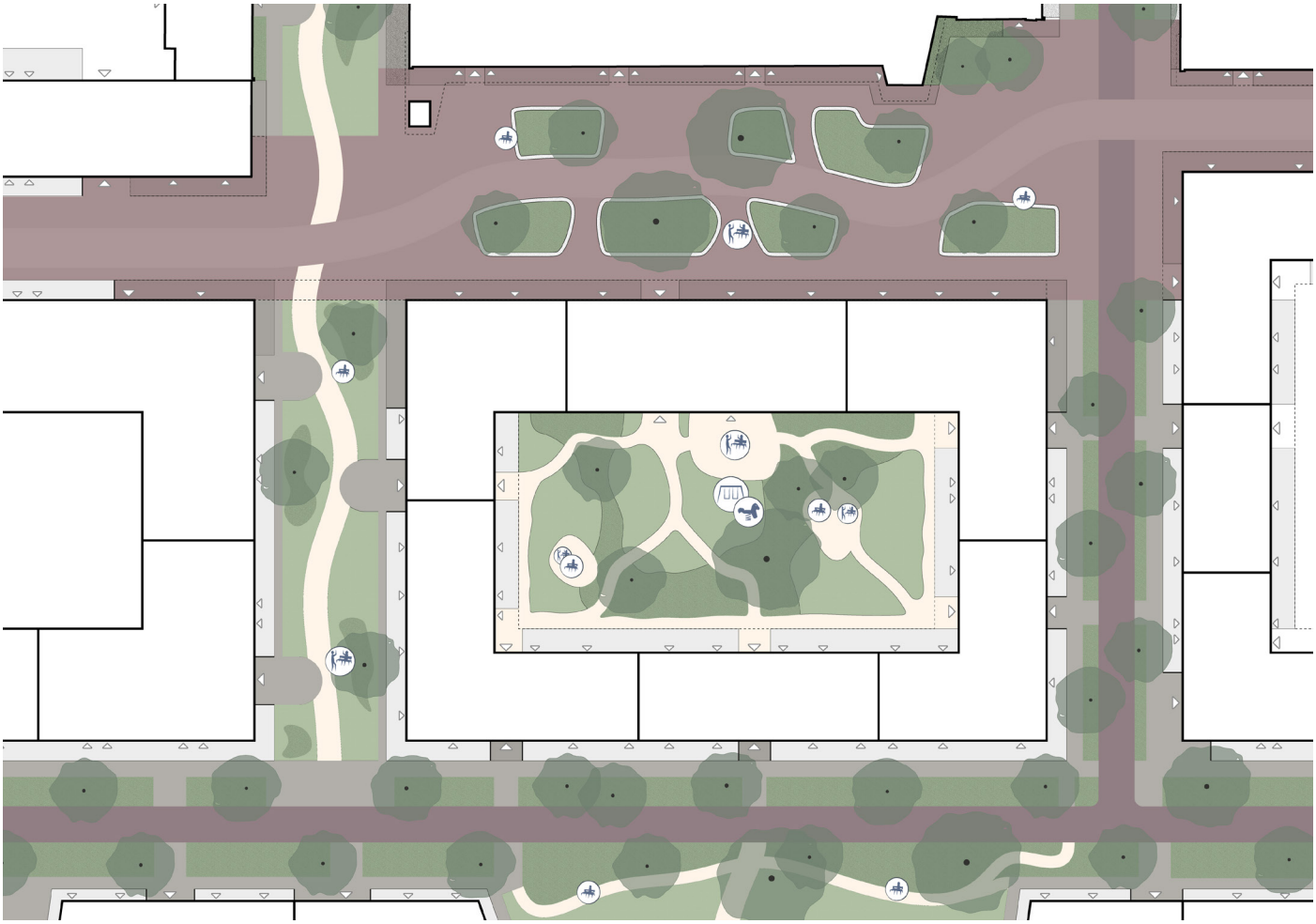
A notable edge is the one on the north side of the courtyards. The back side of the shops initially creates a long blank façade. To introduce life into this façade, there is an entrance to a building, but next to it is a shared indoor room. This room can be used by all residents in the building and has easy access to the courtyard space. Its location divides the long blank façade into two smaller stretches. Although these do not generate much activity, they will probably not create problems, as social surveillance is very good from all sides.

The most notable opportunity in this block is created by the social galleries that encircle the courtyard on the upper floors. They allow people living on them to appropriate the 1.5 m in front of their homes by placing chairs or other furniture and personal decorations. This allows these residents to stay outside on the galleries, creating many opportunities to see neighbours walking by or other block residents using the courtyards or their own galleries.





Surrounding routes:
cycling road (dark blue), shopping square & streets (blue) and living street (light blue)


building
entrance
edge zone
cycling street
paved surface
aggregate pavement
grass surface
tall grass/shrubs
small playground
large playground
solitary seating
meeting place w/ seating
vegetable garden
dog park
0 4 20m

Courtyard & Street Program

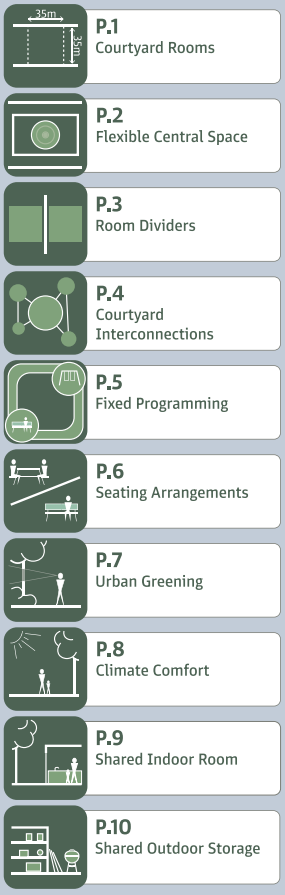
The streets in Dreven Centre are relatively busy, with many pedestrians walking through the shopping area and several cyclists using the cycling streets. Additionally, the streets are relatively narrow and deep. The cycling streets received a quite traditional treatment, with a road in the middle and adjacent planting beds that allow most of the existing trees to be preserved. A pavement along the buildings allows access to the ground-floor homes and edges.

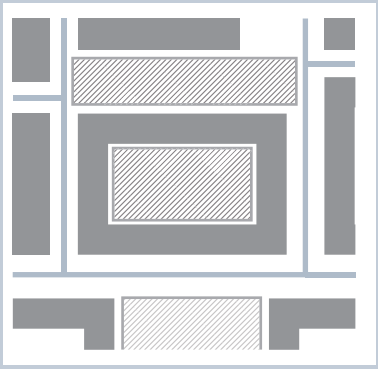
The shopping square is not just a linear space. With the shift in the building line at both ends, the square now has two end walls. Because of this, it is approached as an urban room, using some of the considerations for the courtyards to improve this space as well. Firstly, it is subdivided into multiple smaller rooms with planting beds, with two larger rooms on either end and several smaller rooms in the middle (P1&3). This allows for more intimate meeting spaces for shoppers to linger and use. The raised edges of the planters also offer plentiful seating opportunities (P6). Throughout the square, a subtle path is created by alternating paving and planters to guide people through the area (P4).

The streets to the west of our main building block are less busy. Here, we do not need dedicated cycling or car infrastructure, so an approach similar to the living streets in Zijden West was chosen. The exception to this is a pathway meandering through the green space. Considering the more intensive use, this path allows more people to walk through the street without creating considerable nuisance for the adjacent homes. At the same time, this path connects to the shared entrances. The ground-floor homes are still accessible via a relatively narrow path running along the edges.

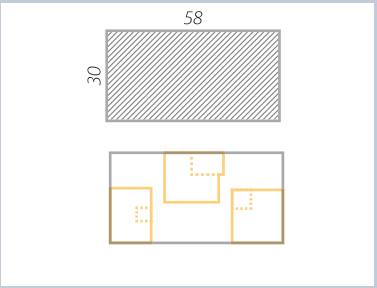
Because the streets are generally busy and there is relatively little space for greenery, the courtyard must be both multifunctional and green. Most of the rooms are therefore grassy, with greenery serving as the main divider between the different rooms (P1&3). Paths connect the shared entrances and stairwells to the shared outdoor room on the north side (P4&9). Here, residents can also store outdoor furniture, toys, and similar items for easy access and use in the courtyard (P10).

The many residents require denser programming. Adjacent to the shared room, the central space also features a playground (P1&5), and throughout the courtyard there are plenty of seats (P5&6)..

