Holland Metropole

What you need to know about **Europe's best connected region**



HOW TO BUILD 1,000,000 NEW HOMES

SUCCESSFUL CITIES NEED PUBLIC TRANSPORT

INNOVATION IS KEY TO CITY GROWTH

Five cities, one European region primed for the future

Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Eindhoven are thriving cities in their own right. Together, they form one of the most competitive urban regions in the world.

Urbanisation, globalisation, demographic change, technology disruption and cross-border capital flows are changing the face of cities as we know them. By working together, the five cities of the Holland Metropole aim to make the most of these megatrends, to ensure a stable, innovative and inclusive future for all their inhabitants.

In order to compete successfully in established markets, accommodate innovation, and meet the needs and rising expectations of their residents, cities must strive to become a medium density, multi-centred metropolis, says Greg Clark, chairman of The Business of Cities, a pioneering research group which analyses cities and their potential.

'These ingredients have existed in the Holland Metropole for a long time,' says Clark. 'Yet despite their close proximity and connectivity, its five largest cities – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Eindhoven – are usually observed and measured in isolation.' But the five cities, he says, should be seen as part of one integrated, interdependent region.

Drawing on a database of over 400 city and regional performance benchmarks, alongside numerous metropolitan datasets, Clark and his team show that the Holland Metropole is one of the 10 most important regional economies in the world, comparable in Europe to the London Region, the Paris Region and the Munich Metro Region. Indeed, the latest figures show that Holland Metropole's GDP per capita is growing at over 2%, behind only the San Francisco Region among its nine peers.

This progress is reflected in the way Holland Metropole's cities are rising up the global benchmarks faster than nearly all the other nine regions. This, according to The Business of Cities analysis, is underpinned not only by the success of Amsterdam in terms of lifestyle, technology adoption, inclusion and connectivity, but also by the growing appeal of Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Eindhoven in terms of the next generation of jobs and talent.

Clark also points out that Holland Metropole's cities tend to rank higher for their objective performance than in the perception of experts and commentators, partly because the world is not yet fully aware of how successful and integrated the region is.

In particular, The Business of Cities report singles out the efficiency of the Holland Metropole's public transport system, which is not only among the fastest and most reliable globally, but is also helping to discourage car use. While other regions are enduring big increases in congestion and pollution exposure, the trends in Holland Metropole are more positive.

The Holland Metropole's USP comes from the way each city has developed its own specialisms. Amsterdam, for example, is the gravitational centre for finance, the creative industries and IT. Utrecht, with its young, well-educated population, excels in life sciences, healthy living and gaming; while Rotterdam's key drivers centre around the port, advanced manufacturing and clean-tech. The Hague, the Netherlands' political capital, is home to many key international organisations as well as The Hague Security Delta, Europe's number one cyber security cluster. And Eindhoven, now a fully-fledged member of the alliance, hosts a highly mature eco-system of advanced IT and materials science.



Pontsteiger in Amsterdam is a new city landmark

KEY ADVANTAGES

The Business of Cities report shows that the Holland Metropole has advantages in three key areas: connectivity, innovation and liveability. The Holland Metropole's airports are growing faster than all of its peers in terms of passenger numbers. The region is a major port and sea hub but also has excellent links between its five cities. The average travelling time by public transport to key destinations within the region is 45 minutes, lower than its nine peers apart from Greater Boston. More than that, the Holland Metropole has excellent digital connectivity, with high internet speeds and broadband penetration rates.

This super-connectedness, argues Clark, provides the platform and the confidence to drive rapid growth in air, port and visitor demand, while the innovation ecosystem is maturing and delivering very high levels of growth and growth ventures, even by global standards. This mix has also been energised by the attraction of leading institutions post Brexit, including the European Medicines Agency and big firm HQs such as Panasonic and Unilever.

