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Pedestrians in Korte Koediefstraat looking at the old and new architecture in the centre of The Hague, 2021. [© The Hague & Partners/HPM]

THE HAGUE CITY CENTRE

PEDESTRIANISING PUBLIC SPACE

Pedestrianisation – the design strategy of restricting or removing vehicle traffic to prioritise pedestrians – requires long-term commitment integrating multiple perspectives, transdisciplinary work, and intersectoral approaches. Pedestrianisation directly engages with pressing questions about the future of inner cities. How can historically car-oriented urban cores be redesigned to prioritise pedestrian-oriented public space without compromising accessibility and economic vitality? What shifts in the design practice are required to translate such long-term ambitions into spatial reality?

European cities have long been at the forefront of pedestrianisation, with early initiatives emerging in the 1940s. Cities such as Stockholm and Rotterdam were among the first to plan for car-free zones in their central commercial districts, followed soon after by Cologne, Copenhagen, and other capitals. By the 1970s, pedestrianisation had evolved into a comprehensive urban strategy, integrating traffic management, economic revitalisation, environmental improvement, and social benefits. Success depended on a broad-based approach involving community engagement, spatial planning, supportive legislation, and financial frameworks. During this period, such these strategies played a pivotal role in addressing the decline of inner-city areas, where falling residential populations and the rise of car-oriented suburban retail and housing developments had accelerated urban decay. The pedestrianisation efforts laid the groundwork for rethinking and redesigning public space, while establishing the means to implement and manage pedestrian-friendly environments effectively.

The redevelopment of The Hague’s city centre offers a concrete response to questions surrounding the reconfiguration of car-oriented urban cores in favour of pedestrian-oriented and liveable public spaces. With the Nota De Kern Gezond (Memorandum A Healthy Core) as a starting point in June 1988, the plans for redeveloping the public space in The Hague inner city were set in motion. The municipal executive of The Hague stated that “in addition to new buildings and renovation of other buildings, there must be a drastic improvement in the residential function, the cultural climate, the structure of the core retail sector, the redesign of public spaces [...] and an increase in traffic liveability. Wherever possible, this process should be realised in partnership with private investors.” Improvements in public space and its redesign, especially focused on pedestrians and slow-moving traffic, would go hand in hand with changes to the urban programme. Accordingly, this exemplar stands out as a formative example that helped lay the groundwork for integrated infrastructure design in dense urban settings. During the initial phase of the pedestrianisation of The Hague city, public space was seen as the territory of society, defined strictly as the space that is not privately owned. This definition was later broadened. Building on the Fourth Spatial Planning Memorandum, a key national policy document on spatial planning published in the same year, public space came to be defined as any connective tissue between human activities – places of encounter, vital for the liveability and identity of our everyday environment. Specifically, regarding The Hague city centre, the pedestrianisation strategy expanded on the municipal memorandum Hart door Den Haag. Mixed use proved to be a quality boost, with public spaces facilitating communication between various places. An illustrative case is provided by The Hague, whose municipal policies and long-term vision aim toward a fully pedestrianised city centre by 2050 (Figure 1).

Pedestrianisation: A long-term commitment

The approach taken by the municipality of The Hague laid the foundation for redesigning the public outdoor environment through a detailed integrated analysis of mobility networks, examining

both local activities and urban connectivity. It also included a study of the street-level experience, with particular attention to the visibility and accessibility of public facilities and amenities for diverse social groups in the adjacent buildings. On this base, it evaluated the configuration of pedestrian path systems to reveal the potential of spaces to support pedestrian flows, connectivity, and functional integration, thereby informing design decisions that enhance urban performance and liveability. This pioneering inner-city design strategy introduced a coordinated approach to planning and integrating multiple urban systems – such as transport, water, and public space – to maximise pedestrian use and comfort. Innovatively, it promoted joined-up planning for urban redevelopment, enabling more efficient use of space in high-density areas, and contributing to improved performance, sustainability, and quality of life. Having been implemented for almost four decades at the present, the relevance of this design strategy is proving to be greater than ever, as urban density increases and the vision of a becomes more central to planning ambitions. The recent municipal general mobility and environmental strategies, respectively Netwerkstrategie 2040 and Omgevingsvisie Den Haag 2050 (both 2025), imply that all residents should, in principle, have convenient access to daily services within a fifteen-minute walk or cycle ride. While these plans agree on extending the pedestrian areas in the city centre, the pedestrianisation strategy will also be applied to support the creation of liveable, vibrant, and safe neighbourhoods and resilient, healthy communities outside of the inner city. [X-Minute City Concept, page 202]