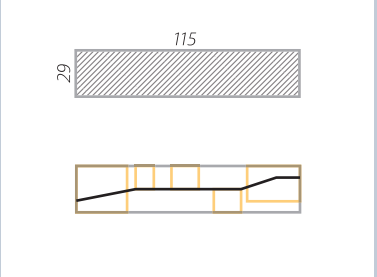




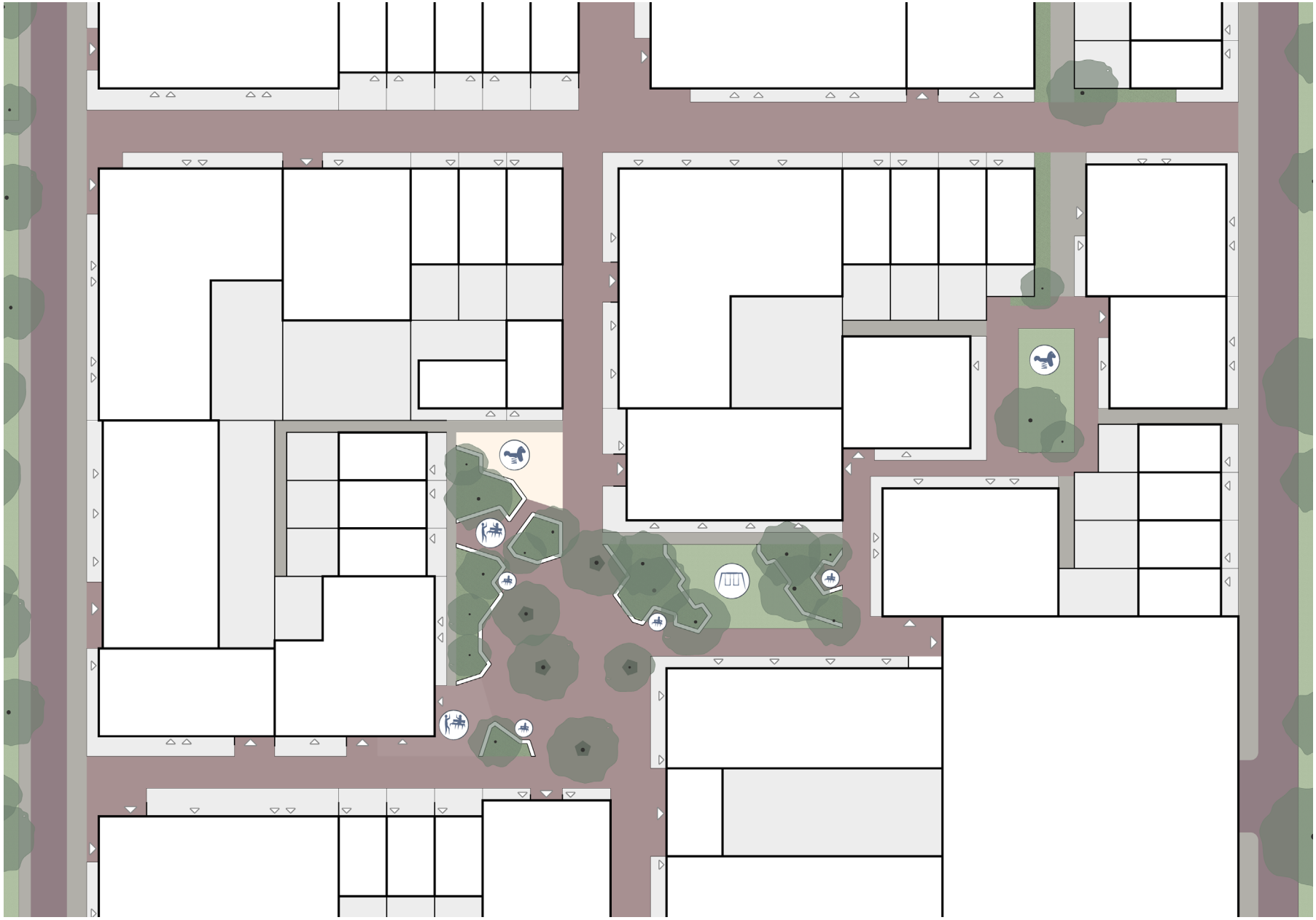
Main urban rooms: Shopping square (top) & courtyard (middle)



Courtyard size, subdivision and path logic



Square size, subdivision and path logic



building
entrance
edge zone
cycling street

paved surface
aggregate pavement
grass surface
tall grass/shrubs

small playground
large playground
solitary seating
meeting place w/ seating

vegetable garden
dog park

0 5 20m

DESIGN OVERVIEW DREVEN EAST

Morphology and Connections

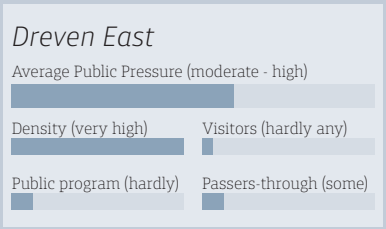
Dreven East has slightly lower public pressure than the Centre. While the housing density is higher, the public programme in the area is much smaller. The users of the outdoor space will therefore mainly consist of residents. Because of the high density. A large part of the neighbourhood area will be built up, leaving relatively little outdoor space. These spaces should therefore be fully focused on local residents. As a result, the area will have an overall inward focus.

The neighbourhood is made up of four large macro blocks, each consisting of smaller perimeter blocks. This approach is derived from the Cityplot approach. The outdoor spaces, while officially public, are integrated in such a way that they intuitively read as more local or collective spaces than fully public ones. The macro blocks have a relatively smooth outer building line, forming a clear exterior to the blocks (M1&C1). The interiors of the blocks are more freely formed, with a looser building line that still creates a largely enclosed, well-defined courtyard (M1&3). Buildings are accessed mainly via the public domain and have private backyards inside the smaller blocks. Because the courtyard itself is public, the adjacent buildings are naturally connected to it. The building height is constrained by Gehl's social dimensions (M2). But to reach the required density we do have to occasionally add a floor.





Estimation of the public pressure:





Old versus new typology.



Buildingtypes:
apartments (white), ground floor shops with apartments overhead (dark blue)


building form
private edge
shared edge
(semi-)public edge
0 4 20m



Edges

The more freely formed blocks create many complex edge relationships and corners.

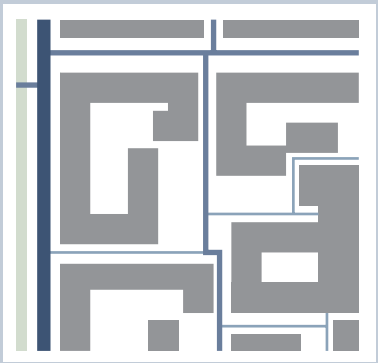
Specific to this area are the private backyards. These will be large and surrounded by either a fence or a wall for privacy purposes. To make sure that the back alleys do not become dead, unsupervised spaces, the interface between the alley and the backyards should not break the visual connection between these spaces, either by using a low or transparent partition.

The rest of the edges are relatively similar to the edges we have already seen in Dreven. Because of the higher density of users and activity, these edges will again cling to the edges of the urban rooms and streets (E1,2&4). This helps ensure that people feel free to walk comfortably through these spaces. Shared entrances will also have a similar approach to the Centre (E7). Here, just as in Zijden West, the street will be part of the edge experience around these shared entrances.

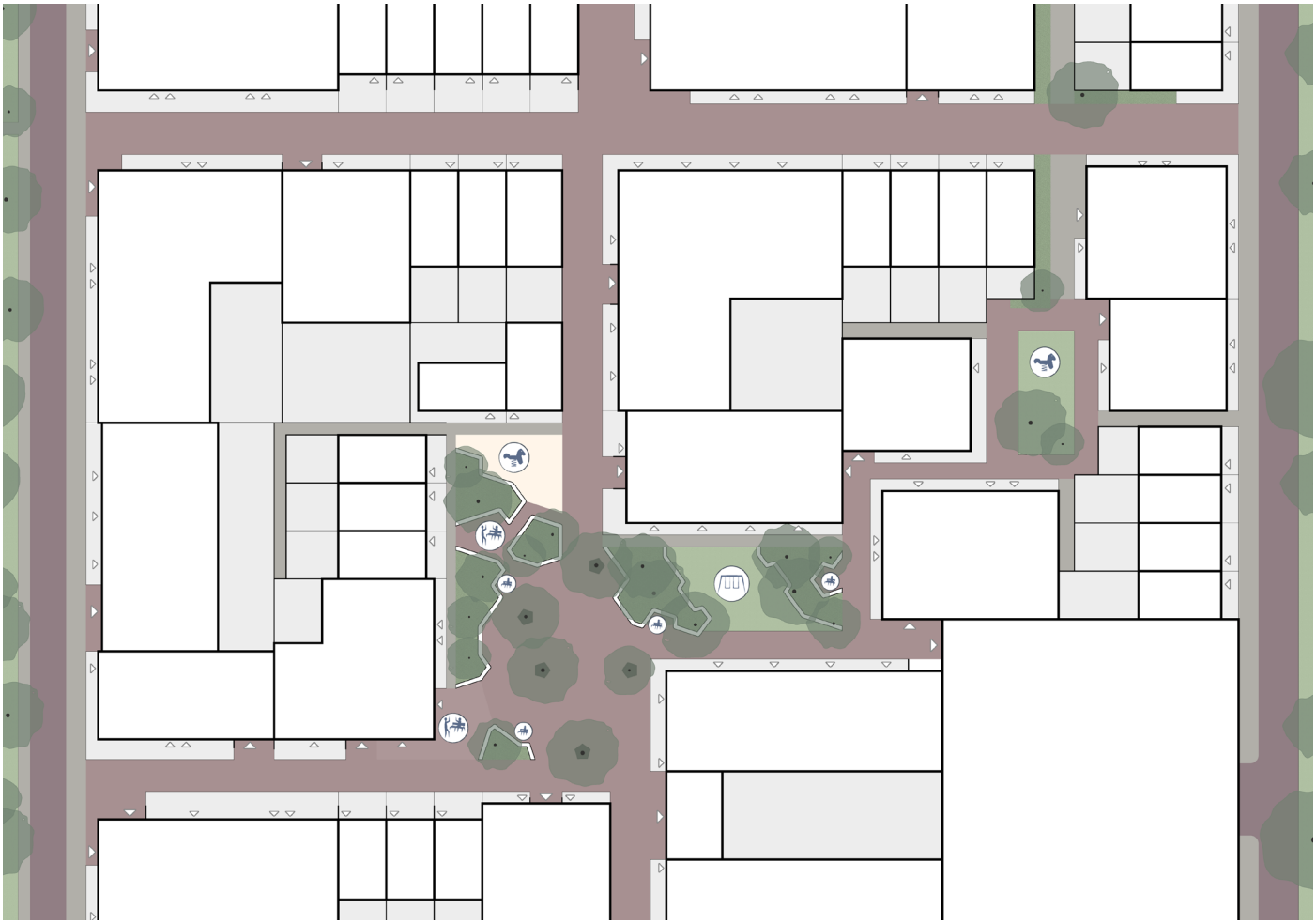
Because of the different orientations of the buildings within the blocks, there are few instances with a longer side façade. If possible, these are created as front façades by providing access to a home. In some cases, this is not possible because the side is either directly on a street with a minimum width through the middle of the area, or the adjacent buildings do not allow for more entrances, such as in the alleyway on the right side (E3). If possible, these edges should at least feature some windows. A narrow planting bed can also serve as a way to create some distance between passers-by and the interior (E1), while not requiring occasional use to keep it maintained.

Two fairly busy edges are located at the entrance to the parking garage on the right and the neighbourhood room, or buurtkamer. These interfaces can be used regularly by residents and guests. If possible, these should also offer some programming, such as seating, to allow for lingering and social activity.





Surrounding routes:
cycling road (dark blue),
pedestrian + infrequent car access street (blue)
and pedestrian street (light blue)


building
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aggregate pavement
grass surface
tall grass/shrubs
small playground
large playground
solitary seating
meeting place w/ seating
vegetable garden
dog park
0 4 20m

Courtyard & Street Program

The streets within Dreven East are generally quite narrow, allowing for little to no programming. The central courtyard stands in clear contrast to this. This space has a variety of programming and is relatively green.