'Yet despite its global scale and credentials, Holland Metropole remains a relatively affordable region and its strong DNA of tolerance and work-life balance, plus high standard of public services, is shining through in a range of new measures,' Clark says. 'Holland Metropole is creating jobs, but importantly they are more productive and higher value jobs,' says Clark. 'This underpins a stable and robust labour market that not only makes the region appealing to workers but also offers predictability for those looking to invest in the region.'•

Holland Metropole's major innovation poles

Aerospace (Schiphol)
Logistics (Amsterdam, Rotterdam)
Fintech, adtech and the creative industries (Amsterdam)
Higher education and life sciences (Eindhoven and Utrecht)
Sustainable energy, waste and circular economy (all five)
Cyber security (The Hague)
Semiconductors, photonics, materials science (Eindhoven)



The European Medicines Agency will have state of the art offices in Zuidas

Well-connected

The Holland Metropole region is super-connected by car and public transport – enabling someone who works in Rotterdam but lives in Utrecht to easily meet friends for dinner in Amsterdam. But the region is also super-connected to other European metropolitan areas, thanks to its central location, excellent air and road links and digital infra-structure.




The Hague is surrounded by green spaces

Developers urge an integrated urban vision

Dutch developers lobby group Neprom has published a position paper calling for a national approach to creating a sustainable urban landscape in the Netherlands. 'For the past 10 years, the government has been reluctant to get involved in urban planning on a country-wide scale,' says Neprom chairman Bart van Breukelen. 'But the Netherlands is a densely populated country and it is extremely complex to develop projects on a piecemeal basis.' The position paper 'Home in the Future' is a road map to ensuring that problems such as the shortage of housing, mobility, boosting energy efficiency and water landscaping are dealt with in an integrated way, says Van Breukelen. In particular, Neprom makes a plea to allow limited building in green field sites and on the edges of cities. 'It would be easy to say that all we want to do is harm the landscape and build huge projects,' says Van Breukelen. 'So we are being as objective and as transparent as we can in our approach.'


Minister Kajsa Ollongren wants to build more homes

Housing challenge top of the agenda

Dutch home affairs minister Kajsa Ollongren has published major plans drawn up together with housing corporations, developers, local authorities, home owners, tenants organisations and investors to bring the Netherlands' housing supply up to scratch by 2021 'The National Housing Agenda will focus on three challenges: expanding and speeding up the house building programme; making better use of the existing housing stock and the affordability of housing,' the minister said. Ollongren told the Provada trade fair in Amsterdam this summer that the Netherlands needs 75,000 sustainable homes a year to keep up with demand. As well as building new homes, old office blocks and other redundant buildings should be reused, to offset the shortage of inner city building ground, the minister said.

Holland Metropole lucrative for real estate investors

Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht were among the top 10 most lucrative cities for investors in European real estate last year, according to research by Dutch consultancy Sweco. Amsterdam topped the list, generating an average return on investment of 16.4%, Utrecht was third with 14.2%, The Hague came sixth with a return of 12.3% and Rotterdam 10th on 11.2%. On average, property investments within the eurozone generated a return on investment of 9.3% last year, up from 7.9% in 2017. 'In the Netherlands, investors tend to put money into logistics, offices and housing,' Sweco consultant Laurens-Jan Portier said. 'But construction is trailing demand so real estate is a relatively safe investment for commercial companies. And prices are shooting up because of the lack of properties.'


Amsterdam was the most lucrative European city for investors in 2017

Eindhoven joins Holland Metropole alliance

Eindhoven, the fifth biggest city in the Netherlands, has joined the Holland Metropole alliance, bringing a new high tech and design dimension to the organisation. 'This is how we complement the other cities,' says housing and planning alderman Yasin Torunoglu. 'The combination of different strengths is what makes the Holland Metropole so important. Everyone outside the Netherlands has heard of Amsterdam and we can piggyback on the other cities' unique selling points. But they too can benefit from us. Actually, I recently had a chat with an American journalist who knew nothing about Amsterdam, but everything about Eindhoven.'