Organisational framework – A wide array of services and specialists have taken on responsibilities for various aspects – traffic, public transport, lighting, paving, planting, street furniture, and more – reflecting an integrated infrastructure design strategy. Therefore, an advisory committee on public space design was established to support the implementation of Nota De Kern Gezond, namely the Adviescommissie Openbare Ruimte (Advisory Committee Public Space, ACOR). Within this framework, the municipal departments of urban development (DSO), public affairs (DPZ), and city management (DSB) have always had their own distinct responsibilities. The advisory committee reviews design proposals for the public space based on an integrated framework document and public space manual, both adopted by the council, and advises the municipal executive. The committee also promotes policy development and sustainable innovation in the design of public space. ACOR is an interdepartmental committee composed of staff from DSO, DPZ, and DSB, supplemented by an external designer from the advisory committee on spatial quality. As such, all relevant disciplines involved in the design, implementation, and management of public space are represented. Since 1994, an additional broad alliance, comprising builders, developers, financiers, transport providers, and the municipality of The Hague, was founded. Umbrellaed under the name Den Haag Nieuw Centrum, this group, involving over fifty participants, included representatives of developers, builders, investors, office-building trusts, housing corporations, residents, estate agents, the national Real Estate Agency, and senior municipal officials. The coordination ensures further alignment in adding and mixing urban programmes and redesigning public space. For each detailed development area, a project manager is designated to coordinate road reconstruction and maintenance, newly-build urban projects, repairs and installation of underground infrastructure, transport works, and public space activities. [Project Management for Integrated Infrastructure Design, page 106]

Addressing social and economic value – When published in 1988, the initial plan aimed to deliver a significant “impetus to the appearance, liveability, and economic standing of The Hague city centre”, generating value both socially and economically. In addition to the anticipated cost savings, investment in the public realm is seen as a quality enhancement with the potential for long-term returns. The ongoing large-scale efforts to make The Hague’s city centre more pedestrian-friendly can be embedded in social cost-benefit analyses (SCBA). These enable transparent, evidence-based

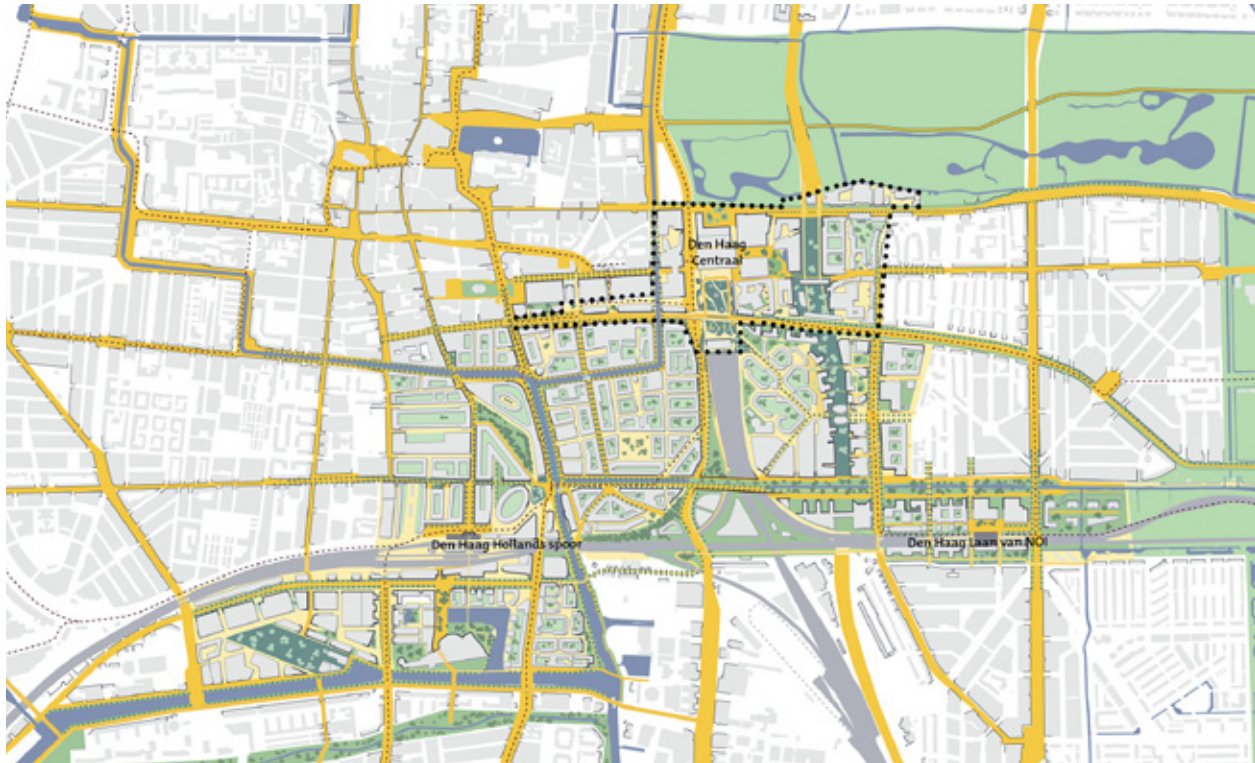


Figure 1. Pedestrianisation vision for The Hague’s new centre: the Central Innovation District positioned between and around the railway stations. [© Municipality of The Hague]