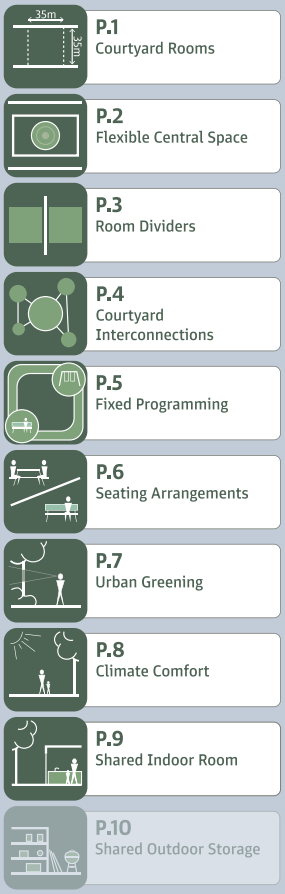
Large planters divide the space into three larger rooms and three smaller rooms (P1,3&7). While the larger room is mostly kept flexible for neighbourhood events, the other rooms do have a programme. The two larger rooms are programmed with playgrounds for different age groups, with plenty of opportunity for parents to sit around the raised planters and keep an eye on their children while chatting with others (P3,5&6).

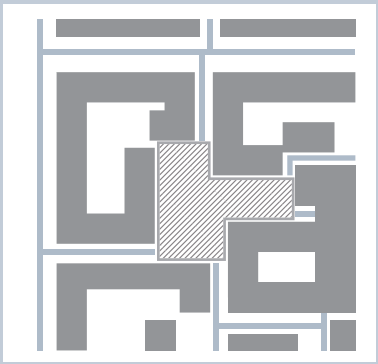
The southernmost smaller room serves as an outdoor extension of the buurtkamer (P9). The other small rooms are mainly formed as spaces to sit around and meet other people (P6). If people prefer to sit more solitarily, the edges around the main flexible space offer ample opportunity (P6).

Trees in the large planters and in separate tree planters create a pleasant canopy that provides shade and different climate zones around the courtyard (P8).

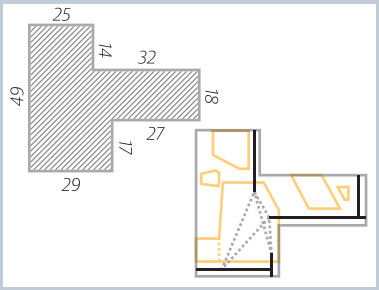


An impression of the courtyard (Author's linework, colored in using generative AI)





Main urban rooms: Shopping square (top) & courtyard (middle)



Courtyard size, subdivision and path logic

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

What did we learn?

This case study explored they way in which we could use our considerations. Here we will sum up the main findings we can take from this study.

Firstly, the neighbourhood-scale interventions suggest that the main challenge in the Zijden and Dreven is not a lack of space, but a lack of structure and differentiation within it. Many spaces do not have a clear relationship to the buildings around them or to the activities they are supposed to support. The interventions do not simply add new public spaces. Instead, they reimagine the roles of existing spaces. Streets become places for walking, cycling, greenery and social activity. At the same time, existing centres are strengthened. This neighbourhood-scale structure also offers the context in which the design considerations can be applied at the level of the urban block.

After that, the four subcases show that clearer outdoor spaces do not have to be achieved through one single approach. Their shape and degree of enclosure can respond to the conditions of each location, like public pressure, residential density, ecological ambitions and the users who are expected to use these spaces. In Zijden West, a semi-enclosed block creates a recognisable courtyard with direct connections to the surrounding homes, while car-free living streets provide additional space for greenery and informal use. Zijden East takes a more open approach, with the former courtyard becoming part of an ecological corridor. This requires the space between buildings to function simultaneously as a residential street and shared garden. In Dreven Centre, higher density and greater public pressure result in enclosed residents' courtyards, social galleries and a better-defined shopping square that combines everyday movement with places for staying. Dreven East uses a macro-block structure in which smaller residential blocks surround publicly accessible courtyards, allowing neighbourhood facilities, play areas and flexible spaces to come together.

The neighbourhood strategy establishes the larger relationships between streets, green structures, activity and residential areas, while the block designs explore how spatial considerations can be translated into more clearly defined and socially supportive spaces between buildings.

CONCLUSION

So, how can redevelopment projects in The Hague Southwest improve spatial and social quality to better support social interactions?

The research shows that redevelopment should not only focus on creating more and better-quality housing. It must also consider the outdoor spaces between buildings as an important social space. This requires an approach in that designs buildings, streets, courtyards, and parks in relation to one another. By creating inviting spaces where necessary and optional activities overlap, redevelopment can increase opportunities for residents to meet, stay, and interact.

Historically, the public and communal spaces of Southwest were social spaces. Parks, playgrounds and courtyards supported the everyday lives of relatively homogeneous and inward-focused communities. However, the functioning of these spaces depended not only on their spatial design, but also on the social structures surrounding them. Because of depillarisation, demographic change and the loss of local amenities, these social structures weakened. The outdoor spaces remained largely unchanged and gradually became underused spaces with unclear boundaries, ownership, and stewardship. This shows that outdoor spaces must adapt to the changing communities around them.

The theories of Gehl, Trancik, and Dovey and Wood provided ways of understanding how design can support this adaptation. Gehl shows how attractive outdoor conditions can encourage optional activities, increasing the possibility of social interaction. Trancik emphasises the importance of coherent urban form, clear connections, and meaningful places. Dovey and Wood draw attention to the interfaces between buildings and outdoor space. Together, these theories resulted in design considerations about morphology, connections, edges, programming, and facades. These considerations are not a rigid checklist. They are a tool to make contextual design decisions that optimise social interactions in urban block design.

The Zijden and Dreven offered a way to redevelop both neighbourhoods using new theoretical insights. The neighbourhoods both contain large amounts of outdoor space but lack clear spatial or social structure. Porous building structures, conflicting orientations, car-dominated streets and unclear transitions between public, communal, and private domains have created many ambiguous spaces. At the same time, public life is concentrated around a small number of successful places, including the Dreef and community centre Alle Kanten. These places show that social potential is strongest where attractive spaces, amenities and routes come together. Combined with additional interventions into ecology and the street and parking structure, a base spatial framework was created for the application of the considerations in four block designs.

The four block designs demonstrate how the same design considerations can produce different outcomes depending on public pressure, density, ecological goals and the intended users of a space. Across these subcases, clear urban rooms, direct connections, usable edges, varied programming, and active facades create more socially supportive spaces. These outdoor spaces do not require one fixed typology. Instead, the considerations can create different outcomes depending on their context.

The project therefore concludes that socially supportive redevelopment requires design across different scales. Neighbourhood structures can create movement and concentrate activity. Buildings and their edges can connect everyday indoor life to shared outdoor space. Spatial design cannot guarantee interaction or create social cohesion by itself. It can, however, provide the physical conditions for repeated encounters, appropriation, longer stays and informal contact. By reintroducing social layers between the private home and the public city, redevelopment can help transform Southwest's lost spaces into shared social spaces.

& DISCUSSION

While the results of this project are positive, we must critically reflect on the project's limitations, design trade-offs and the further research required to test and implement its proposals.

On the project's approach

The approach used in this project is primarily probabilistic. Spatial design can create opportunities for social interaction by bringing people together. It cannot, however, create social cohesion by itself. Whether encounters develop into meaningful relationships also depends on the residents, their willingness to interact and the existing networks.

Furthermore, this project mainly focused on networks connected to physical places and not on social networks that exist independently from the neighbourhood's spatial structure. Their influence on the use and meaning of the outdoor spaces should not be underestimated.

Additionally, the clearer definition of public, communal, and private spaces that was proposed, may improve ownership, appropriation, and stewardship in Southwest. But to ensure access, maintenance and long-term responsibility, formal agreements between residents, housing corporations and the municipality could still be necessary. Without such arrangements, these spaces may gradually deteriorate or lose their intended social function again.

On methodological limitations

The project also has methodological limitations. It relied on literature, historical research, policy review, spatial analysis, and research-by-design. Interviews, extensive behavioural observations and participatory design sessions were not used within the case-study areas. Consequently, the proposals consist of theory-based assumptions about how residents use outdoor space. The designs should be regarded as spatial hypotheses: they demonstrate how social interaction could be better supported, but their actual effects cannot be proven without implementation and evaluation.

Because the project has a relatively general approach towards forming the design considerations, its approach can also be applied beyond The Hague Southwest. These considerations may support redevelopment in other post-war neighbourhoods, although their spatial application should always respond to the specific social and physical context.

On design trade-offs

During the design process, several trade-offs had to be made. On of the main design decision was to demolish most buildings that should technically and spatially be replaced. Although demolition enables densification and improvements to spatial quality, it leads to temporarily relocation of residents. This could disrupt existing social networks, which would work against the social ambitions of the project. Careful phasing, close communication, and a guaranteed right to return for current residents are therefore essential.

Within the case study, the designs repeatedly had to balance public accessibility versus residential privacy as well as enclosure versus openness and connectivity. The four subcases show that these tensions cannot be resolved through one fixed spatial model. Their balance depends on public pressure, density, users, and context. In Dreven specifically, the required housing density resulted in taller buildings and larger groups of residents sharing the same spaces. This weakened the intended human scale and may reduce familiarity and repeated encounters.

To conclude, further research could include interviews and co-design sessions to incorporate residents' experiences and preferences. Additionally, behavioural observations across seasons, days, and times could provide a better understanding of outdoor activity, specific to Southwest. Finally, careful phasing and relocation strategies are needed to protect existing social structures during the proposed redevelopments.

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APPENDIX I
Methodology

Within this research project, I used several methods to bridge the gap between a social challenges and the spatial domain.

Research by Design

The project aims to design interventions that improve the spatial and social quality of selected neighbourhoods in The Hague Southwest. Knowledge is developed through a research-by-design approach, where design questions guide further inquiry and experimentation. Designing functions as both the main method and the core outcome, generating new questions and testing innovative ideas and potential solutions.

Policy Review

Because The Hague Southwest has long been a focus of redevelopment, policy papers and related documents provide extensive information on municipal and corporate ambitions and project progress. These materials identify key issues in the region and offer essential context for the design project.

