

# Heart of Health

How to develop a healthy Utrecht?

29 April 2025



**Miriam Weber**

Policy Advisor Healthy Urban  
Living & WHO Healthy City  
Coordinator



**Inge Janssen**

Advisor Healthy Urban Living





Let's meet!





4<sup>th</sup> largest city





Surrounded by landscape





Urban facilities — metropolitan & village





Best educated city of the country



# Growth



Inwoners

2020

352.940

2040

455.000



Woningvoorraad

153.845

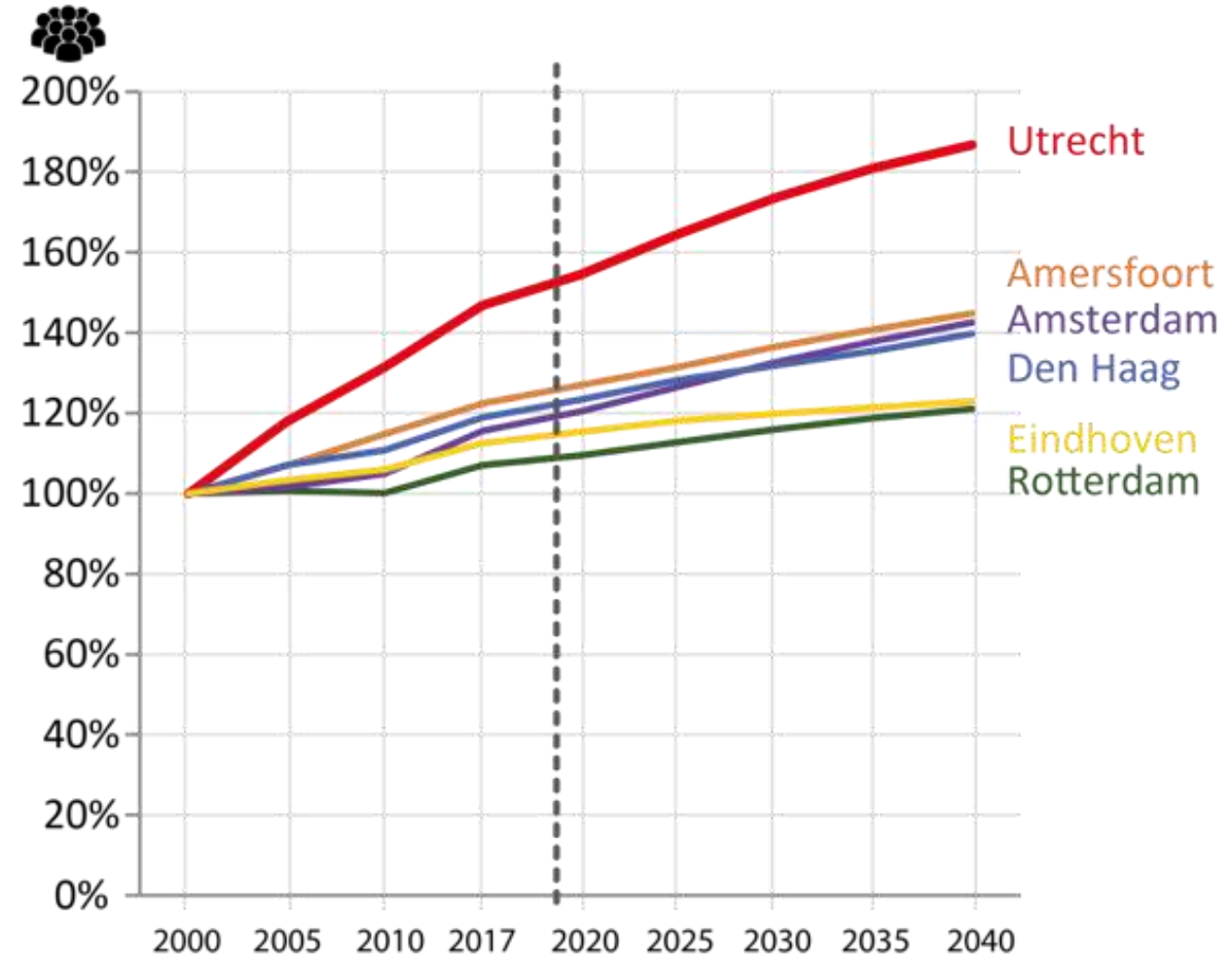
+ 60.000