investment decisions that prioritise long-term societal value, such as well-being, health, liveability, and safety, while generating significant economic value and strengthening the local economy. For social value, it is essential that public space functions as a common: a collective good that is non-rival and non-excludable. In The Hague, infrastructure investments have inevitably influenced land value through positive external effects. The quality of public space design, from pavement type and facade detailing to colour schemes, ground floor use, and car-free streets, have directly impacted not only the value of the project itself, but also that of surrounding properties. With the focus on pedestrianisation the negative external effects of car dominance like congestion, emissions and accidents were addressed. Investing in urban infrastructure, therefore, generates both social and economic value.

The trade-off between traffic and the quality of public space has come down to setting priorities as intended. The focus has shifted to pedestrians, creating friendlier spaces and a changed traffic circulation system: car traffic is reduced, and public transport is promoted in the city centre. Bus services are rerouted around the centre rather than through it. Car access to the centre is ensured through dedicated parking areas and nearby short-stay car parks, and a flexible vehicular traffic system is in service, distinguishing between day and night flows for safety reasons. In implementing this pedestrian-focused approach, identifying and engaging stakeholder groups through a power-interest matrix enhances the effectivity of such a design strategy. Stakeholders with high power and high interest, such as city planners, local government, and business owners, play a crucial role in shaping priorities and traffic policies. Meanwhile, managing the interests of groups with lower power but significant interest, like daily commuters and divers residents, is essential to ensure broad support and minimise resistance to changes like rerouted bus services and restricted car access. [Social Cost-Benefit Analysis, page 200] [Land Use and Transport, page 92] [Benefit-Oriented Design, page 276] [Stakeholder Analysis, page 112]

Modernistic driven infrastructure development – The urban structure of The Hague underwent a significant shift in the 20th century, moving from a pedestrian- and tram-oriented centre in the past century to a layout increasingly dominated by car traffic, a transition that occurred before pedestrianisation became both necessary and inevitable. The turning point came a century ago with major cut-throughs through the historic city centre to facilitate traffic flow, as envisioned by Hendrik Petrus Berlage in the Extension Plan for The Hague from 1908, altered in the subsequent decades. These infrastructural interventions, like Grote Marktstraat and Hofweg, were gradually implemented from the 1930s to the 1950s, under growing pressure from motorised traffic (Figure 2). Torenstraat was another cut-through along which the Netherlands’ first multi-storey car park was built. National developments reinforced this trend. The first Rijkswegenplan (Highway Plan, 1927) envisioned a network of high-capacity roads for motorised traffic only. This included Rijksweg 13 (now A13) and Rijksweg 4 (A44) as existing roads, widened to four lanes in roughly the same period, and Rijksweg 12 (A12) – a dedicated and grade-separated motorway from The Hague to Utrecht – with the Voorburg-Zoetermeer section opened in 1936–37 as the Netherlands’ first true motorway. These car-oriented developments at the edge of the city influenced local policy as documented in Memorandum Regarding Roads in the Western Part of South Holland of 1933. Within the city, raised infrastructure was implemented. The Schenkviaduct (1940) was the most prominent, spanning railway lines to connect the centre with the southeast. Later, on the edge of the inner city, the Prins Bernhardviaduct and the sunken urban motorway Utrechtsebaan were added (opened respectively in 1975 and 1976). They connected to the A12 via high-speed links. This car-oriented strategy brought with it the creation of large car parks in the inner city, while replacing older structures or underused land. Traffic jams became a daily occurrence in the inner city. In the 1970s and 1980s, congestion exposed the limits of car-based mobility. At a time when traffic in the city centre was declining, particularly during rush hour, while off-peak cycling increased, a new integrated infrastructure design approach was introduced.



Figure 2. Crowded traffic in Papestraat, one of the narrow inner-city streets in The Hague, 1955. [PD Haags Gemeentearchief]

Pedestrianisation: Densification and hybridisation of the city centre and revisited networks

The modal shift, following the implementation of the pedestrianisation strategy, represents a clear trend change. In four decades, the number of car movements in the inner city has dropped significantly. The pedestrianisation of much of the city centre has led to road narrowing and reorganisation of traffic circulation, and, for example, the decommissioning of a car viaduct, which has since been partially demolished. Meanwhile, pedestrian accessibility has actually improved. Also, with this modal shift, the resident population in the area has increased markedly. The momentum for this change was driven by a renewed pull towards the city and accompanied by a revival of high-density urban living. Over the same four decades, the number of residents in The Hague city centre grew by 71.44%, with the largest increase occurring in the first ten years after the implementation of the pedestrianisation strategy, and in the most recent years. Although several massive mono-functional office buildings from the 1980s have been subject to redesign and