Eindhoven is at the forefront of efforts to print houses


The Merwede canal zone in Utrecht will include gas-free homes

The Netherlands to go gas-free

The Dutch government is pressing ahead with plans to phase out the use of natural gas in the Netherlands within the next 40 years. As part of this, the government says all new homes should now be connected to alternative sources of heating, such as geothermal systems or city heating schemes using warmth generated by industry. The coalition government wants to ensure that all six million homes in the Netherlands no longer use gas by 2050.


Some of the biggest property deals have been done in Rotterdam

Investors pump almost €20bn into Dutch real estate

Property investors within and outside the Netherlands pumped a record €19.5bn into Dutch bricks and mortar last year, according to calculations by property advisory group CBRE. This makes the Netherlands one of the best-performing property investment markets, CBRE said, adding that the prospects for 2018 are also favourable. Some 70% of last year's purchases were made by foreign investors and 30% of the transactions were between foreign companies. 'This illustrates how Dutch real estate is now being traded in a global marketplace, by international players,' CBRE said. Hotels, healthcare and residential property gained in popularity in 2017, alongside the more traditional investments in offices, shops and logistics parks.



Holland Metropole: top investments

Amsterdam



1 Haven-Stad
Area development
650 hectares

Twelve existing sub areas in the port of Amsterdam will be transformed during the coming decennia into highly urbanised residential areas combined with offices and industry. The suggested development contains 40,000 to 70,000 homes and 45,000 to 58,000 jobs.

2 Sluisbuurt
5,500 residential units and
60,000 m² in facilities

The future Sluisbuurt on the Zeeburgereiland will be a new urban living environment in Amsterdam. This will be a sustainable, green neighbourhood with a unique location at the water and a short distance to the city centre.



3 Lelystad Airport Businesspark
Business park
140 hectares

Lelystad Airport Businesspark is situated between the A6 motorway and Lelystad Airport. Plots of between 5000 m² and 2 hectares are available. The excellent ground structure and short permit process facilitates fast and low-cost building.

4 Zuidas
Area development
80,000 m², mixed use

The goal is to turn Zuidas Kennisk-wartier ('Knowledge Quarter') into a metropolitan area, with the university as part of an urban neighbourhood plus international businesses and homes for young professionals and students.

5 Hoogtij
Industrial
30 hectares

Hoogtij is a prime new business location in the port of Amsterdam and Zaanstad area. It offers plots with flexible layout and space for different types of businesses and is located next to deep sea waters.

6 Amstel III
Area development
250 hectares

The district of Amsterdam South East will be transformed into a modern multifunctional urban district over the next few years as more plots become available for investment.

7 Beukenhorst-Zuid
Office park
28 hectares

This asset borders the Geniedijk, a Unesco heritage site and is the most sustainable full service office park in the Netherlands. Situated in the municipality of Haarlemmermeer the park is close to Schiphol airport, Amsterdam and connected directly to the A4 motorway.

8 Amsterdam Science Park
Research companies, start ups
125,000 m²

Amsterdam Science Park is home to an impressive range of science related companies, institutions and educational facilities – creating an exciting place to live and work in. Plots of all sizes are available for development.

Rotterdam



9 Rotterdam Central District
Business area
45,000 m² (first plot)

Rotterdam Central District is an appealing business area. The area is extremely central, has excellent transport links and is particularly suitable as a headquarters location for companies, as well as for (short-term) rentals. The first plots for development are at Weenapoint and Delftseplein.

10 Schieoevers
Area development
120 hectares

Schieoevers is an area with great potential, located in Delft (between Rotterdam and the Hague). The development of Delft Campus Station in Schieoevers will facilitate the future growth of the area and provide easy access from the university to other cities.

11 Zomerhofkwartier
Residential
26,000 m²

Zomerhofkwartier will be transformed from an outdated inner-city business area into a lively sustainable part of the city centre, with some 500 residential units. The focus is very much on sustainability and includes a rain-proof project.



12 Feijenoord City
Area development
180,000 m² residential, 64,000 m² commercial and 83,000 m² sports

The new 63,000 seat stadium will act as a catalyst for the further development of Rotterdam Zuid with space for sport and leisure and residential units. The new infrastructure and stadium development will be accompanied by an extensive social programme with sport at its core.