Banen

261.165

+ 70.000





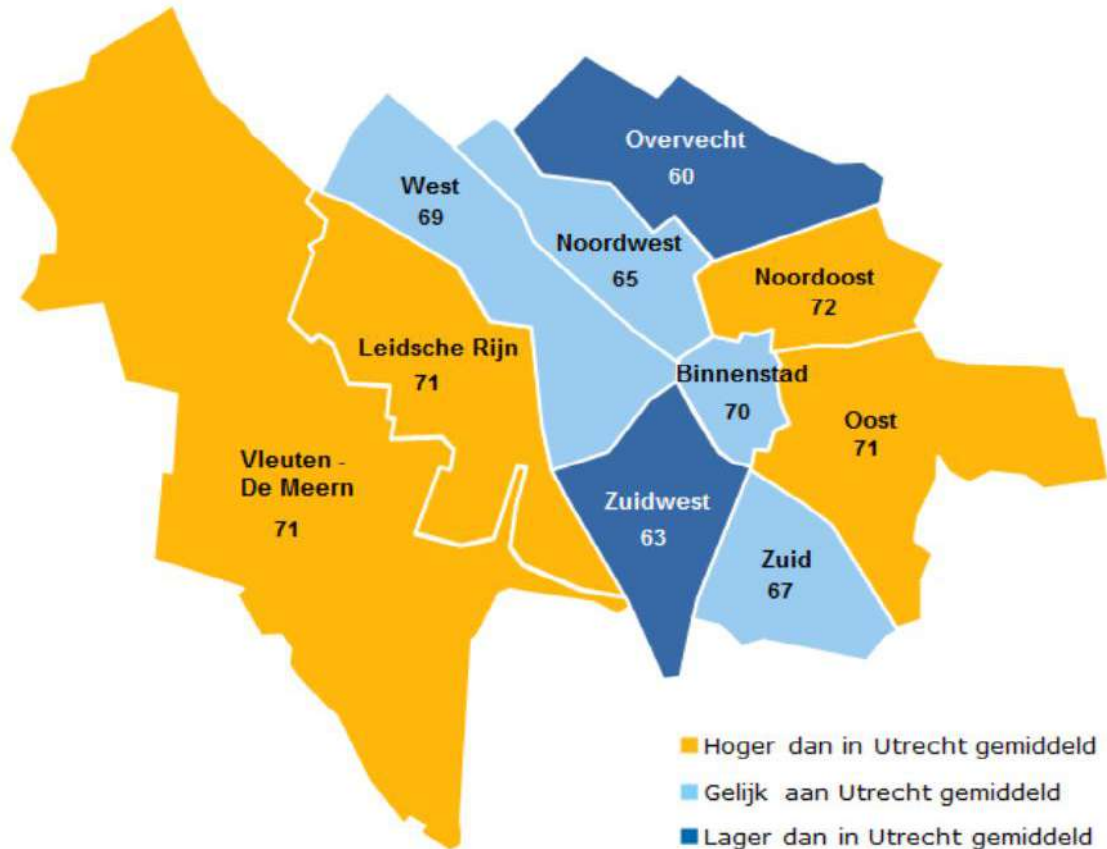
# Our challenges

- Housing
- Public space under pressure
- Economic functions
- Amenities (schools, sports, healthcare)
- Mobility transition
- Energy transition
- Climate change





# Health inequalities



Therefore: Unequal investing for equal opportunities







Utrecht 2040



# Our vision: the 10-minute city

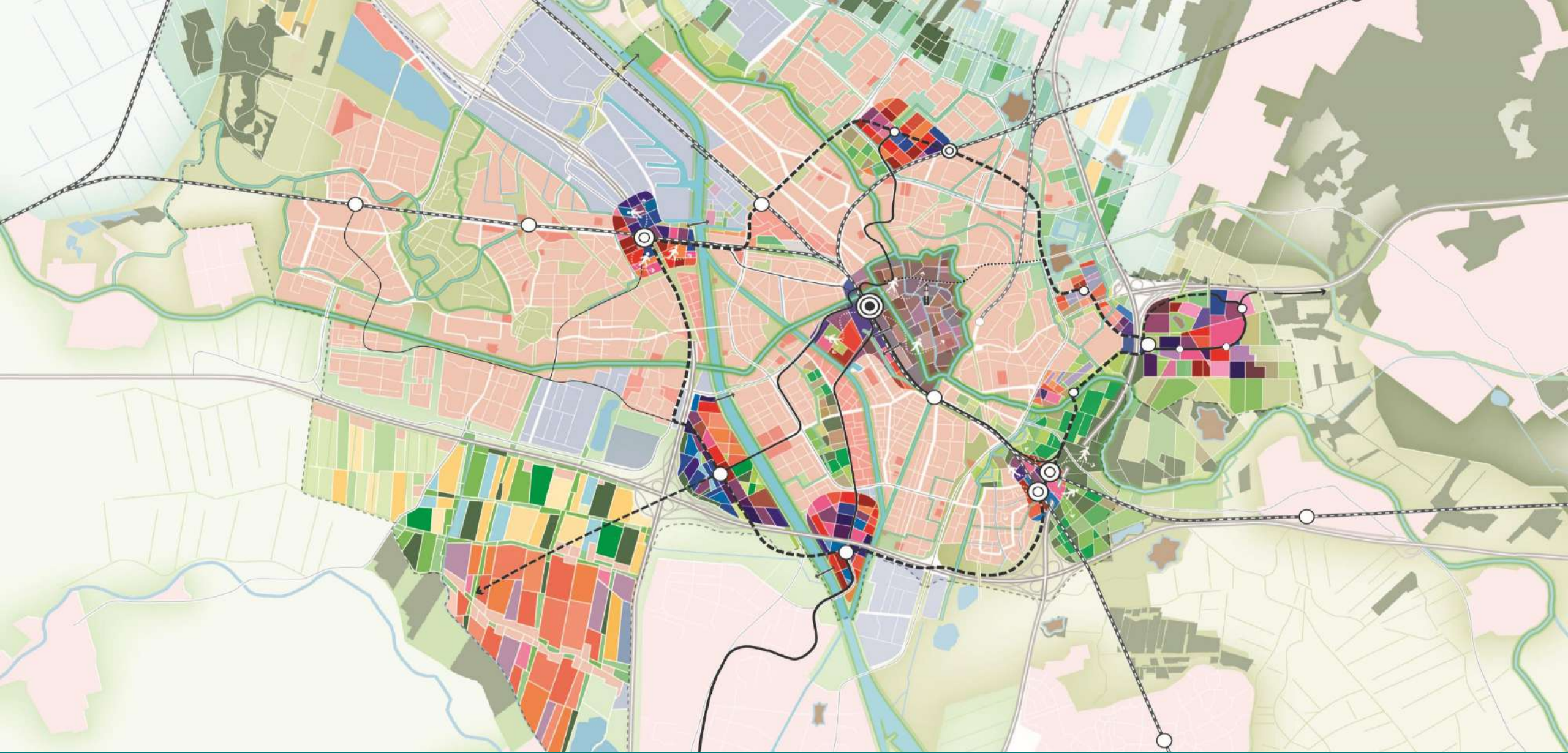
City residents can find everything they require within a 10-minute walk or by bike`.