Fieldwork & Street Interviews

Fieldwork is used to move beyond abstract maps and images by directly experiencing the design sites and their current spatial and social qualities. Simple street interviews help clarify residents' needs and perspectives on the spaces they see, use or lack.

Spatial Analysis

Spatial analysis is used to understand the sites and their spatial relationships, drawing on data from the municipality, province and other (semi-)public institutions. At the start of the project, the analysis is strongly theory-based, using figure-ground, linkage, place and interface analysis to map outdoor spaces in the Southwest area.

Literary Review

Existing research on the links between spatial and social qualities forms the foundation of the design research. This literature helps define public and collective life and their preconditions, as well as spatial qualities of good urban spaces, drawing on authors such as Trancik, Gehl and Dovey & Wood.

Professional Interviews

Interviews are also planned with professionals who have long-term involvement in the area, such as designers, neighbourhood managers, organisations and municipal staff. Through the Thesis Workshop Southwest, the project seeks to contact these actors to learn from their experience and projects in the neighbourhoods.

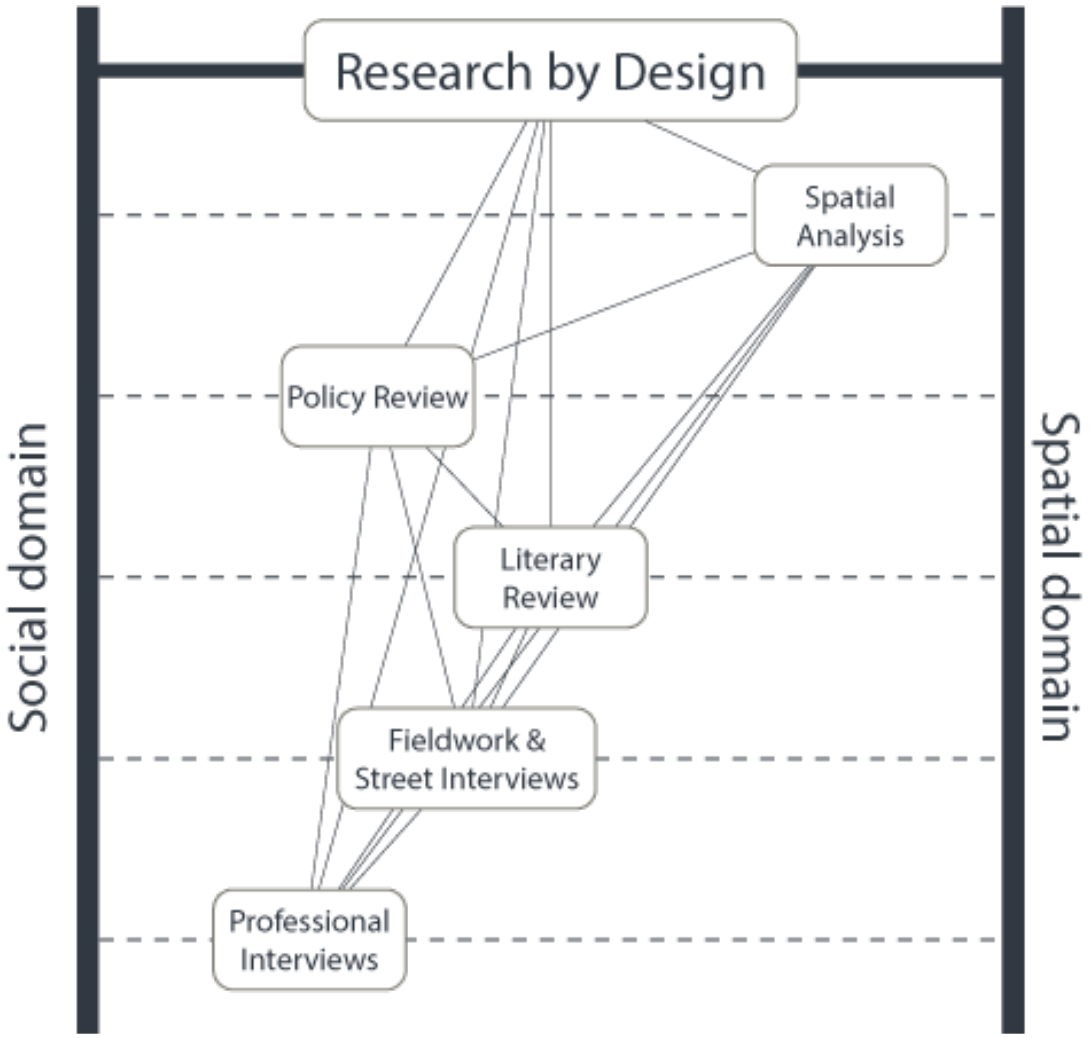


figure I.1: the methodology for this project, linking the social & spatial domain.

APPENDIX II
Case Selection

For this study, cases are selected based on their size and spatial continuity within the Southwest area. To determine spatial continuity the recently redeveloped areas (after 1990) and corporation owned housing have been mapped.

Figure II.1 shows buildings that have already been redeveloped, are currently being redeveloped, or are planned for redevelopment. These projects can be focused on Demolitions & reconstructions, where most buildings are removed and replaced with new housing; Transformations, which keep existing buildings but change their form (e.g., extra floors, combining or splitting apartments); Additions, meaning new buildings in formerly open (public or collective) spaces, especially along the green axes of the Melis Stokelaan and Dedemsvaartweg; and Renovations, where existing buildings are preserved through repairs and upgrades to housing quality and energy performance.

This project focuses on neighbourhoods that have not yet been redeveloped or are only prospectively planned for redevelopment. This ensures that the project centres on areas where the original post war planning structure and collective spatial logic are still largely intact and where housing is of low quality and due for redevelopment.

Due to the large scale post war construction in Southwest, most buildings are owned by housing corporations, as shown in figure II.2. These corporations have already started investing in their portfolios, and most of the projects shown in the previous figure are theirs. It is therefore likely that they will also plan investments in the areas they have not yet transformed.

This project focuses on neighbourhoods that are largely owned by housing corporations, as they offer more coherent ownership structures and are therefore better suited for larger scale redevelopment and with a larger potential impact on the public space.

On top of the existing maps showing recently redeveloped areas and corporation owned housing (figure II.2), I identify the largest non redeveloped patches that remain intact within the original urban fabric. These patches are prioritised as case study areas because they are:

- large enough to represent coherent neighbourhood scale units;
- still largely shaped by the original subdivision logic of the post war plan; and
- not yet radically transformed by recent redevelopment.

Through this approach, the selection focuses on neighbourhoods that are spatially substantial, relatively undisturbed by recent interventions, and therefore suitable for comparing the persistence, transformation, or breakdown of collective life in relation to the original planning model.



figure II.1: housing redevelopments since the 1990's

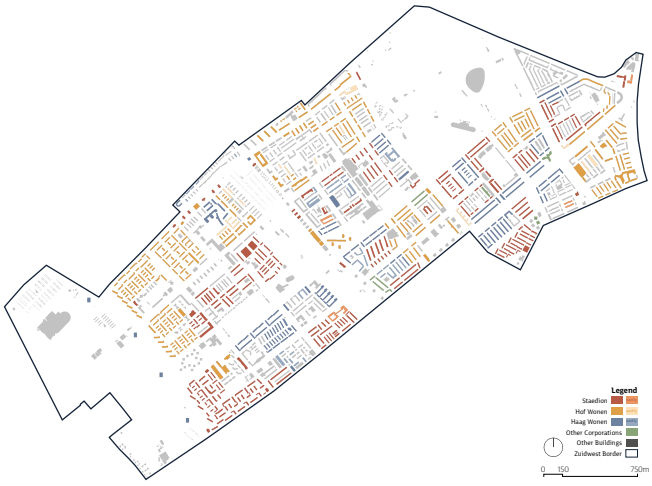


figure II.2: corporation owned housing (The Hague, 2025)



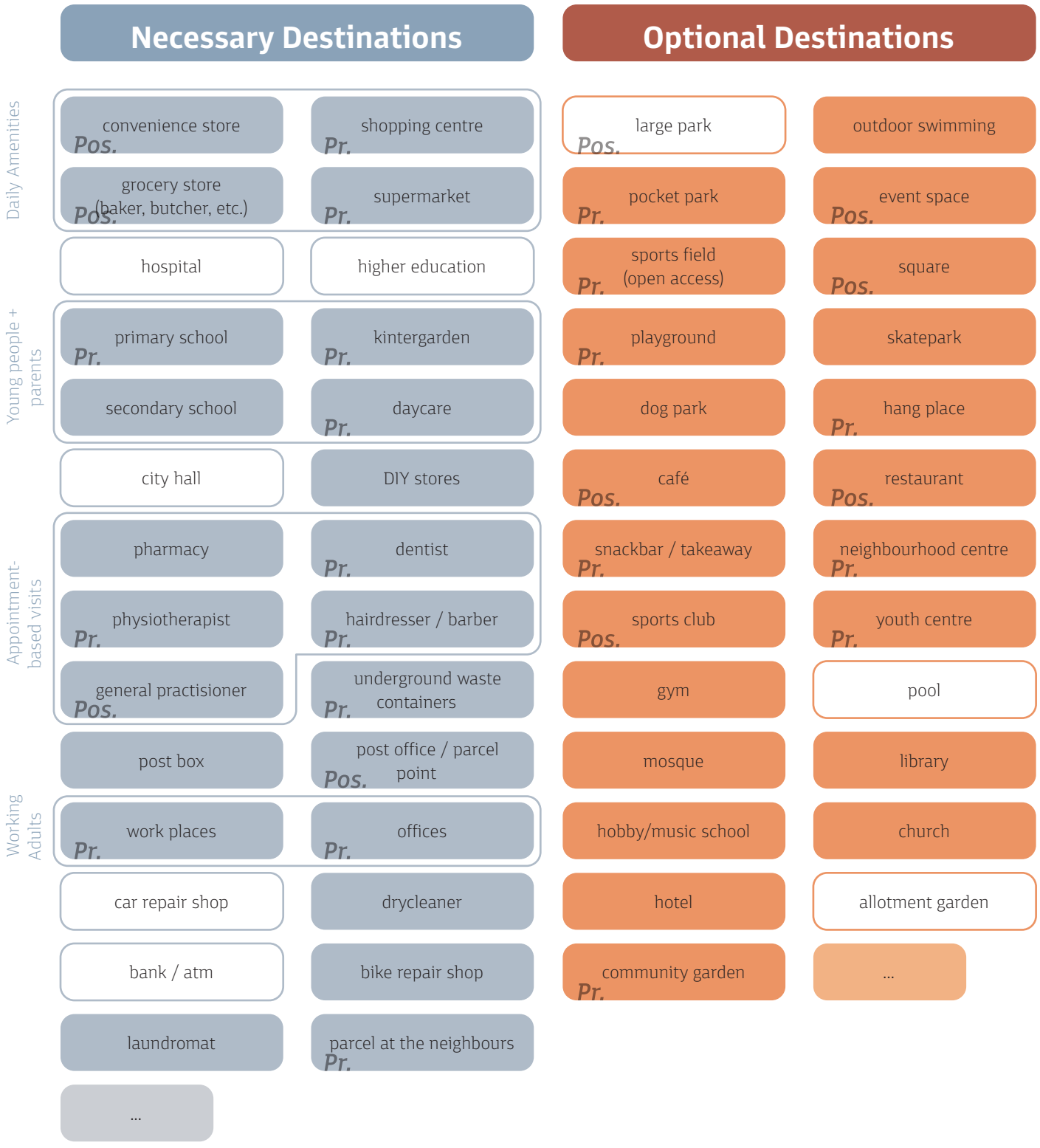
figure II.3: selected cases through overlapping redeveloped areas and ownership