The Hague

13 Central Innovation District
Mixed use

There are many rich opportunities for development in this large inner city area. With three stations and excellent transport links, CID is already home to dozens of international companies and organisations, plus tens of thousands of students.



14 Binckhorst
Mixed use

Binckhorst is a former industrial area now being transformed into a modern city district combining residential property with offices and shared spaces. The district borders the HS railway station and offers plenty of opportunities for development.



15 Koningin Julianaplein
Mixed use

Koningin Juliaplein, on the main square in front of the city's central railway station, will provide a new entrance to the city. It comprises 350 new apartments spread between two towers. The project also includes retail, F&B, conference facilities and underground parking for bicycles.

Utrecht



16 Leidsche Rijn
Mixed use
33,000 residential units and working space for 40,000 workers

Leidsche Rijn Centre has outstanding architecture, it's own train and bus station and direct access to the A2 highway. The complete Leidsche Rijn project will eventually house 110,000 people. Opportunities in the central district include office plots and a high-rise building plot.



17 Station area Utrecht
Mixed use

This major transport, retail and business hub is used by 88 million people yearly. The redevelopment will result in 2,200 homes, 250,000 m² of office space and 47,500 m² of retail and services by 2030.



18 Utrecht Science Park
Research companies, start ups, 300 hectares

This hotbed of growth and innovation currently serves 27,000 workers and 51,000 students. The campus offers high-quality institutions, companies and facilities with a focus on health, life sciences and sustainability. Various opportunities for development available.



19 Merwede canal zone
Mixed use
60 hectares

This wide-ranging project involves the urban redevelopment of a former industrial area to create 6,000 to 10,000 homes for 20,000 inhabitants. It will focus on innovative, sustainable solutions for high density building and low car use.



20 Cartesius Triangle
Mixed use

This project involves transforming a former railway yard and repair workshops into a mixed use development. The aim is to create the healthiest and most public transport and bicycle friendly district in the Netherlands.

Eindhoven



21 Brainport Industries Campus
Business park
65 hectares

This project will be the face of the high-tech manufacturing industry, where innovation and strengthening competition are central. The campus is home to both knowledge institutions and successful companies, who work together to realise ideas and develop business cases.



22 High Tech Campus Eindhoven
Business park
100 hectares

There are considerable opportunities for new development on the High Tech Campus Eindhoven. The business park is said to be the smartest square kilometre in the Netherlands, with more than 160 companies and institutions. Some 40% of all patent applications in the Netherlands derive from companies based here.



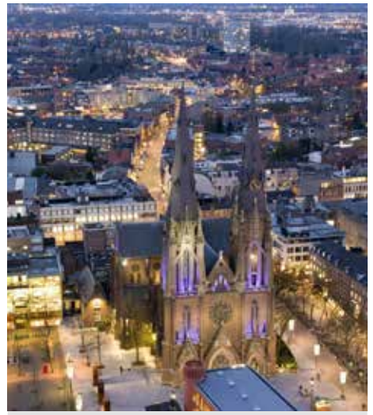
23 Strijp-S
Area development
30 hectares

The creative and cultural heart of Eindhoven is being realised on this location, once the home of Philips' development labs, where the electric light bulb, radio, cassette player and CD were developed. This new area will be a mixed-use development where thousands of people will live and work.



24 Eindhoven Internationale Knoop XL
Area development
50 hectares

Some 200 people currently live on this site which will eventually house 15,000. A mixed-use development, this project will have a park-like feel because of the amount of greenery and the lack of cars. Good rail and international airport connections.



25 Inner city Eindhoven
Area development
40 hectares

Eindhoven's compact centre offers a wide range of shops, cafes, bars and restaurants but work is underway to increase the residential population. Several major projects are in development for increasing the amount of residential and recreational facilities.