Crucial factors:

- > proximity
- > diversity
- > density







New strategy



# Spatial Strategy 2040

Utrecht: 10-minute city



# Social Vision Utrecht 2040

Focus on security of existence, a roof above your head, growing up with opportunities and living healthy together



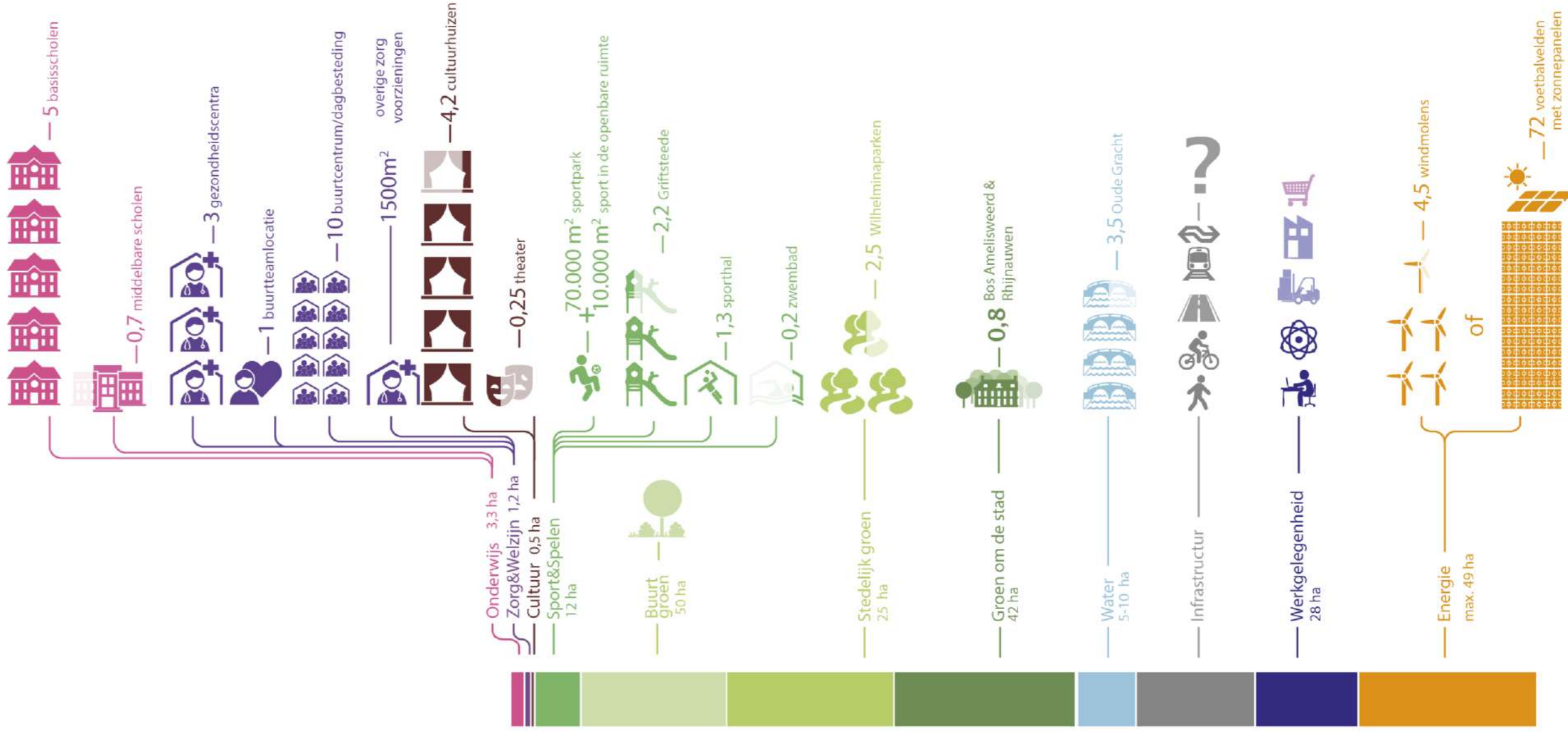


# The Utrecht barcode

- Urbanisation is not just building houses and roads
- But also providing sufficient greenery, water, facilities, infrastructure and energy supply.











Health vision



# Key ambition



**Hoofdambitie  
2040**

In 2040 the health differences in Utrecht between highest and lowest socio-economic groups are reduced with 30%