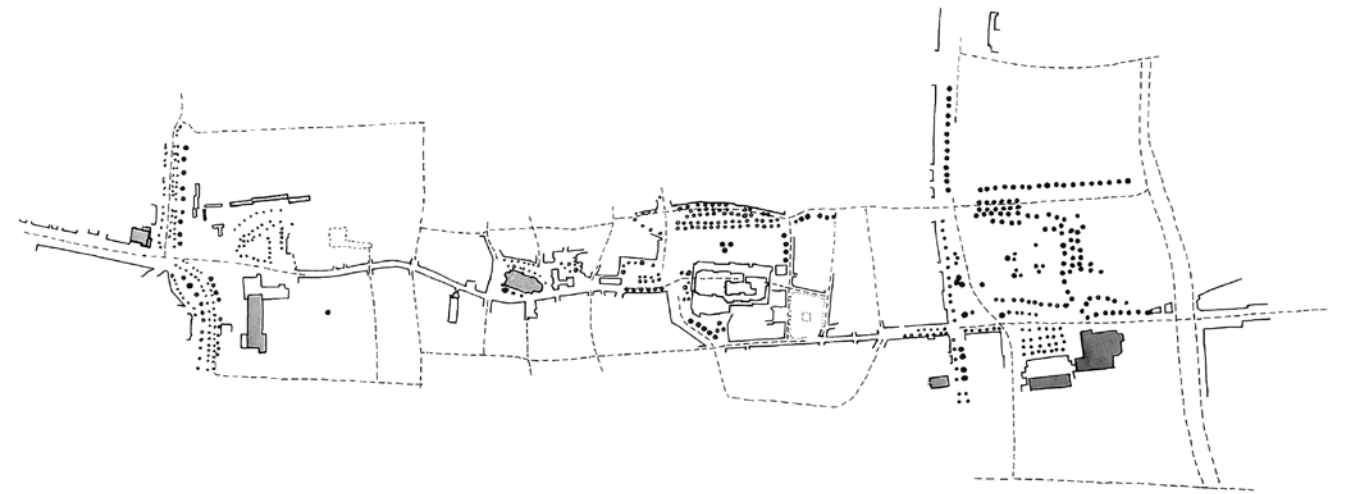


Figure 3. Spatial analysis of one of the city’s lines: Westeinde–Centrum–Poten–Centraal Station (1980). [© Municipality of The Hague]

reuse, the results are now becoming visible, also in a qualitative sense. Further densification has also led to additional facilities as well as hybridisation of programmes. There is now a wealth of cultural and leisure amenities, co-working spaces, and meeting points, which shape public life, in addition to the commercial function of the area. They enrich public space by encouraging social interaction, creativity, and a sense of community. Public spaces have been designed inside and outside. They activate the urban environment, making it more inclusive, lively, and attractive for a diverse range of users throughout the day. In addition, Leiden University and TU Delft have also established a presence here, apart from The Hague University of Applied Sciences. These public institutes bring not only knowledge, innovation, and a steady influx of young talent to the city but also foster vibrant academic and cultural places.

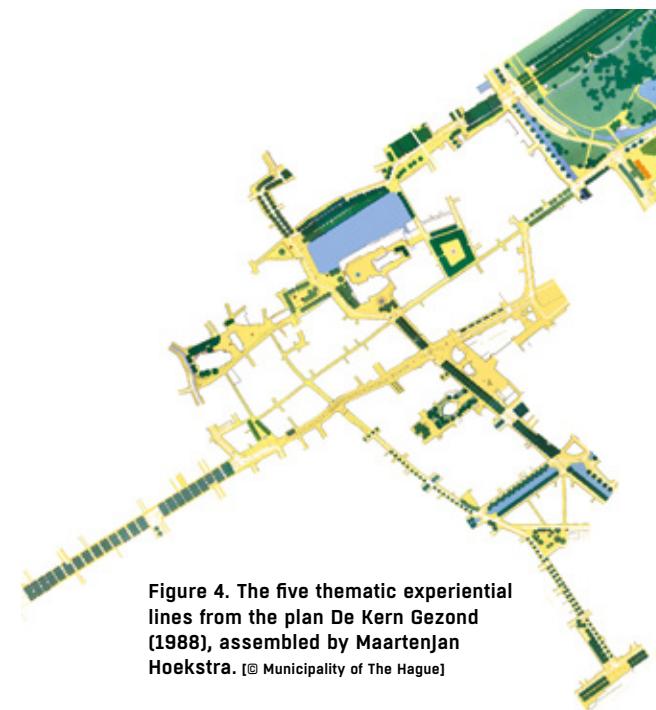


Figure 4. The five thematic experiential lines from the plan De Kern Gezond (1988), assembled by Maartenjan Hoekstra. [© Municipality of The Hague]