Holland Metropole:
How to build one million new homes

Transforming prisons into homes and schools, turning an old railway yard into a thriving residential district – these are just some of the projects developers are working on to boost the supply of housing in the Holland Metropole region.

The Dutch economy is growing and the lure of the big cities is drawing in ever more people. This, planners say, means Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Eindhoven need to build an increasing number of new homes to house their growing populations.
At the same time, the Netherlands is facing other major challenges – the shift to a gas-free society, climate change, congestion and mobility – all these too need to be tackled to ensure the region's towns and cities are equipped to cope with urbanisation and demographic change.
'There is a lot of understanding about where we have to go in the Holland Metropole region,' says Dick van Hal, chief executive of real estate investment group Bouwinvest. 'There are three key areas – liveability, affordability and health – and we all want to create a metropolitan region which deals with all three of them. Infrastructure is key in this and we have to focus on extending and improving our public transport links and our roads.'

TYPICALLY DUTCH

The Holland Metropole approach, says Van Hal, could be described as typically Dutch. 'In other metropolitan areas, it is the local authorities and national government who set the pace. Singapore, for example has a top-down approach. But we are approaching the issues from the bottom, from the perspective of the developers, the investors and the residents. For our society this is a much more sustainable approach than forcing everyone to listen.'

City development depends on facts: urbanisation; the greying of the population; agreements with national government; climate change, the rise in single person households, says Nicole Maarsen, CIO Real Estate at Syntrus Achmea.
'We are busy translating this into neighbourhoods. We want to be seen more as a neighbourhood investor – it's about population familiarity,' she says. 'If you plan to build 500,000 new homes, you need a lot of new facilities - supermarkets, cafes and infrastructure - to meet local demands. This can all only be done by working together and takes very careful city planning.'


Altera is redeveloping this Amstelveen office complex into 124 new homes


The Maasbode development in Rotterdam has internal streets

JOINING FORCES

The Holland Metropole is important because the world is getting smaller, and that means joining forces, says Harm Janssen, director of the North West region at BPD. 'There are different issues in every city but the underlying links between them are strong,' he says. 'By working together, we create a major urban region and a much stronger economic position than if we were working alone.'

The Hague's focus is on making clear choices about where to build and the city is concentrating its development efforts on the central area between the three main railway stations and on the Binckhorst district. Good public transport connections are key, says Boudewijn Revis, The Hague's alderman for city development and housing.

'These main investment areas will be subject to an integral development programme, which will not just include housing, but improvements to the quality of the district and the way it works,' he says. This emphasis on public transport, cycling and pedestrians is echoed throughout the Holland Metropole. In Eindhoven, BPD is involved in turning a former dairy products factory into a mixed use development by maintaining several of the former outbuildings, including the ice cream plant, complete with tall brick chimney. One key element is that people are central, rather than the car. There will, for example, be no streets and pavements, but communal spaces for pedestrians, bikes and other vehicles.

Indeed, repurposing redundant buildings has taken on a key role in the alliance's efforts to boost the supply of housing in the five big cities. In Amsterdam, for example, AM is turning a former prison complex into a residential area in which 98% of the development project is circular. This means, for example, that the old cell doors are being transformed into handrails for the bridges and the bars have become balcony fences.

'We have to think about how different groups can continue to live together in the same city, as well as the pressure on public spaces and the demands of the energy transition and climate change,' says chief executive Ronald Huikeshoven. 'We have to dare to be sustainable, to focus on healthy urban living and working, an inclusive city and a happy life.'

TRANSFORMATION

The transformation of existing buildings into offices, startup hubs and exhibition areas as well as housing is also a key part of the Dutch approach, given the shortage of space. 'In The Hague we have bought an industrial complex from a print group and are transforming it into housing,' says Fransje Sprunken, the director of concepts at VORM. 'The Binckhorst is already changing from a place of work to a mixed-use site. The opportunities for living


The Zalmhaven development is helping transform the old waterfront in Rotterdam

and working here in the future make it a place everyone will want to come home to.'