APPENDIX III
Neighbourhood public life analysis & design

Public Destinations

This analysis breaks down public space into different types of destinations, distinguishing between necessary places (such as shops, schools, and transport) and optional ones (such as parks and terraces), based on Gehl's framework. Mapping these as separate elements helps reveal where activity is concentrated and where gaps exist. While necessary destinations ensure a steady flow of people, lively public spaces depend on a good mix with optional destinations and attractive surroundings. As such, this method serves as a diagnostic tool to identify where connections and distributions can be improved to support more continuous and diverse public life.

All destinations with ***Pr.*** next to them, are ones that are currently present in either the Zijden or the Dreven. The ones with ***Pos.*** are not there as of yet, but can be added. Many of these, especially the necessarry ones would be welcome additions to the Dreven shopping centre, as the demand for these will increase due to the increased number of residents.


Necessary Destinations
Optional Destinations
Daily Amenities
Young people + parents
Appointment-based visits
Working Adults
convenience store
Pos.
shopping centre
Pr.
grocery store (baker, butcher, etc.)
Pos.
supermarket
Pr.
hospital
higher education
primary school
Pr.
kintergarden
Pr.
secondary school
daycare
Pr.
city hall
DIY stores
pharmacy
dentist
Pr.
physiotherapist
Pr.
hairdresser / barber
Pr.
general practisioner
Pos.
underground waste containers
Pr.
post box
post office / parcel point
Pos.
work places
Pr.
offices
Pr.
car repair shop
drycleaner
bank / atm
bike repair shop
laundromat
parcel at the neighbours
Pr.
...
large park
Pos.
outdoor swimming
pocket park
Pr.
event space
Pos.
sports field (open access)
Pr.
square
Pos.
playground
Pr.
skatepark
dog park
hang place
Pr.
café
Pos.
restaurant
Pos.
snackbar / takeaway
Pr.
neighbourhood centre
Pr.
sports club
Pos.
youth centre
Pr.
gym
pool
mosque
library
hobby/music school
church
hotel
allotment garden
community garden
Pr.
...



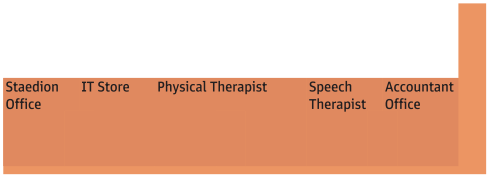
Necessary Activity
Optional Activity
Playground

Both necessary and optional activities are present in the area, yet most optional ones remain scarce, isolated, and predominantly limited to playgrounds for young children. These attract activity mainly during specific times and for narrow age groups, leaving gaps in broader neighbourhood life. Overall these do not majorly contribute to public life.

There are two areas in which nec. and opt. activities mix: in the Dreven shopping centre and in the Zijden centre. Their mix of activities attracts many people, and if outdoor conditions are not good, their necessary destinations will still attract people. These would be good places to introduce more varied destinations, including mixed approaches that could support continuous public life.







Dreven Shopping Centre

The shops, amenities and offices in along the Dreef attract varying degrees of activity. Especially the first block (left in the diagram) has many active places that also attract people from outside the neighbourhood. The second building is more quiet and has more closed facades, partly because it features more offices.









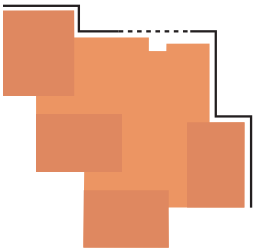






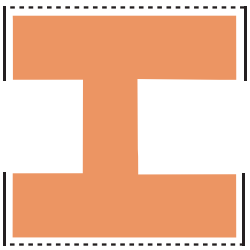


Source lower half: maps.google.com



Former School (Currently housing a community centre)

Building consists of four large rooms on the south facades and other supporting rooms on the north side. South facades have many windows. Building is owned by the municipality seeking to redevelop the aging building. The community centre (AlleKanten) is very active and organized many events. During afternoons and evenings this building is very active.



Former School (Currently housing physical therapist and day/after school care)

Building has many facades with glass. Main orientation is on the squares created between the building wings. Building is owned by Arcade, a corporation seeking to redevelop the aging building.



Church (Jehova's Witnesses)

Building with fairly closed facade. Windows are high up on the walls. Next to the building is a fenced of parking lot for visitors. Building is owned by the religious community, so demolition or major changes are hard.











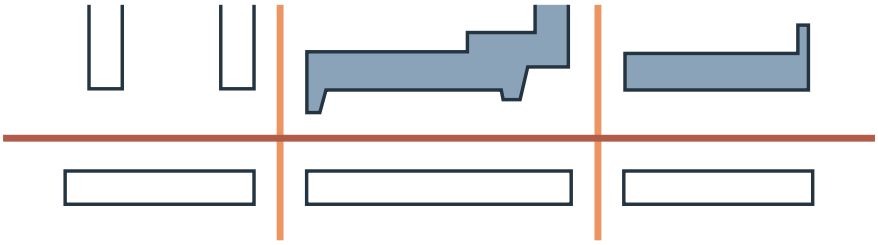


Public life design interventions

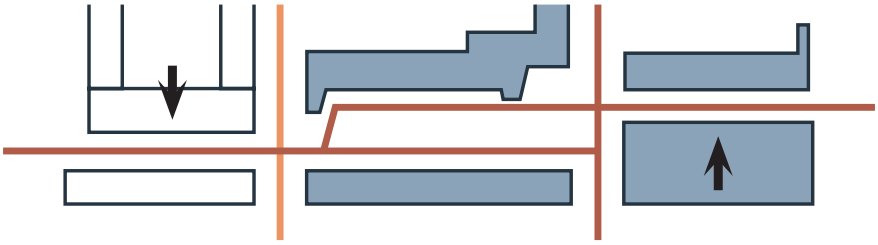
Dreven Shopping Square (Special attention)

An important public space in the Dreven will be the space in between the shops. The width of square (25m) creates a long skinny square, but is within Gehl's social dimensions. But to define the space both ends need to a visual end of the square, while keeping the physical connection to the Tram and rest of the Dreven.

Now: long ill-defined street

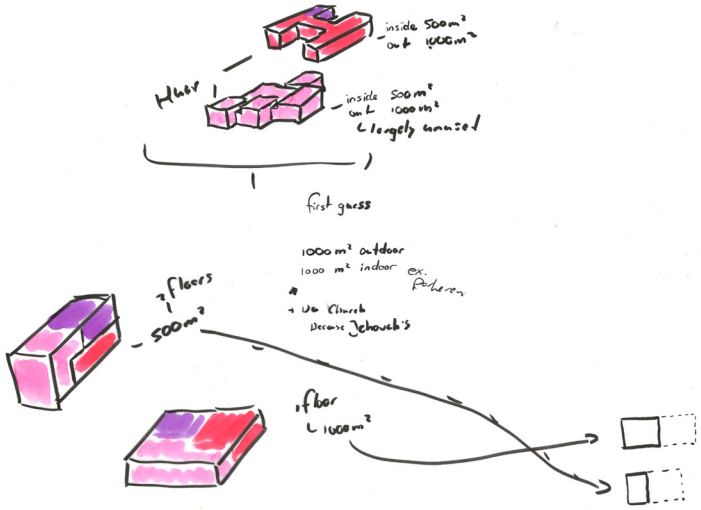


Proposal: Bring the square closer and create potential for social use.



Zijden Former Schools (Special attention)

Because both old schools house important functions for the neighbourhood, they can't just be demolished. At the same time, the buildings are at the end of their functional lifespan and need to be replaced. The functions can be combined into a single larger building, reducing the footprint. This can even be located outside the park, to increase the space for ecology.



III.Parking

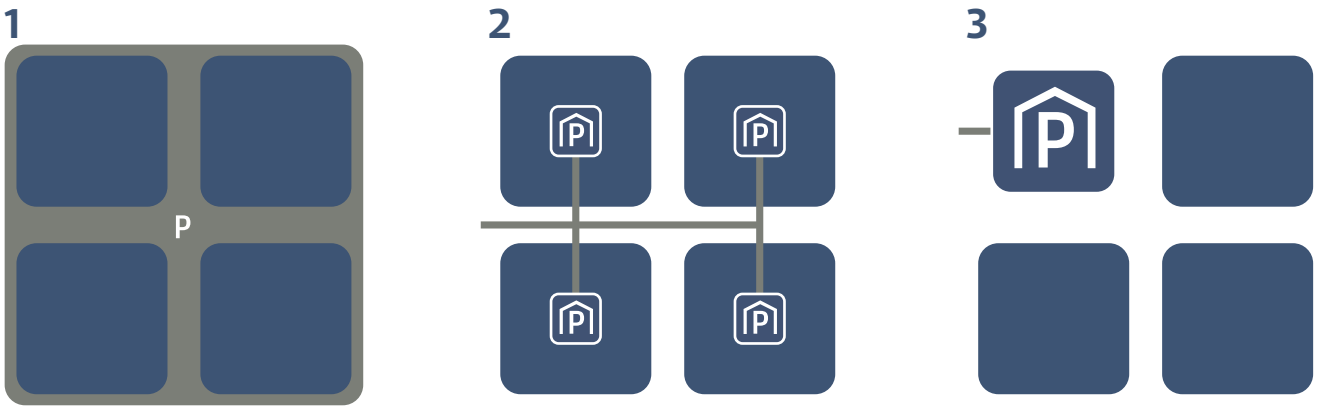
Gehl, Trancik, and Dovey all support the idea that streets should be designed for people rather than cars (Dovey & Wood, 2017; Gehl, 2011; Gehl et al., 2006; Trancik, 1986). Gehl argues that car dominance squeezes public life out of streets and reduces opportunities for walking, lingering, and social interaction. Trancik sees automobiles as a major cause of "lost space" that weakens urban form and connectivity. Dovey shows that car-oriented streets create weak public–private interfaces and limit everyday accessibility. Taken together, their work suggests that removing cars from streets would free up space for more active, legible, and socially vibrant public environments.