Reprioritisation of transport flows and transformation of public space – This ongoing integrated design approach to the traffic challenges in the inner city, particularly manifested in cross streets rather than in main roads, is based on a historical-morphological spatial analysis, published as early as in the 1980 municipal memorandum The Structure of the City Centre (Figure 3). Whereas Nota De Kern Gezond was the first to adopt its conclusions for revising and integrate design strategies, new strategies continue to work on the city’s characteristic spatial structure, with dominant lines following the underlying ancient dune ridges in an east-west direction (Figure 4). The morphological study of The Hague’s inner city is supported by extensive documentation of pedestrian routes through drawings and photographs. This has provided a layered understanding of the spatial structure and layout of the city centre, which reflects the user’s perspective and experience of a fragmented urban environment

which finds its origin in top-down planning and compartmentalised approaches, reinforced by institutional boundaries and discipline-driven methods.

Today, within the pedestrian-friendly zone, a coherent design of the walking network reinforces a distinct spatial character that actively engage with their surroundings. Historic routes, open spaces, and a fine grid of streets continue to define the inner-city experience. The results of the morphological analysis are evident: it grounded a proposal to transform the major east-west axis in the inner-city public space network, and a first crosslink in the north-south direction. One axis is predominantly green; another consists of a series of enclosed urban courtyards; there is a shopping promenade; a row of urban streets; and in Spuikwartier an urban corridor now stretching all the way to Den Haag Centraal station. A cross-axis – the Berlage cut-through – was transformed in a main road, allowing car passage. This all characterised by the following locations and streets:

- 1 The public spaces formed by Lange Vijverberg, Toernooiveld, Korte Voorhout, Malieveld, and Koekamp have long served as essential green lungs within The Hague’s urban fabric. Many of these date back centuries and have retained their open, wooded character, offering a vital counterbalance to the density of the built environment.
- 2 Behind Plaats, a fine-grained network of intimate streets emerges – some of the oldest in the city, such as Papestraat – highlighting the enduring qualities of medieval urban patterns.
- 3 A central axis formed by Buitenhof, Dagelijkse Groenmarkt, and Kerkplein links three historically enclosed squares. Once used primarily as court, market, and religious spaces, these squares are mostly framed by monumental architecture, illustrating the layered history of civic life in The Hague.
- 4 Streets like Vlamingsstraat, Spuistraat, Lange Poten, and Korte Poten form a chain of narrow shopping streets that were pedestrianised in earlier decades. These routes are among the oldest commercial arteries in the city, still retaining their human scale and bustling atmosphere.
- 5 In contrast, Prinsegracht, Grote Marktstraat, and Kalvermarkt were part of a major modern intervention. Designed as main traffic routes created by cut-throughs of existing buildings, they introduced a structural spine for urban infill and densification and became the setting for The Hague’s first generation of high-rise developments in the city centre.

Revaluation of the waterway and green networks – Following the layer approach, slow-changing water management in the dune landscape is crucial for sustaining the natural water balance in the city. In the inner city, particularly the Hofvijver and Lange Vijverberg (dating back to the 13th century), the partly filled Spui watercourse (which has drained excess water from the Hofvijver since 14th century), and the lower canal ring around The Hague (mainly built in the 14th/15th century) respond to rainwater fluctuations. These distinctive historic water structures continue to organise water flows, while shaping public spaces. Porous materials such as the scenic, tree-lined gravel promenade along Hofvijver and Lange Vijverberg support natural infiltration, while harder surfaces remain necessary in high-traffic areas with significant surface water management needs. Given the subsoil conditions and numerous underground cables and pipes, combined with the goal of planting city trees with large root structures capable of receiving rainfall, brick paving was the clear preference in the design of the public space. This choice also aims to enhance visual attractiveness.

The pedestrianisation strategy has also aimed to enhance the inner city’s green character and image by preserving its monumental plantings, and connecting green enclaves, while fostering collaboration across various levels of governance (Forestry Commission, province, municipality). Concrete interventions include linking the pedestrianised zones to the broader urban green structure, such as the primeval forest Haagse Bos located just outside the inner city near the central station,