Meanwhile, Altera is transforming the former KPMG headquarters in Amstelveen into residential accommodation, a massive project which involves creating a green flyover to take residents to the main shopping district. 'We've opted for a challenging transformation of both a building and an area,' says chief executive Jaap van der Bijl. 'We believe that creating good homes and living spaces within the Holland Metropole is crucial to keeping the urban environment alive, because of the scarcity and the pressure on the housing market.'

The main challenge, says Peter Krop, chief executive of developer Dura Vermeer, is to ensure we maintain a good balance between facilitating economic growth and creating sufficient affordable housing.

'The biggest part of this is making existing property meet the newest targets and requirements in terms of energy efficiency and the like,' Krop says. 'Investors demand sustainable buildings because everyone these days wants to contribute. Investors, construction firms, developers, tenants – everyone is involved in making the built environment more future-proof.'


Greenery is key in Heijmans's Greenville project in Leidsche Rijn, near Utrecht

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

The Holland Metropole project is of crucial importance, says new Holland Metropole partner IC, which focuses on housing for students and young professionals.
'If the Holland Metropole is going to meet the residential needs of the future, councils will have to work more closely together,' says Wouter van den Eijnden, managing partner at IC Netherlands.
IC regards micro-housing with communal areas as the future, because it keeps housing affordable for a wide group.
'The focus has to be on communal facilities, both inclusive and exclusive,' says Van den Eijnden.

In Amsterdam where the housing market has reached boiling point and house prices are soaring, the city administration plans to build 7,500 new homes every year for the next four years. 'As well as realising homes for families, Amsterdam is planning to increase the provision of student accommodation and housing for young singles, by encouraging the development of new concepts in shared housing and studios with shared facilities such as a laundry or spare rooms for guests,' says Amsterdam's deputy mayor for spatial development and sustainability Marieke van Doorninck.


In The Hague, VORM has turned a former office block into a 9-storey residential development

GREENERY AND HEALTH

At Heijmans, developing homes which can be adapted to the different stages of their residents' lives is key. The company has also developed a smart monitoring system so that home owners can manage and monitor their homes from afar, including security systems. Nature too has an important role. Not only does having plenty of greenery around soak up excess rainwater, but it boosts social cohesion.

'Within the Holland Metropole, we can learn from each other's expertise and experience and make sure we are not all reinventing the wheel,' says Maarten van Duijn, chairman of Heijmans Vastgoed.
'We aim to connect the different Holland Metropole regions together in a logical, cohesive way, rather than taking a fragmented approach.'

The Netherlands is well positioned to continue to grow as a place to live and as a corporate location, says Pieter van der Heijde, director of urban planning consultancy Bureau Stedelijke Planning.
'The fiscal climate is friendly, it has outstanding international air connections as well as attractive places to live and work… We are attracting increasing international investment and it is the urban areas that will profit.'•

Mobility and energy efficiency are the key to future-proofing cities


UNStudio envisages a cable car connecting the two halves of Amsterdam

Throughout the Holland Metropole region, innovative solutions are being found to ensure smarter, sustainable and energy efficient towns and cities.

A cable car spanning the IJ waterway which bisects Amsterdam might not seem like the most serious option to boost mobility in the Dutch capital, but architects' bureau UNStudio is deadly serious. 'A cable connection is the most sustainable form of public transport,' says Ben van Berkel, UNStudio's principal architect. 'It is a fast, green way of travelling, which is attractive to cyclists, commuters, students, residents and tourists.'
The cable car is just one of the ideas being developed in the Holland Metropole to boost sustainability and green the five biggest cities, creating a metropolitan area where connection times are short and where people will actively want to live and work. 'We have a high quality of life in the Holland Metropole and to keep our leading role we have to continue creating resilient places in our cities,' says Lars Rompelberg, chairman of Fakton, a professional services firm with a focus on the real estate industry.
'Innovation is crucial to get housing construction up to speed and that is our real challenge,' says Erik Leijten, director of development at construction and real estate company Hurks. 'We need to look at different building methods, at robotisation, at changing the processes. By working together as the Holland Metropole we are stronger and we can share our knowledge and our best practices.'