## **Beleidsnota** Gezondheid



**Samen gezondheidsverschillen  
verkleinen 2024 - 2027**

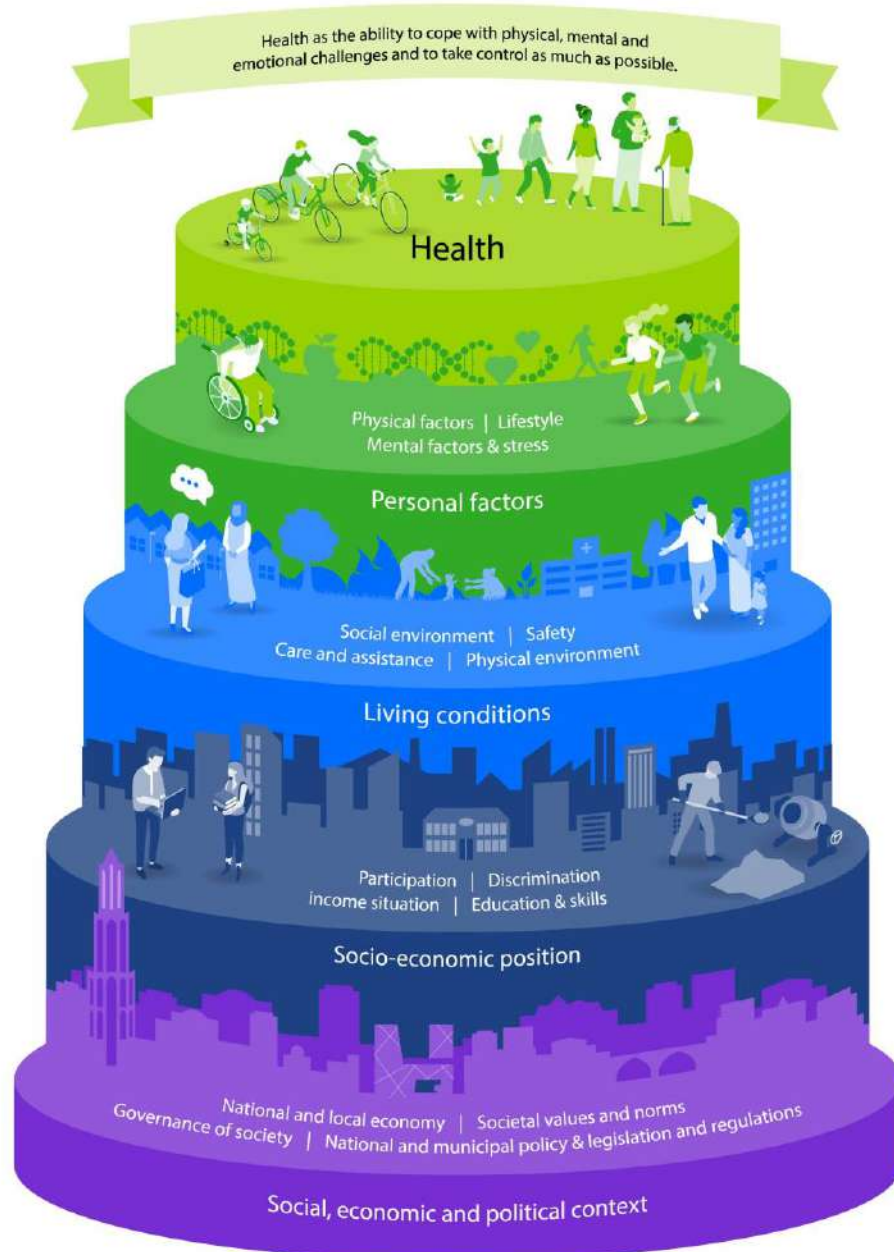


Gemeente Utrecht

Utrecht.nl



# Utrecht Health Model



## Focus health policy

Healthy habits

Mental health

Healthy environment

Social and human capital

Income security and  
employment

Healthy society

## Because...

Most important themes  
where health disadvantage  
is manifest  
*(national en local data)*

Most impactful underlying  
societal causes for health  
inequalities  
*(WHO)*

For working effectively we  
need changes in national  
policy (incl. legislation) and  
societal values and norms



# Healthy urban environment

Utrecht residents are protected against **negative environmental actors**.

The physical environment supports / facilitates **healthy lifestyles**.

The physical environment increases **‘social fabric’ in neighbourhoods**.