In the Zijden & Dreven streets are dominated by cars. Many people rely on their car for getting to work, so just reducing the number of cars is not possible. So alternative solutions will have to be found to create parking inside buildings. For parking solutions there are 3 options.

Option 1: Streetparking. Cars are parked on the streets, reducing the area for greenery and public life, while also needing the necessary infrastructure to move these cars throughout the neighbourhood.

Option 2: Integrated Building Parking Garages. Every building solves its own parking demand by integrating parking spaces within its footprint. This is often achieved by creating raised garden deck over a central parking garage. While it is a popular approach, it does limit the ecological, climate adaptive and social potential for the courtyard. Therefor they should only be used if it is not possible to solve parking on the neighbourhood scale.

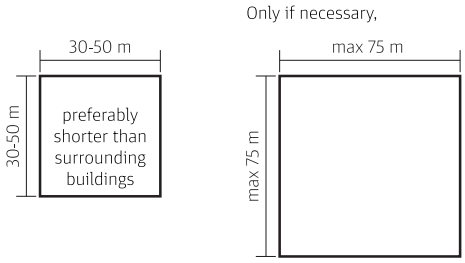
Option 3: Neighbourhood Parking Garages (Preferred). Within a neighbourhood there are a couple of larger parking garages that each cover the parking demand within a comfortable walking distance. Streets can be car-free, if the parking garages are accessible from outside the neighbourhoods. The ground area needed for al this parking is reduced to a minimum and if in the future the parking demand declines, part of the garage(s) can be converted into something else. This makes neighbourhood garages the preferred option.

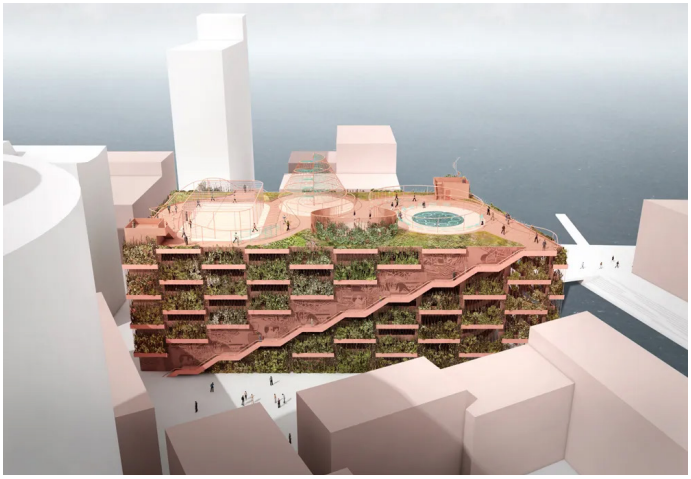


Garage appearance

Because long dead facade strongly decrease public life, these should be prevented. Instead facades should be within a 30-50m range, and their height should be limited. If absolutely necessary facades can be longer.

As for materials, they should more than concrete boxes. Their facades must be interesting, green and follow the same requirements as the buildings in general. Below are some examples of relatively successfull parking garages.







Examples of good parking garages: (top) garage by JaJa Design in Copenhagen for 485 cars; (bottom) garage by Van Mourik near Rotterdam CS for 400 cars + 450 bikes.





Roads (Zijden)

In de Zijden the creation of the ecological connections to the park in the centre will lead to the creation of a kind of island that is disconnected from the rest of the neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood only has access points to the north and west side, with the west side being the main access. This creates a challenge for the "island" regarding access and parking solutions.

First of all regarding access there are 3 main options: Option 1 would be to connect the island via the north, option 2 via the south, and option 3 is connection via both.

Some considerations are: These connections will have to go through a very ecological structure. So these connections should have limited impact on the ecological functionality of the park. Because the neighbourhood is somewhat of a peninsula for cars, the number of car-movements will be limited to residents and local traffic, as it does not offer through routes.

Both possible connections overlap with bicycle connections that are already there, running along the water sides. So there will already be need for structures crossing the eco zone.

Because both connections are already necessary for cycling and walking, it would be possible to make these connections also suitable for car traffic. This will furthermore reduce the number of crossings per connection as the demand will be divided between the two connections.

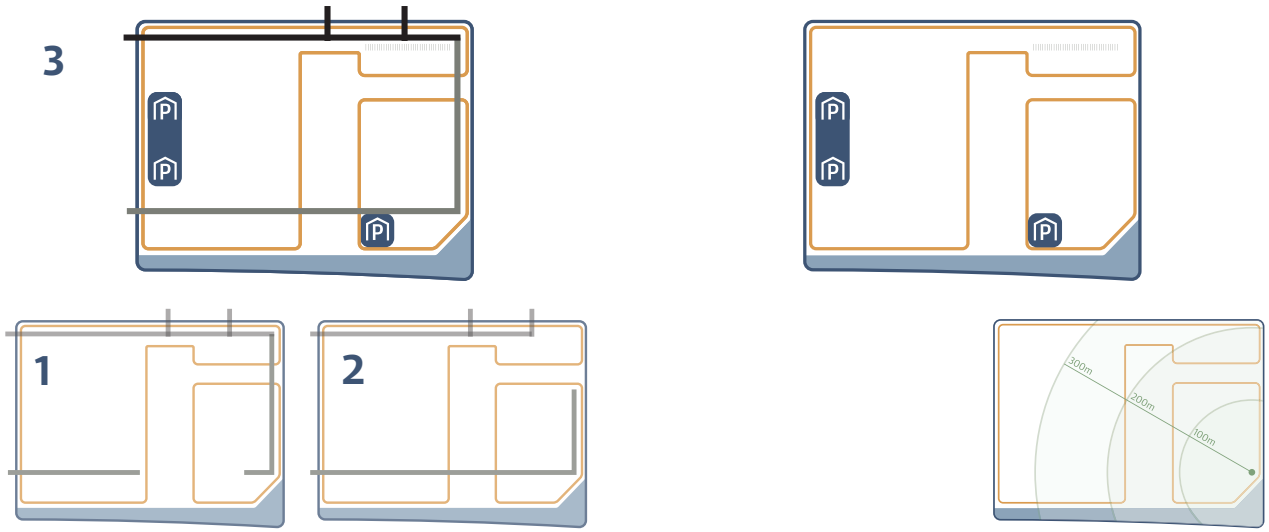
Parking (Zijden)

For both neighbourhoods the wish is to get rid of street parking and improve the outdoor quality on the streets. So in the Zijden there is also need for parking garages.

The problem is that space is fairly limited, due to the portico's remaining. In the west part this is not a large problem as the long plot allong the arterial road can be demolished and replaced by a new large structure incorporating one or more parking garages.

For the east part, including the "island" it will be harder as the distance accross the neighbourhood is to large for comfortabily parking your car and walking home. A smaller parking garage is therefore needed on the island. The only suitable places are next to the west connection, as the rest of the neighbourhoods lacks space or direct access.

Finally this leaves us with the northeast strip. Due to its larger distance to the other parking garages a local solution is needed. Due to its small size (only about 45 houses), a parking garage will be too expensive. This street will be the only place with street parking left in the neighbourhood.



Parking (Dreven)

In de Dreven plans a new parking garage is already projected on the westside of the neighbourhood (top left in the diagrams). So this garage will already solve part of the parking in in that west side.

To solve parking for the rest of the neighbourhood the minimum number of parking spaces was calculated for the neighbourhood as a whole. Based on the current parking norm this would be over 1.800 parking spots. It is evident that multiple parking garages are necessary to cover the demand for private parking.

The diagrams below explore the different approaches for connecting the parking garages to the exterior of the neighbourhood.

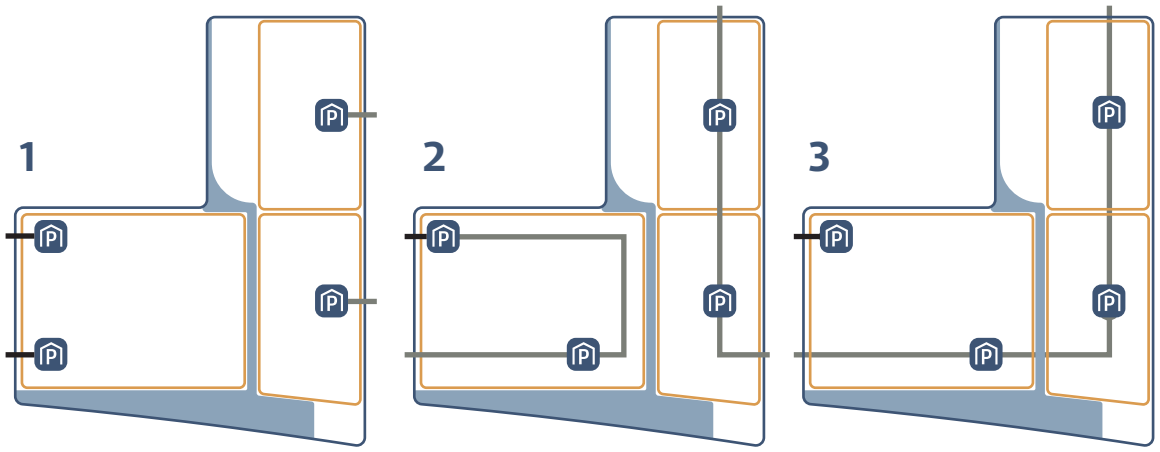
Option 1 connects the parking garages directly to the outside arterials around the neighbourhood. Residents and visitors will therefore not need to drive into the neighbourhood, keeping it mostly car free except for emergency services, delivery services, etc. This will free up the connective tissue of the neighbourhood for extensive use for slow mobility and greenery.