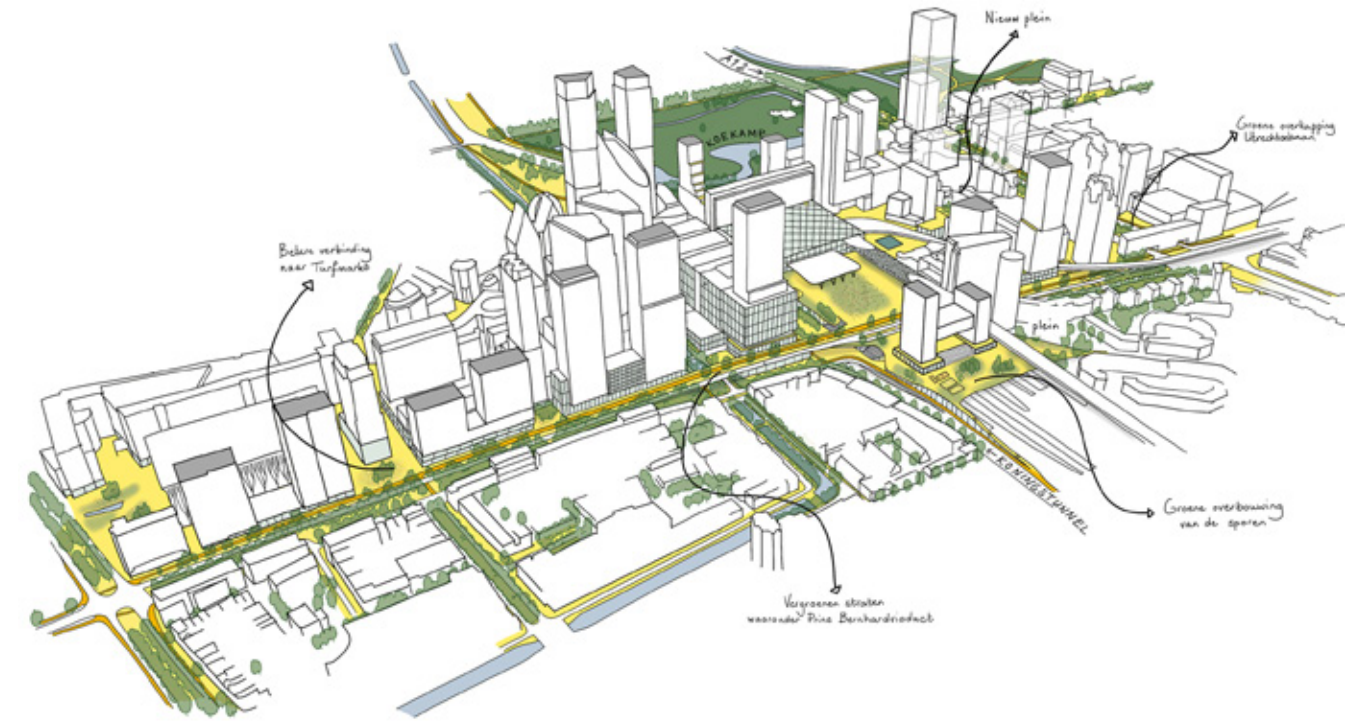


Figure 5. Sketch impression of the future surroundings of Den Haag Centraal station (2024). [© Municipality of The Hague]

integrating the 15th-century avenue plantings along the Hofvijver, and enhancing typical street-lined trees in various 19th-century public spaces, thereby reinforcing both historical continuity and ecological connectivity. Additionally, the strategy seeks to reinstate the balance between trees and greenery and underground and above-ground infrastructures, ensuring a harmonious integration of nature and natural systems within the urban environment. [Layer Approach, page 94] [Nature-Inclusive Infrastructure, page 296]

Incorporating the railway stations in the urban transport and public space network – The pedestrianisation strategy and general redesign of the public space to improve the quality of the inner city of The Hague has now been expanded to a much larger area. To accommodate ongoing inner-city growth while preventing the growth of car use, a mobility transition towards clean and space-efficient transport modes has become essential, aiming for a modal split of 40% walking, 25% cycling, 20% public transport, and 15% car use. This shift is supported by applying the inverse mobility pyramid – prioritising the most sustainable modes first (walking, cycling, public transport, then cars). This is made feasible through transit-oriented development (TOD), strong integration with the cycling network, and the design of high-quality public spaces with greenery, active ground floors, and inviting places to stay. The extended inner city is being by three train stations in close proximity: Den Haag Centraal, Den Haag Hollands Spoor (HS), en Den Haag Laan van NOI (Nieuw Oost-Indië). Their distance from each other ranges between just 1 km to 1.7 km apart. Together with the metro, tram, and regional and local bus services, these three high-quality public transport hubs give access to an area of at least ten square km. The current extension of the strategy focus to the areas around these ‘new’ centralities makes it feasible to further transform and urbanise the inner city, enabling people to live, work, and travel without relying on a car (Figure 5). In addition to the historic inner-city area where the initial plans were implemented, pedestrianisation has been extended to the three neighbouring areas: the Den Haag Centraal station area; the Laan van NOI station and Beatrixkwartier area; and the Hollands Spoor station and Laakhaven area. The various urban renewal projects in



Figure 6. Top and bottom left: Grote Marktstraat, with Nieuwe Haagse Passage, Papestraat and Molenstraat in 2025. [© Maurice Harteveld] / Figure 7. The Netkous, part of one of the RandstadRail connections. [CC A4-Nieuws]

these areas are accompanied by upgrades to public space and amenities. More so, pedestrianisation investments around the three stations accompany a major urban development in the heart of The Hague: the Central Innovation District (CID), situated between them. Envisioned as the city's new economic and urban core, it integrates living, working, learning, innovation, amenities, and pedestrian-friendly public space (Figure 6). Again, the municipality ensures coherence through an integrated area strategy developed in collaboration with partners. [Transit-Oriented Development, page 114]