# Shifts in thinking



# 1: Mobility

- Prioritize clean ways to travel
- Improve the livability of the streetscape







Priority to pedestrians



# Bike infrastructure

- Is more than just bikelanes
- 12.500 bikes can be stored in the new parking







Excellent public transport

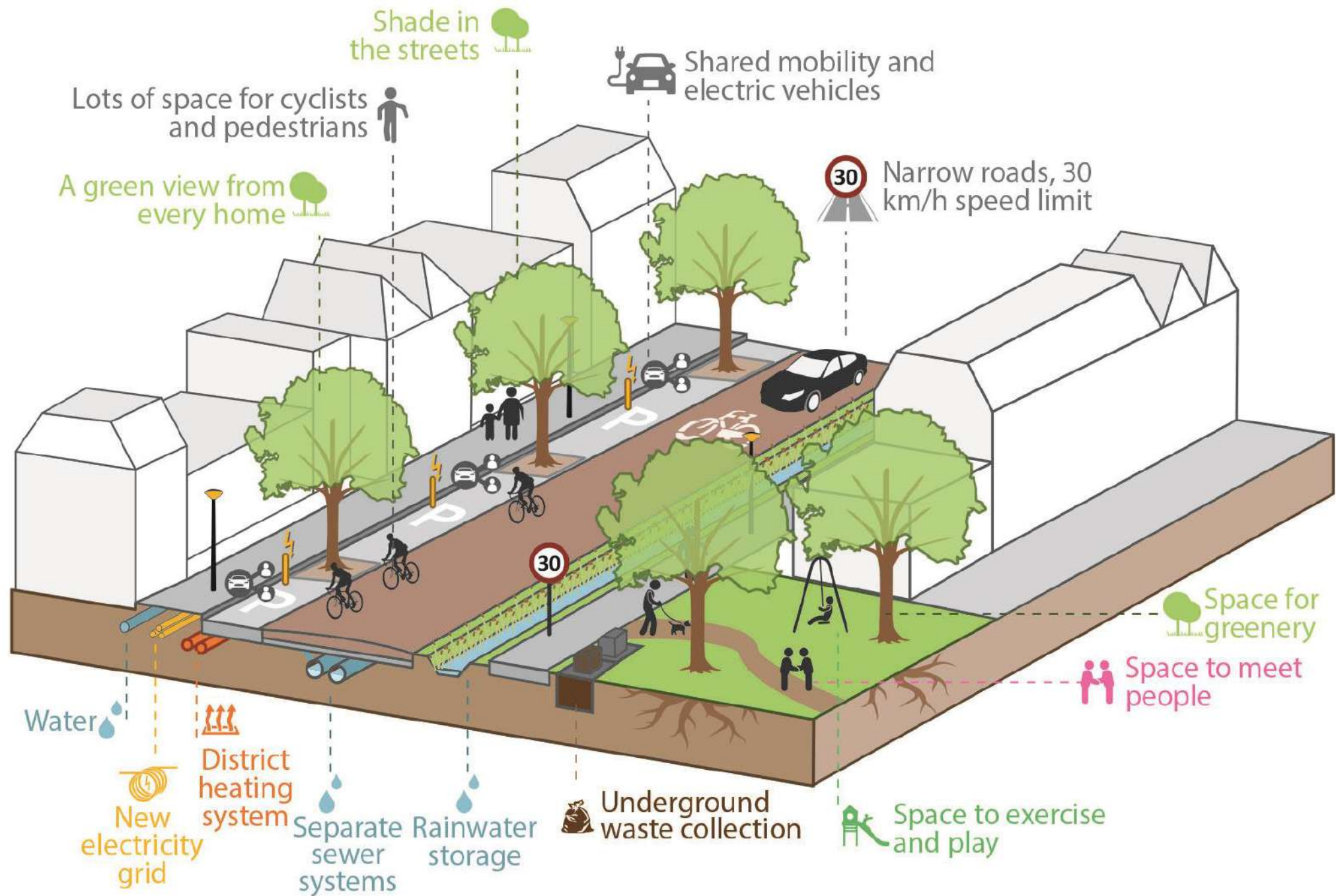


## 2: Redesign of streets

- Add quality for bikes/pedestrians
- Add green wherever possible

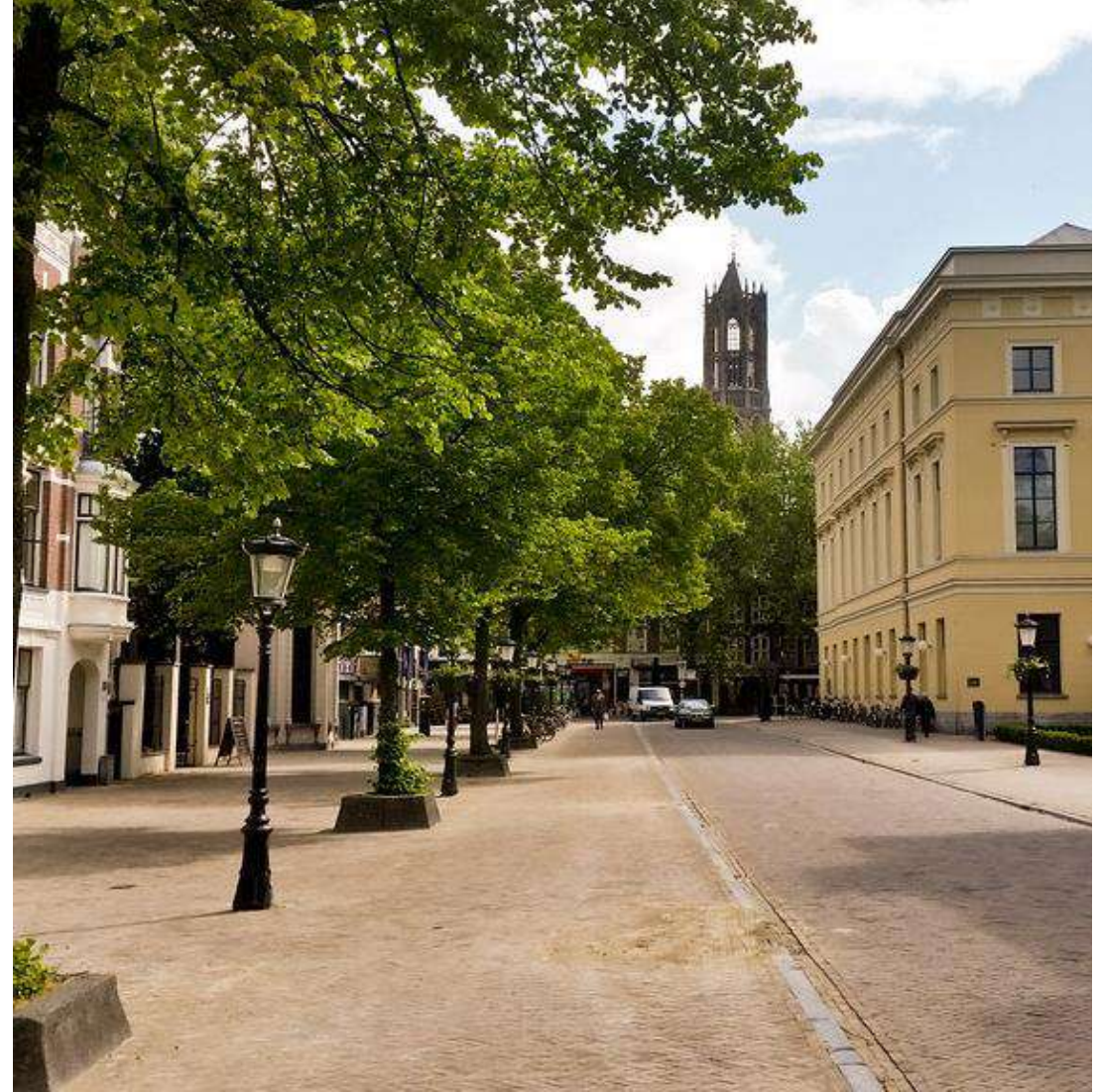








# Example: Mariaplaats





# Example: Catharijnesingel

## From car orientation to quality





# 3: Urban nature

- Connect the city to the surrounding landscape
- Add qualitative green within the city





# Green planning

Multifunctional use,  
integrating (policy) goals  
on e.g.