3D PRINTED HOMES

In Eindhoven, for example, work is underway on creating the world's first 3D printed homes which will actually be used for human habitation. In total five detached homes are being 'printed' and several Holland Metropole partners, including Vesteda and Van Wijnen are involved in the experiment.
'Project Milestone is a really interesting project,' says Yasin Torunoglu, Eindhoven's alderman for housing and spatial planning.
While the project only involves a handful of homes at the moment, the technology can easily be used elsewhere if successful. After all, all five



Project Milestone's 3D printed houses in Eindhoven could transform the construction process

Holland Metropole cities are grappling with the same urban issues, Torunoglu says.

Redeveloping inner cities, repurposing vacant offices and other buildings and dealing with housing shortages all require decisions about the future of the city itself. And those decisions will shape how its residents will live and work in decades to come. Printing houses is just one novel approach to dealing with the issues. 'It is a way of democratizing the building process,' Torunoglu says. 'Soon you won't be buying bricks and mortar but a print. I would really like to see real estate developers playing a pioneering role in this.'

NO SPACE

In Rotterdam, alderman Bas Kurvers says there are several major challenges ahead, one of which is to build 18,000 homes in the next four years. 'But we have no available space to put them, and so we have to build these homes inside our already overcrowded city,' he says. 'And that asks for smart and innovative solutions.' BPD and Van Wijnen are involved in one such 'space saving' project in the port city – the innovative Maasbode project – which will create dwellings for families in the city centre. 'Rather than build horizontally, we are building vertically, with three-storey family homes with streets and paths within the block itself,' says Van Wijnen regional director Theo Rook.

In Utrecht, by contrast, the Wonderwoods development involves creating a vertical forest in the heart of the city. The design is a joint project between MVSA architects and Stefano Boeri Architetti from Milan. In one tower the trees surround the structure, in the other greenery grows out of the tower itself. We aim to create architectural designs which contribute to well being, says MVSA senior architect Charlotte Griffieon. 'Everything we design should be future proof, contributing to a durable and sustainable society,' she says. 'Given the rise in urbanisation in particular, MSVA goes outside its basic "architectural" field to find synergies that will help us design better spaces, buildings that enhance the well-being of the cities and its inhabitants.'

The Holland Metropole's local authorities are also making concerted efforts to ensure the real estate within their boundaries can withstand the test of time. One step towards this is changing the way apartments are heated. Many homes throughout the Holland Metropole region are kept warm by district heating systems, whereby heat created by industry or waste incinerators is piped directly into homes from a central point. District heating is seen as key in the drive to phase out the use of natural gas for cooking and heating.

GEOTHERMAL HEAT

In The Hague all new buildings are expected to be energy neutral and gas free and major redevelopment projects will also include removing gas connections. In Amsterdam, it has become customary to connect new developments to high-temperature city heating schemes rather than gas, says deputy mayor for spatial development and sustainability Marieke van Doorninck. 'Climate change demands that we move toward gas-free neighbourhoods, boosting sustainability and saving energy,' says Van Doorninck. 'But in true Amsterdam style, we will ensure than innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship help shape one of the biggest transitions in our history. This is why we are looking now into a low- temperature district heating which is suitable for new houses and can use other types of energy, like energy from the sewage system or from surface water (thermal energy).'

In Rotterdam, the city has begun a 'heat transformation programme' to phase out old gas boilers – 80% of the city's homes are currently heated by gas – and bring in better insulation and heat pumps, which use geothermal heat deep under ground as a source of heating. At the same time, the districts where the energy transition is taking place will be scanned for other issues, such as parking problems and social cohesion. This means the focus on new forms of heating will impact on the social and physical wellbeing of the district as well.



MVSA's joint project Wonderwoods is creating a vertical forest in the heart of Utrecht



Synchroon and BPD are working together on the SAX development in Rotterdam

'We are looking to transfer a large number of houses from gas to city heating in one go so we can spread the cost,' says Rotterdam's Bas Kurvers. 'Transferring the easy and cheap targets first makes it more expensive for the people who cannot make the change easily.'