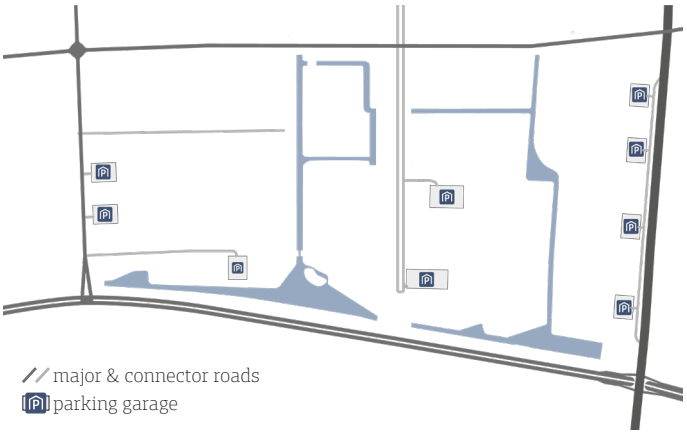
Option 2 will allow for some through traffic, the parking garages are now located on the interior of the neighbourhood, resulting in lower walking distances for residents to their parked car.

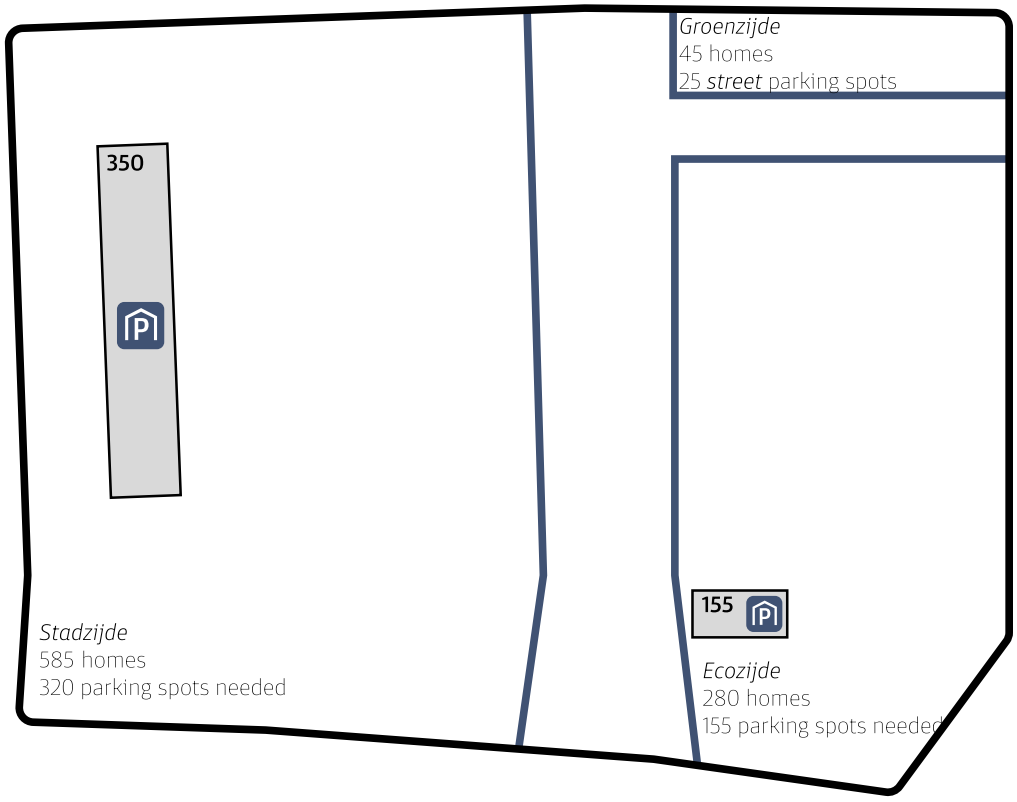
Option 3 again uses parking garages on the interior of the neighbourhood, but with a connection running through the neighbourhood as a whole.

In the end ***option 1*** has the most potential for improving public life as on the one hand it creates opportunities for designing streets primarily for walking and cycling. Furthermore it creates more necessary activity, walking to and from the garages, creating more opportunity for encounters and lingering on the way there.

In determining the location of these parking garages it is important to limit the distance that needs to be walked to the garage, as too long distances can lead to dissatisfaction among residents.







Zijden Main Garage

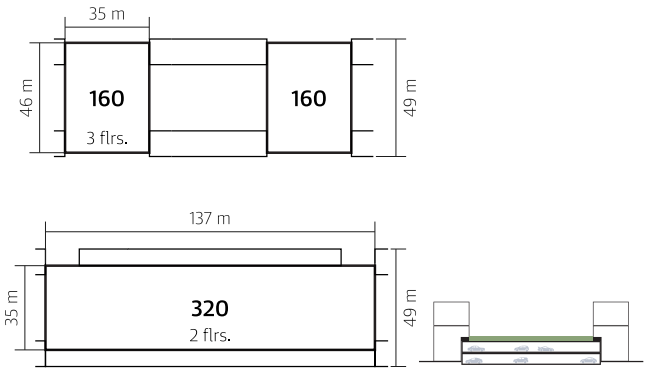
Can be integrated very well into the large building on the west side of Zijden, due to limited size compared to block.

Option A:

2 smaller garages perpendicular to the main block axes, resulting in four short facades on the street.

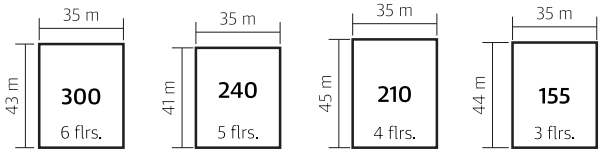
Option B:

1 large internal facade, with buildings on the street covering them up. Only access points are visible to the street. Best option for public life.



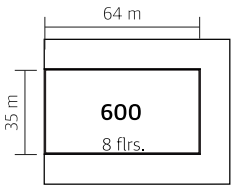
Standard Garages

Short facades, minimal impact on public life due to blank facades. Can be partly covered up by building onto the sides.



Dreven Centre Garage

Exposed facades on head of the building , because preferred short proximity to Tram Stop and keeping cars out. The parking building is wrapped in buildings housing apartments, making the impact on the street level minimal.



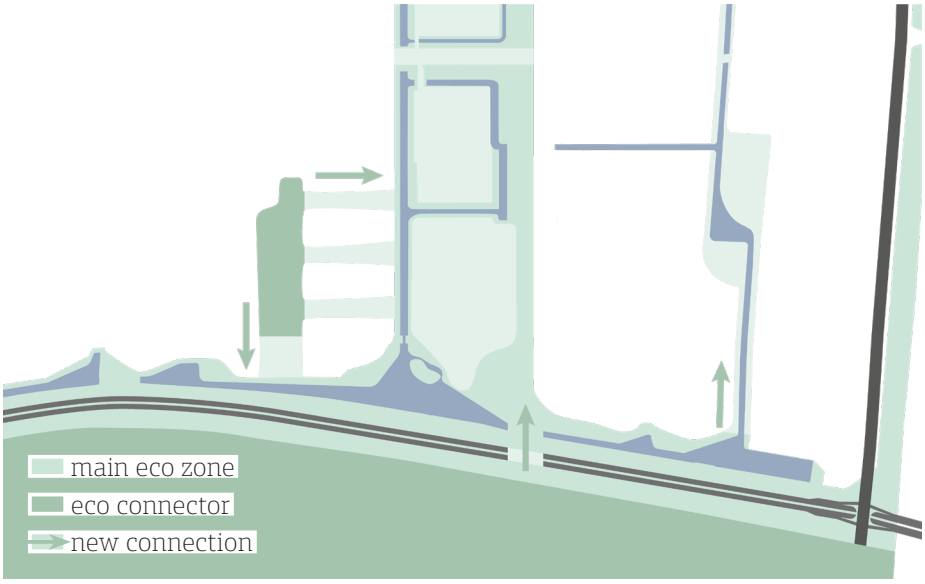
III.Ecology

Both the Zijden and Dreven neighbourhoods are adjacent to the Uithof (at the bottom of the map), a major, green recreation area that is integral to the city's ecological framework. A network of ecological connections has been established to link ecozones like Uithof to other areas. In Southwest these connections run through the green axis that runs from the Zuiderpark to the Uithof. The connection is characterised by its large presence of green, and even though buildings were added throughout the previous decade, the axis is still the most important ecological connector in the area.