- > Climate adaptation
- > Biodiversity
- > Health (promotion and prevention)
- > Equity (available, accessible, affordable)





# Landscape starts at front door





# Iconic housing projects



# Merwede

A large-scale Urban densification project

- 6000 apartments
- 50% green roofs with water retention
- 50% roofs with solar panels
- A new park
- Car free

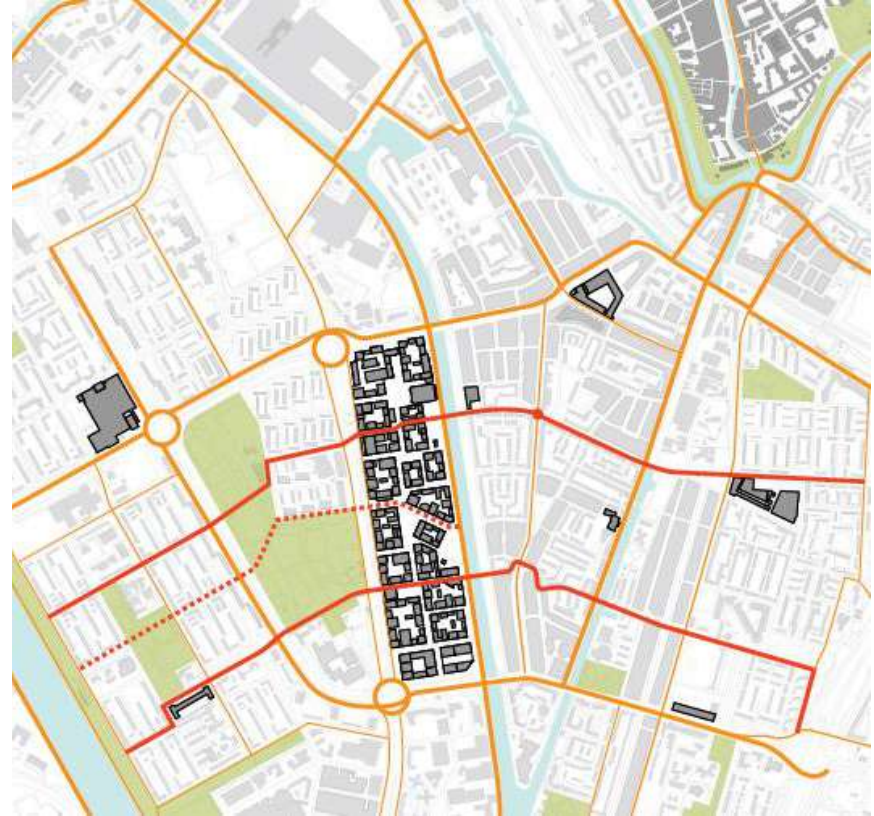
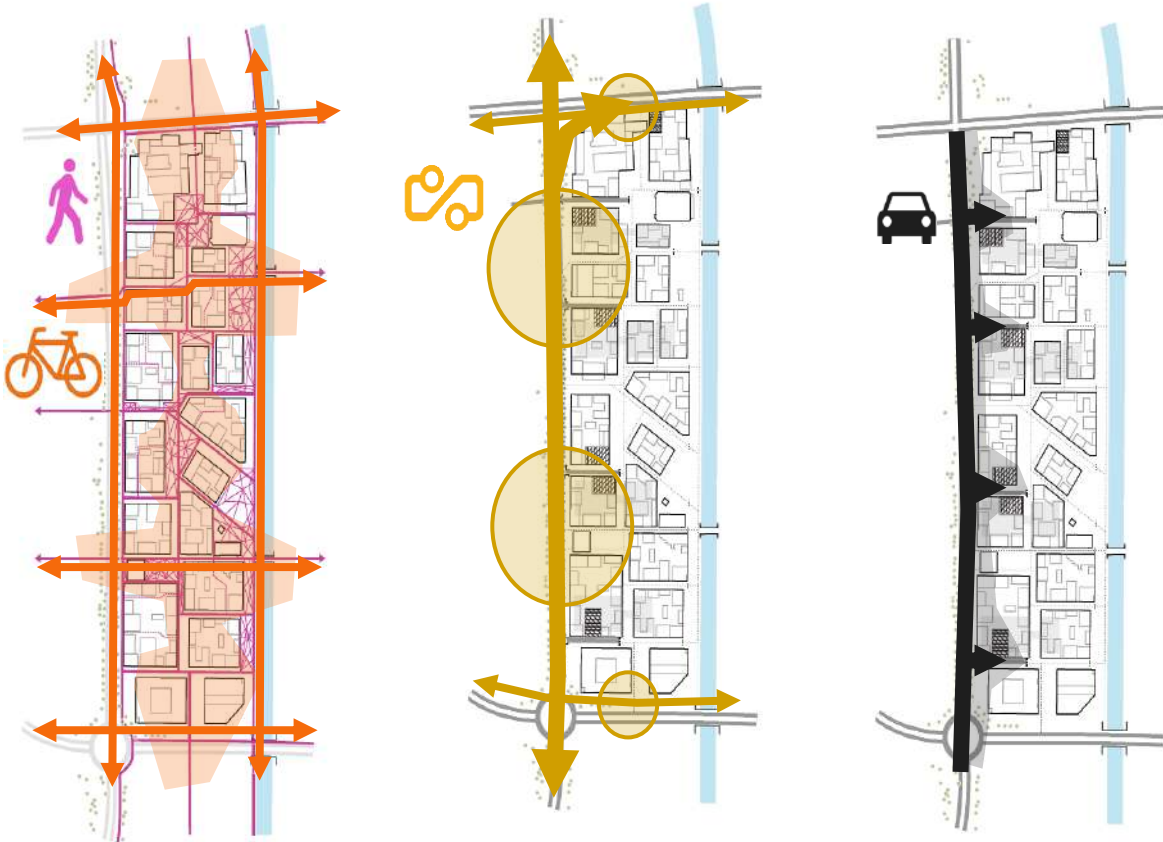