Infrastructural key projects – The extensively implemented pedestrian-friendly integrated infrastructure design strategy includes several key projects which could be identified as specific types of integrated infrastructure design themselves. The key projects can be categorised in three ways: *infrastructural objects*, involving large-scale new or revised infrastructures; *infrastructural spaces*, where existing infrastructures are not necessarily altered but their potential is enhanced; and *infrastructural acupuncture*, consisting of small, often overlooked additions that play a critical role in the functioning of the overall network. In The Hague, this tripartite framework is exemplified through a range of interconnected interventions.

Infrastructural objects include major undertakings such as the Souterrain Tramtunnel and the Koningstunnel, which restructure urban mobility at a foundational level by relocating respectively tramlines and car traffic underground. Whereas the Koningstunnel is diverting vehicles underground in order to reduce congestion in utilitarian ways in favour of street level flows, the tram tunnel underneath Grote Marktstraat adds underground qualities for the pedestrian. The latter also provides a car park access on one level in the main commercial zone, and tram stops on another

level with direct access to one of the adjacent department stores. This not only streamlines transit flows, with growing numbers of traffic movements in place, but also frees up surface space significantly while benefitting the surrounding properties in social-economic valuable ways. As both infrastructure and architecture, the Souterrain Tramtunnel reflects a hybrid ambition; more than just a traffic solution, it is a multi-layered, spatially rich environment where user experience is shaped through daylight, glass separations, and seamless transitions that connect it to the urban fabric. Another example is The Netkous light-rail viaduct near Den Haag Centraal station. As an elevated, mesh-like tram connection that combines a striking architectural form with separation of transit and street-level activity, it further embodies this category in the form of 'infratecture'. The Netkous exemplifies how thoughtfully-designed infrastructure can go beyond functionality to create urban identity and spatial experience (Figure 7). Its expressive, mesh-like form not only facilitates efficient transit but also contributes to the spatial quality of the area, integrating architectural and structural aspects into a coherent whole, in which the balance between form, material efficiency, and force distribution becomes visible. The result is a piece of infrastructure that is not only technically effective, but also socially, culturally, and visually meaningful. This enhances conditions for pedestrian movement and enables the creation of more accessible, walkable public space. [Infratecture, page 284]

Infrastructural spaces, meanwhile, are represented by the transformation of Turfmarkt into a high-quality pedestrian corridor and the strategic revisions for the areas near Den Haag Centraal, Laan van NOI, and Hollands Spoor stations. Turfmarkt exemplifies an inner-city infrastructural space where existing urban infrastructure is not radically altered but its potential is unlocked. Originally a wide, open green interstitial space, with parallel parking in the 1980s, it has been transformed into a smaller, and lively pedestrian spine, enabling ongoing urban densification and today's high-rise development. Apart from improved pedestrian connectivity and accessibility within the city centre, which fosters social interaction, pedestrianisation of this infrastructural space is now supporting offices, businesses, cultural institutions, university buildings, and homes, while reinforcing The Hague's focus on sustainable, people-centred urban design. The area around Den Haag Centraal station, as an example of a design strategy for infrastructure-entangled inner-city spaces, is enhancing the potential of existing transport and urban systems without radically altering their physical form. Back in the 1980s the station area, including Anna van Buerenstraat, functioned as a broad thoroughfare dominated by vehicular traffic and surfacelevel parking, before its transformation into a more vibrant, compact pedestrian corridor that supports the city's urban densification ambition. [Design Strategies for Infrastructure-Entangled Spaces, page 300]

Finally, infrastructural acupuncture is seen in smaller, precise interventions like the design of the pedestrian Nieuwe Haagse Passage, an arcade extending a 19th-century arcade towards Grote Marktstraat. The new and old interior public spaces provide shortcuts through formally closed urban blocks between major pedestrian arteries. As such, the intervention results in a finer pedestrian network. Furthermore, the linear atrium of the City Hall provides a finer grid by offering a parallel interior public space along Turfmarkt during daytime. Another example is the passageway through Den Haag Centraal station and the public interior of the New Babylon shopping and office complex, which extend the pedestrian path system. Another form of urban acupuncture may be found in the discreet yet vital water retention infrastructure at the Hofweg tram stops. Each of these smaller elements plays a subtle but essential role in stitching the urban fabric together, while addressing the climatological conditions under which pedestrianisation is implemented in a culturally situated manner. [Urban Pathway Design, page 312]

Pedestrianisation: How robust and adaptive is its strategy in the future?