ROADS AND RAILWAYS

Mobility is another key issue for urban transformation. In Amsterdam, the city's Zuidas business district is about to begin a multi-million euro project to place part of the A10 ring-road underground, while widening the railway network and redesigning road junctions.

The project, slated to take 10 years, will have a major impact on Zuidas which began life as an office park and now includes thousands of apartments, plus shops and a thriving café and restaurant scene. Zuidas is also taking part in pilot study to allow commuters to book a train ticket, a bicycle, a car, a moped or even a taxi using the same online platform. 'Mobility is not about taking a mode of transport, but about the best way of moving from A to B,' the developers say.

The Zuidasdok is just one example of the way public transport is being integrated into development projects. In Utrecht, a new city district is being developed on the site of a former railway yard. When completed, the Cartesius Triangle will have 2,600 homes, a large park, schools and retail.

GOOD HEALTH

The epicenter of the project is the CAB building, a listed former railway repair shed, which will house startups, a brewery and community spaces. The district, pledge the developers, will be the healthiest and most bicycle and public transport-friendly neighbourhood in the Netherlands. The main motor behind the project is to try to replicate the world's five 'blue zones' where locals live extremely long and healthy lives.

'Utrecht is the fastest growing city in the Netherlands,' says Klaas Verschuure, the alderman in charge of spatial planning and economic development. 'We are working to create a city with a good balance between supply and demand on the housing market, in terms of volume, price and quality. But city planning goes hand in hand with improving accessibility and strengthening mobility.' We need innovation to ensure our city grows in a sustainable way, so we are also investing in our startup ecosystem.'

COMMUNITY

Shared cars are central in a development by rental housing supplier Vesteda, which has turned a 1964 block of flats on the edge of Amsterdam Zuidas into a modern residential complex named De Boel which is based on 'share and create'. Residents will share both the electric cars in the garage and a green roof covering a large part of the complex.

'If you want to keep housing really affordable, then you need to create enough supply,' says Vesteda chief executive Gertjan van der Baan. 'Encouragement gets better results than regulation.' One aspect of this, he says is improving infrastructure. 'It is about travelling time, not so much distance,' he says. 'If cities were more accessible, commuting would be simpler and not everyone would have to live in the middle of the city.' Creating mixed communities is also leading to innovation.

One major MRP Development project currently under way is the conversion of the former ministry of social affairs offices in The Hague into housing for both students and refugees. Students will get preferential treatment if they apply for a SOZA home, while refugees will get to mix with students.

INTEGRATED AREAS

We are seeing a big shift from the individual developments of 10 to 15 years ago, in which communal areas, food and transport were not taken into account, to a more integrated approach,' says Bart Meijer, CEO of MRP Development. 'This is changing dramatically. Today we are much more about looking at how buildings compare and relate to everything around them.'

This integrated approach requires the input of both the public and private sector. For example, local authorities are needed to plan infrastructure with an eye on future growth. 'Issues such as the shortage of housing and congestion cannot be solved by one party,' says Nicole Maarsen, CIO Real Estate at Syntrus Achmea. 'The big themes of the day are impossible to solve without alliances. You need an open source approach. I know if we are going to build one million new homes that we will invest in some of them. But we have to work together.'•



The Cartesius Triangle project in Utrecht aims to create the healthiest area in the country

The Holland Metropole: a public private initiative

The Holland Metropole initiative is an alliance between Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Eindhoven and a number of development and investment partners. The aim is to highlight the development opportunities available in the Netherlands' five biggest cities. All five are well known in their own right, but together they form one of the most successful city regions in the world. As Europe's best-connected region, with many international and innovative institutions and stable economic growth, the Holland Metropole offers investors a world-class business and investment climate.

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Cover illustration: The former Campina milk factory in Eindhoven is being converted into a lively mixed use area.