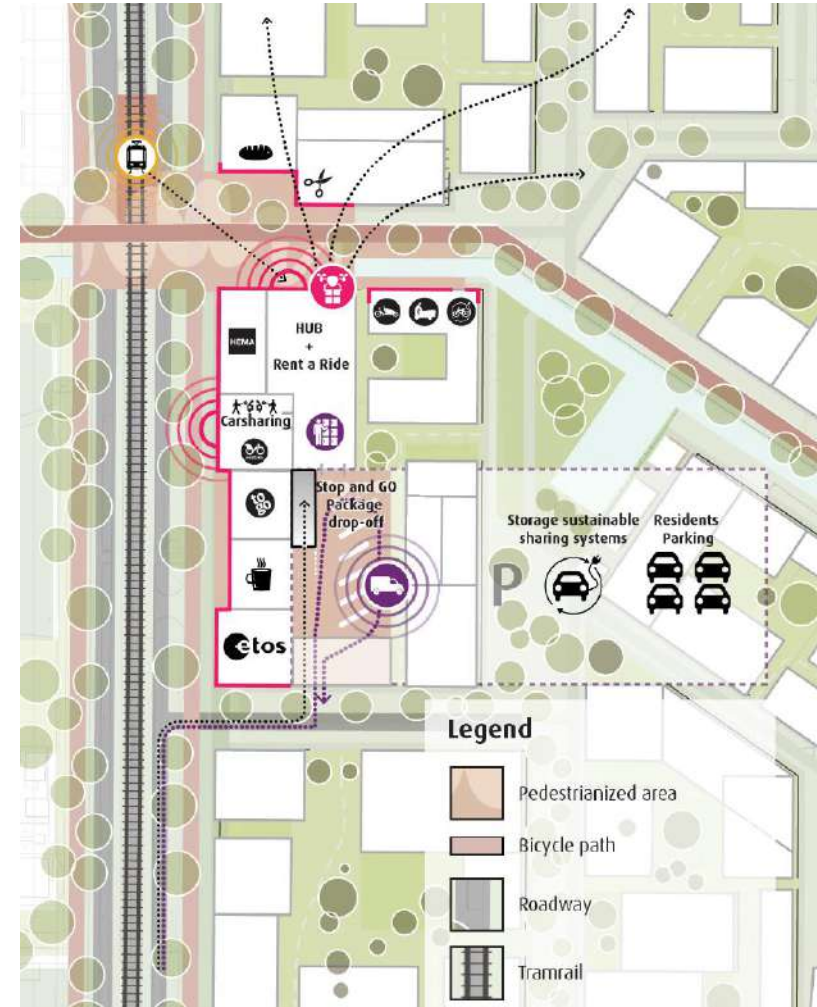


# Smart networks





# 0,3 parking place per house





# Climate proof and as green as possible



Intuitive navigation



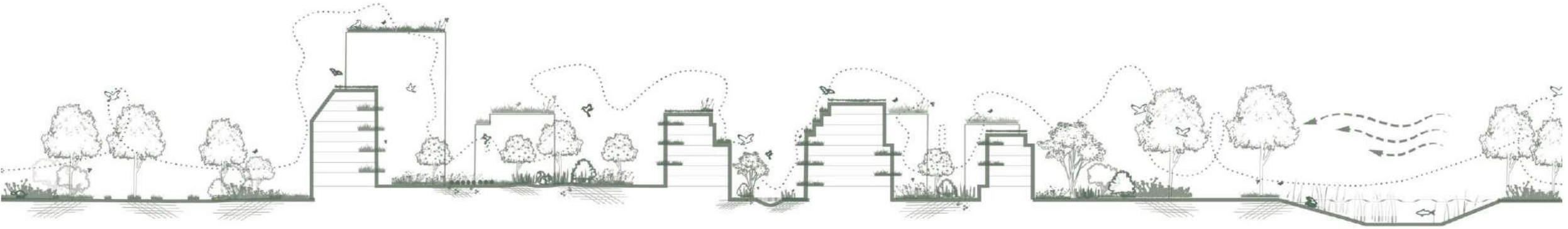
Rich city nature



Active public space



# Biodiversity







# Beurskwartier





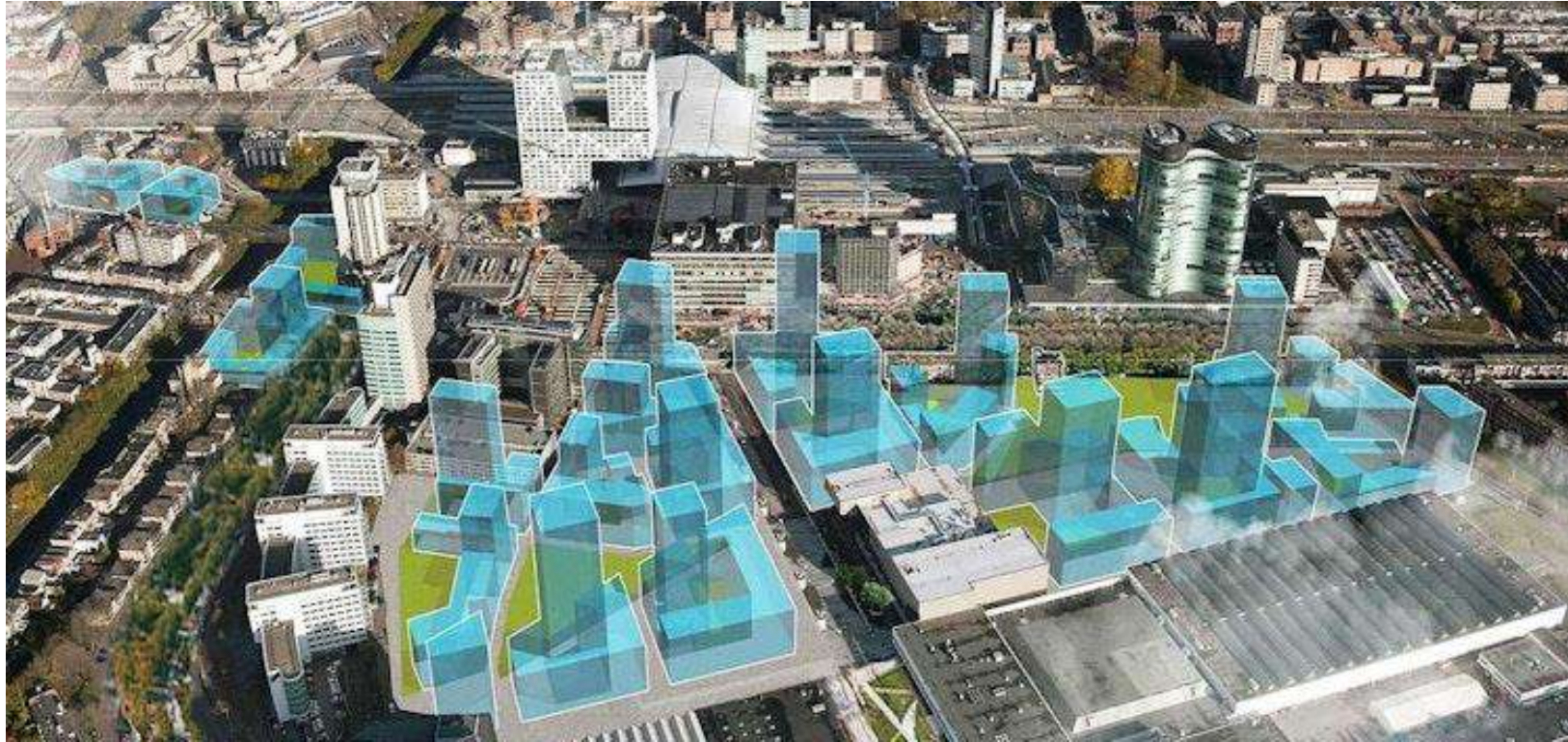
# Beurskwartier

- Highly urban mix: Living, Working, and Leisure
- 2.500 -3.000 apartments, of which 35% social housing.
- 50.000 m2 office.
- Elementary school, supermarket, health centre.