Amid constantly changing urban conditions, the implementation and development of the design strategy for pedestrianisation remains challenging, because it requires bringing together people

of diverse backgrounds, lifestyles, and incomes. This has already led to more variation in public space design and a diversification of strategic interventions to promote social connection, encounters, and learning. Moreover, all city districts are strongly oriented towards the city centre. Hence, rethinking the inner city will pose growing challenges in a future that prioritises public services for compact, integrated, and community-focused neighbourhoods.

As remote work becomes increasingly common, many people are spending more time at home, leading to a stronger connection of inner-city residents to their immediate surroundings. As a result, urban residents are increasingly appropriating or even co-creating public spaces, transforming them into extensions of their homes. This process of ‘domestication’ underscores the need for urban designs that cater to diverse, locally-focused needs, promoting accessible and inclusive public spaces that support community life.

Additionally, there is a shift towards less institutionalised office buildings, altering the traditional perception of inner cities as central business districts (CBDs). This shift is further accompanied by a growing emphasis on local mobility and the use of nearby public spaces, such as (pocket) parks and recreational areas, with a particular focus on active modes of transport, which supports a broader pedestrianisation strategy.

Lastly, the pedestrianisation strategy must address environmental sustainability by incorporating circularity, using durable, eco-friendly materials, and reducing climate change impacts through urban heat mitigation, water management, and enhanced biodiversity. By integrating these agendas, the pedestrianisation of The Hague’s inner city can contribute to both a more liveable and sustainable future urban environment.

As The Hague’s city centre continues to evolve under the banner of enhanced appearance, liveability, and economic strength – the initial targets of the pedestrianisation strategy – several crucial questions emerge. In an increasingly hyper-diverse society, how can infrastructure design for public space ensure that the city’s visual identity remains affectively resonant across multiple social and cultural groups? As lifestyles shift and fragment over time, what forms of adaptive infrastructure will be required to sustain and redefine urban liveability? And finally, as economic growth as well as transition drive the centre’s transformation, to what extent can infrastructure design help preserve the city’s openness, thus ensuring that central infrastructures remain up to date as well as accessible, inclusive, and genuinely public for all? [Life Cycle Management, page 98]

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LESSONS

PEDESTRIANISING PUBLIC SPACE

- **Prioritise pedestrian networks as a framework** By giving the highest priority to pedestrian networks in the city core, a strong development framework is established. These networks have remained intact for decades, while the surrounding built environment and public space continue to evolve. A well-defined framework allows for future adaptation to socio-economic changes, ensuring that pedestrian routes remain relevant and effective long-term, while also accommodating shifts in urban life as well as societal change, with changes in behaviour patterns, perceptions, and thus preferences.
- **Pedestrianisation as a long-term commitment supported by an organisational framework** Pedestrianisation is not the responsibility of a single entity. A wide range of specialists, including urban designers, traffic planners, transport providers, developers, architects, property owners, housing experts, economists, and ecologists, all play key roles. This requires an integrated design strategy that fosters collaboration across sectors. An advisory committee focused on the design of public space and public space networks is essential to ensure a balanced and holistic approach to urban development, reflecting both the social-spatial and cultural aspects of the city.
- **Align pedestrianisation with environmental sustainability goals** The pedestrianisation of public spaces also stimulates other active modes of transport as well as public transport hubs to create interconnected urban areas, which support sustainable living and reduce the city’s carbon footprint. In addition to its focus on enhancing the inner city’s green character and image, the pedestrianisation strategy also aligns with broader contemporary greening goals aimed at fostering environmental sustainability. These include promoting sustainable greening, enhancing biodiversity, stimulating native plant species, and revitalising and cleaning urban water. By integrating green strategies and sustainable water management, pedestrianisation can contribute to climate resilience more effectively. Pedestrianisation supports resilient, sustainable infrastructure that promotes economic development and human well-being, ensuring accessible, and green public spaces, while future strategies must guarantee equitable access to inclusive, affordable urban areas and enable orderly, safe, and responsible movement for all residents.
- **Define key projects based on integrated infrastructure design** Defining specific integrated infrastructure design projects helps to manage urban development at various scales. These projects align short-term actions with long-term urban and socio-economic changes. By bringing together different sectors at the project scale, these initiatives facilitate effective collaboration and create tangible, short-term improvements. Such projects also help anticipate future needs and steer the development process in a cohesive direction, ensuring urban evolution stays on track.
- **Redoing the past through pedestrianisation** The drastic modernistic transformation of the city into a car-oriented, less liveable, and environmentally unfriendly environment can be redone by today’s generations through pedestrianisation. What previous generations did in terms of prioritising cars and traffic can now be reversed with the right focus on public space, walkability, and green infrastructure. The challenge lies in reclaiming urban space for people, turning it into a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable space for future generations.

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Backcover: Harderwijk, Gelderland: Aqueduct Veluwemeer crossing the N302 motorway. [© Sébastien Nagy]

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