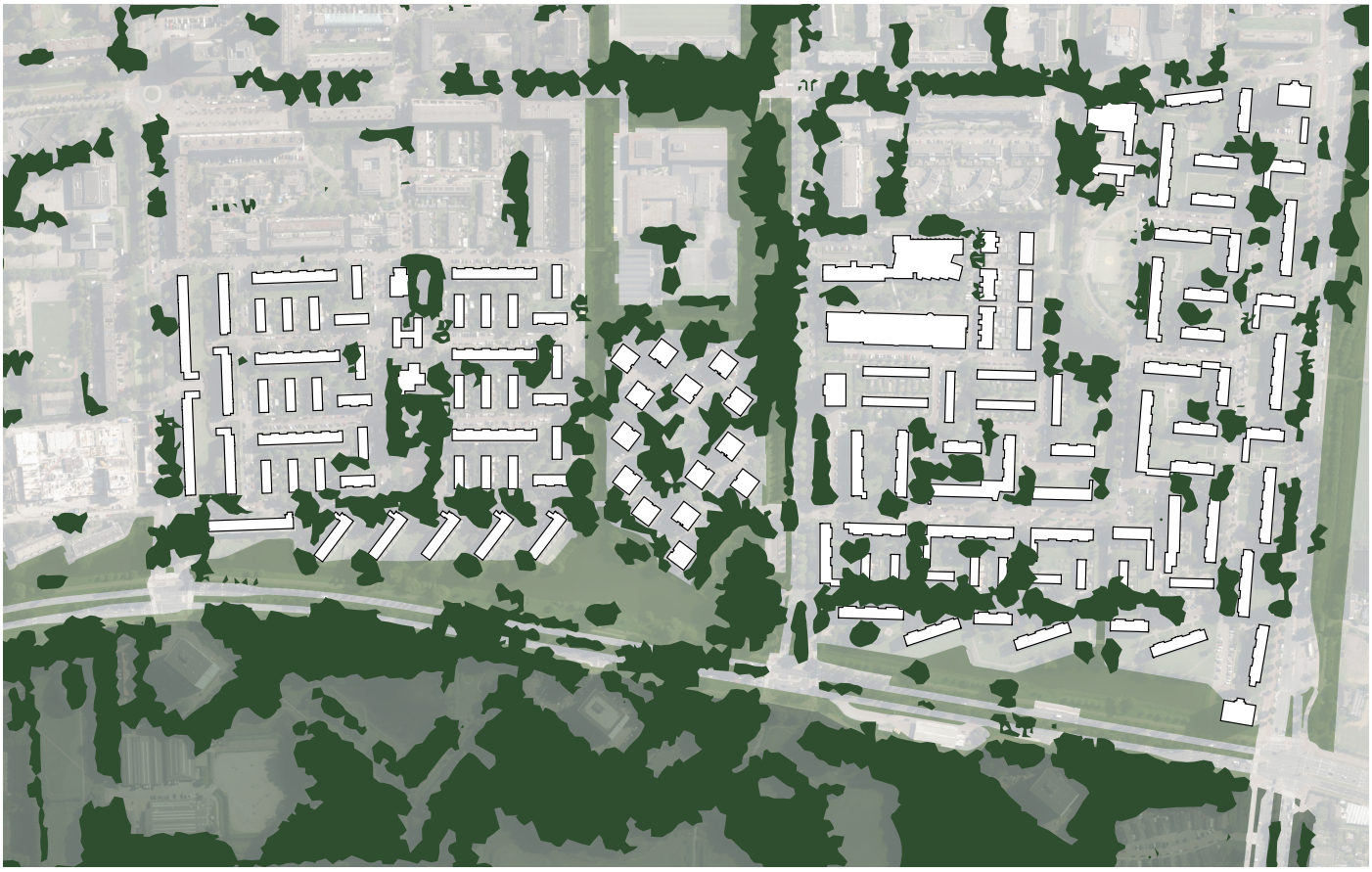
Outside the axis, there is also abundant greenery in the neighbourhood, especially in the shape of full-grown trees. The presented map shows the tree cover, signalling a large presence of trees in the axis, the Zijden Park, the Page Park and along the Ridderdreef. These ecological hotspots should be integrated into the master plan for the area.

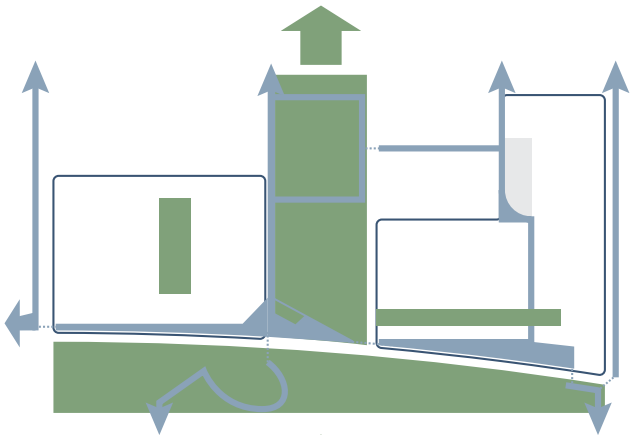
Furthermore, the Southwest area is characterised by its waterways, or 'singels'. Although this project does not focus on climate adaptation, these waterways should be integrated into a new design, nonetheless. Improving the water network is not only important for climate adaptation but also for ecology. Research shows that The Hague generally has a poor water quality. Surface waters like canals and singels exhibit high pollution, insufficient ecology, and issues like algae and hard infrastructure limiting aquatic life (Hoogheemraadschap Delft, 2025).

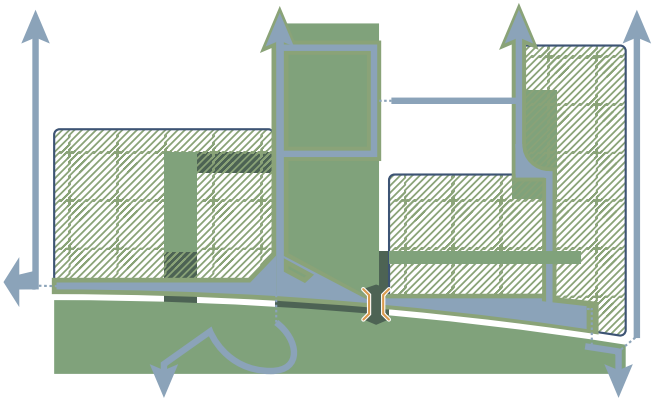
Finally, a new ecoduct is being planned that will have a major impact on ecology. The ecoduct over the Lozerlaan will establish a strong ecological connection to the Uithof via the Melis Stokelaan and Melis Stokezijde.



For the final proposition, the new ecoduct is incorporated, allowing animals to cross freely from the Uithof to Southwest. Additionally, new ecological corridors are proposed. Most notably, a series of corridors will connect Zijden Park to the Uithof and the axis. Additionally, the singel through the Dreven will be improved to have ecological significance and to form a wet ecological connection along the singels to the north.







APPENDIX IV
Current Housing Projects in The Hague Southwest

In efforts to produce the 10.000 extra homes in the area many projects are already built or designed. In the graphs below, the ambition for the area has been subdivided into more precise ambitions for each of the districts Moerwijk, Morgenstond, and Bouwlust-Vrederust (Municipality of The Hague, 2025b; Programmabureau NPZW, 2025). This is then compared to the current developments that are already underway.

This shows that especially in Morgenstond and Moerwijk a majority of the ambitioned housing must still be developed from scratch. For Bouwlust-Vrederust the ambitions are almost fully met. New projects in this area will not have to create many new houses.

The figure below shows the projects that contribute to the ambition, divided per neighbourhood. For every project the number of added housing units has also been included (Municipality of The Hague, 2025b).

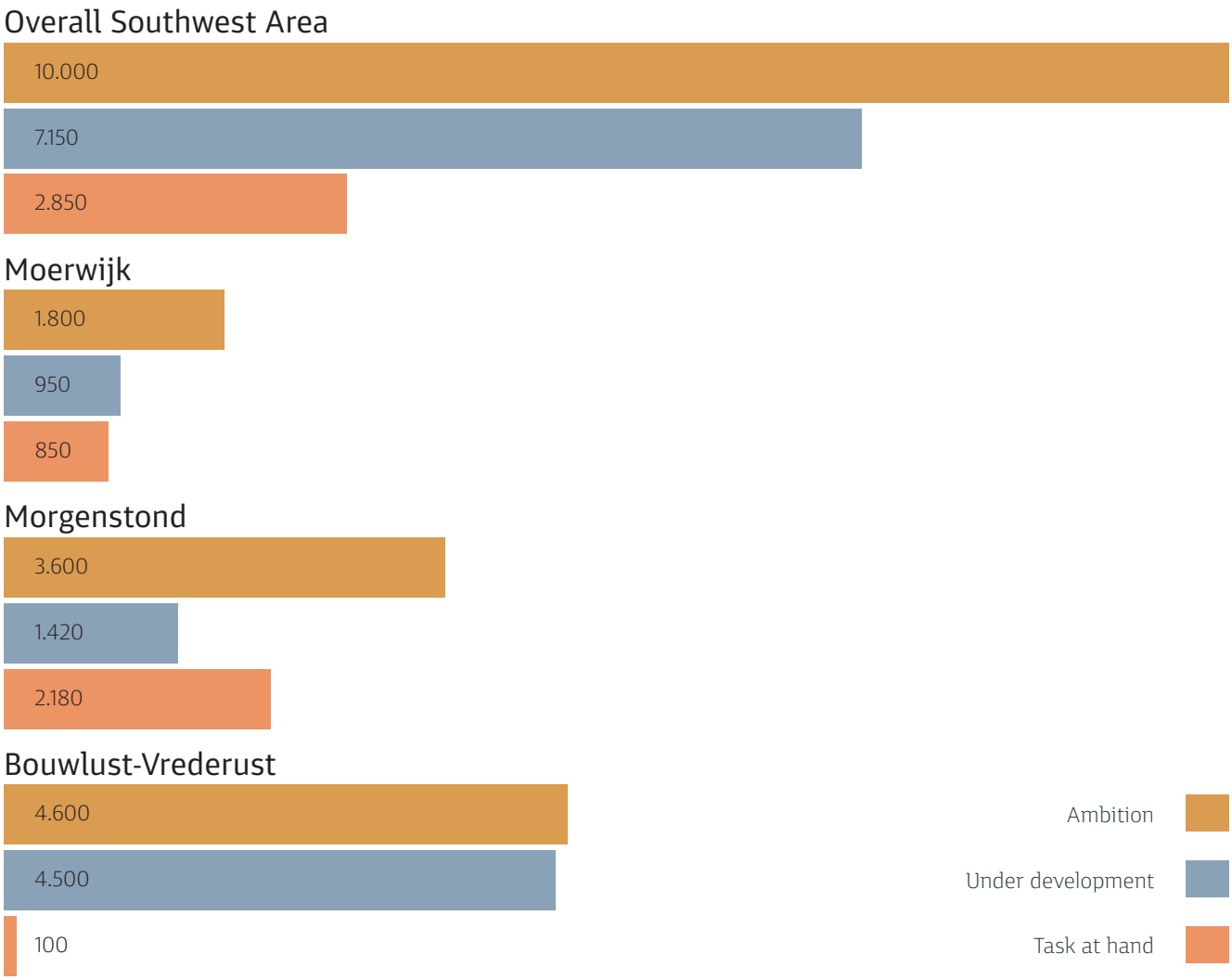


figure IV.1: the number of houses already added per district

In Bouwlust-Vrederust four major projects are being developed by Staedion (Zichten, Gaarden, Dreven) and by Hof Wonen (Venen). In the other districts there are some larger projects, like De Schaloen, Denekampstraat and Levels. But these projects are smaller in scale. Especially in these areas new projects will have to contribute to the ambitions.



figure IV.2: housing projects currently under development

FROM LOST SPACE TO LIVING SPACE

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Jasper Kooiker

October 2026

Urbanism - TU Delft