- Restaurants, cafés and coffee corners





# Beurskwartier





# Beurskwartier

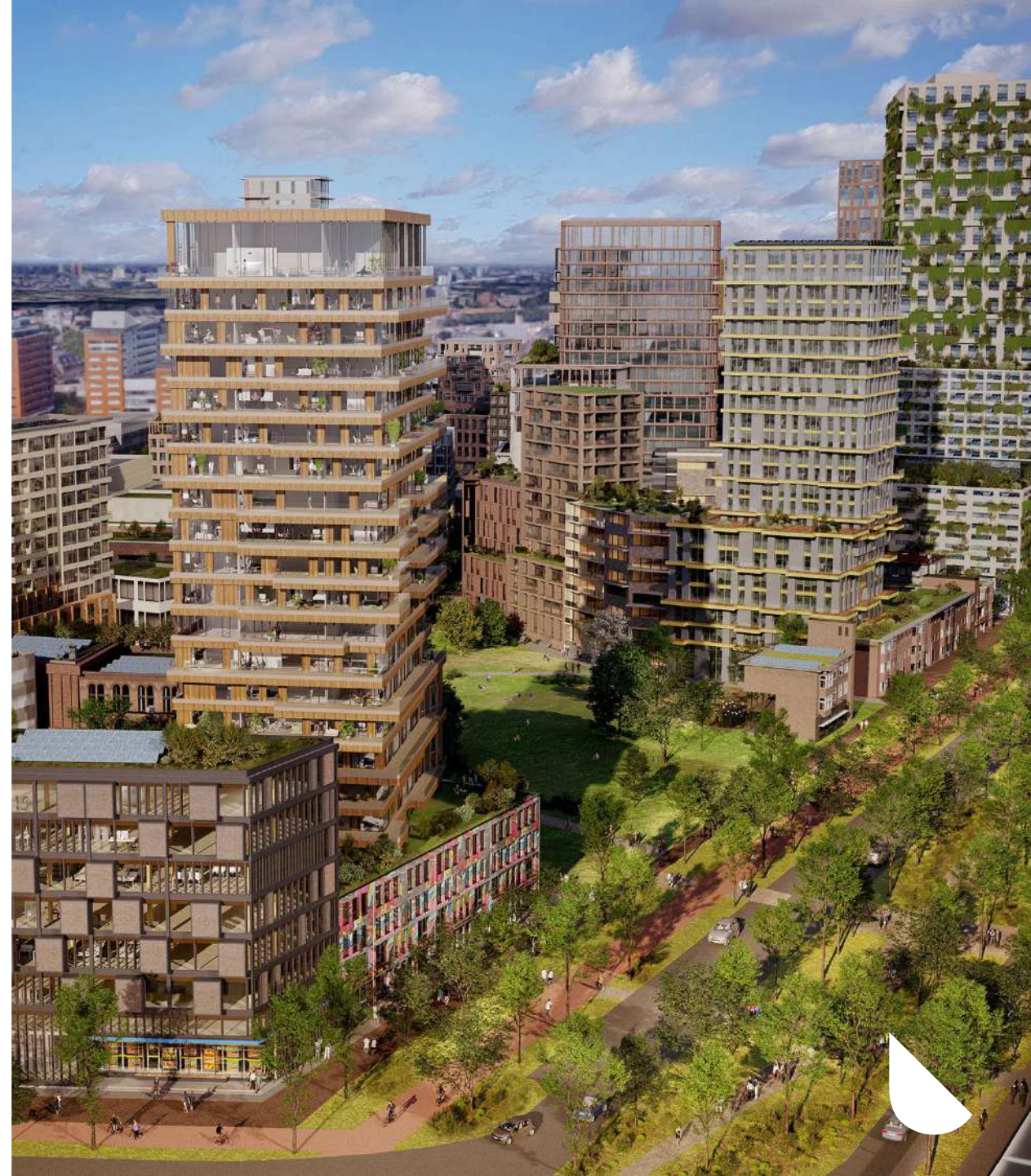
Highly urban and still  
green





# Beurskwartier

- Building blocks surrounded by green
- Indoor waste collection
- Shared courtyards
- Cyclist and pedestrian are the priority
- Car free district – no parking spaces
- Community-building program





# Miriam Weber PhD

Senior policy advisor

[m.weber@utrecht.nl](mailto:m.weber@utrecht.nl)

[heartofhealth.com](http://heartofhealth.com)

