



# RAGGED BUT RIGHT

15 YEARS OF  
THE PIUSHAVEN  
URBAN DEVELOPMENT  
PROJECT IN TILBURG,  
THE NETHERLANDS



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5	FOREWORD
7	TIMELINE
9	PIUSHAVEN
11	<b>1 FROM A PROCESS TO CONSTRUCTION</b>
21	<b>2 WHAT CAN YOU ACTUALLY SEE?</b>
29	<b>3 THE ROAD FROM Aa TO Bé</b>
39	<b>4 RED DISTRICT IN A YELLOW CITY</b>
49	<b>5 LETTING GO OF THE HELM</b>
59	<b>6 MANY CAPTAINS IN THIS HARBOUR</b>
69	<b>7 WILL IT EVER BE FINISHED?</b>
77	LIST OF INTERVIEWEES
78	PUBLISHER'S IMPRINT



In 1867, the people of Tilburg spontaneously started calling the road from Hilvarenbeek to 'the Fen' *Piusstraat* (Pious Street). The name stuck. *Piushaven*, a 'papal harbour', followed in 1923 and may well be the only Pious Harbour in the world! The street and harbour were named after Pius IX, the 'infallible pope', in a period when young men from all over the world were being called on to defend catholic Rome as Papal Zouaves. Dozens of Tilburg men answered the call.

The urban development plans for the area (in 1976 and 1990, among others) referred to 'recreational developments', but the plans never came about, and the Piushaven district long remained in a deep sleep. And then, in 2001, everything changed. The district has been kissed awake, like a sleeping beauty. This book is about the rise of Piushaven, the spontaneous people of Tilburg and the (in)fallibility of plans.

The book shines a light on the fascinating process of urban development in Piushaven from various angles. Plans that were made and plans that were implemented. Changes that took care of themselves, changes that required encouragement, changes that had to be forced. Some things seemed to happen by chance, when 'everything fell into place in the space of a weekend'.

You could compare a city in transition to a river. You can build barriers and dams, or do nothing; the water will flow on. Are successful urban planners like trend-watchers, with an infallible nose for the unavoidable? 'Plans only serve to postpone what's going to happen anyway ...' is how a colleague described it.

Are plans really merely 'retrospective conceptual visions', a result of the historical falsification of development?

The development plan for the historic city centre of 1976 struggled with the notion of makeability. The term 'process plan' was regularly used as an alternative to the standard 'blueprint'. The euphoria that accompanied the rapid suburban expansion contrasted starkly with the slow and painstaking development of the city centre, piece by piece. Even political manoeuvring to undermine the position of adversaries failed to help.

Much has been achieved in the Piushaven district in a short space of time. But how did this come about? Was it the spontaneous initiatives of the local residents and businesses that kindled a smouldering fire? Who was it that joined all the dots in this network of events? And who will connect this network with the future?

If you ask a group of great musicians to improvise freely, the result will initially be a cacophony. But gradually, the tonalities, rhythms and melodies will merge into a melodious whole. Maybe this is the mystery that this book unravels: how great musicians can make great music together.

Finally, a city is not an inanimate object; it flows, just as music does. The show must go on. If you stop the music, all you get is silence; the silence of emptiness.

**Jaap Vromans**

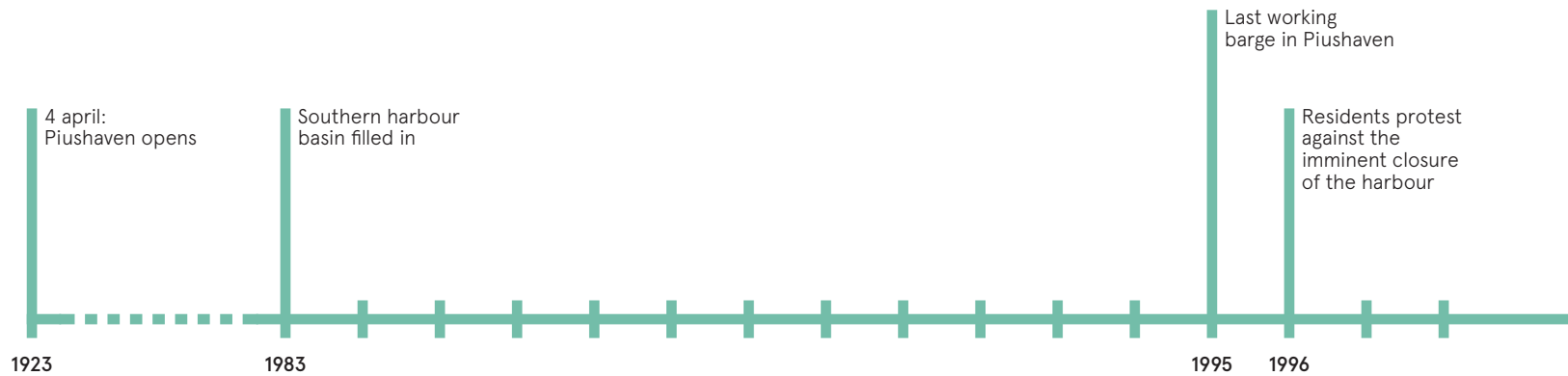
Urban planner in Tilburg (1972–2005)



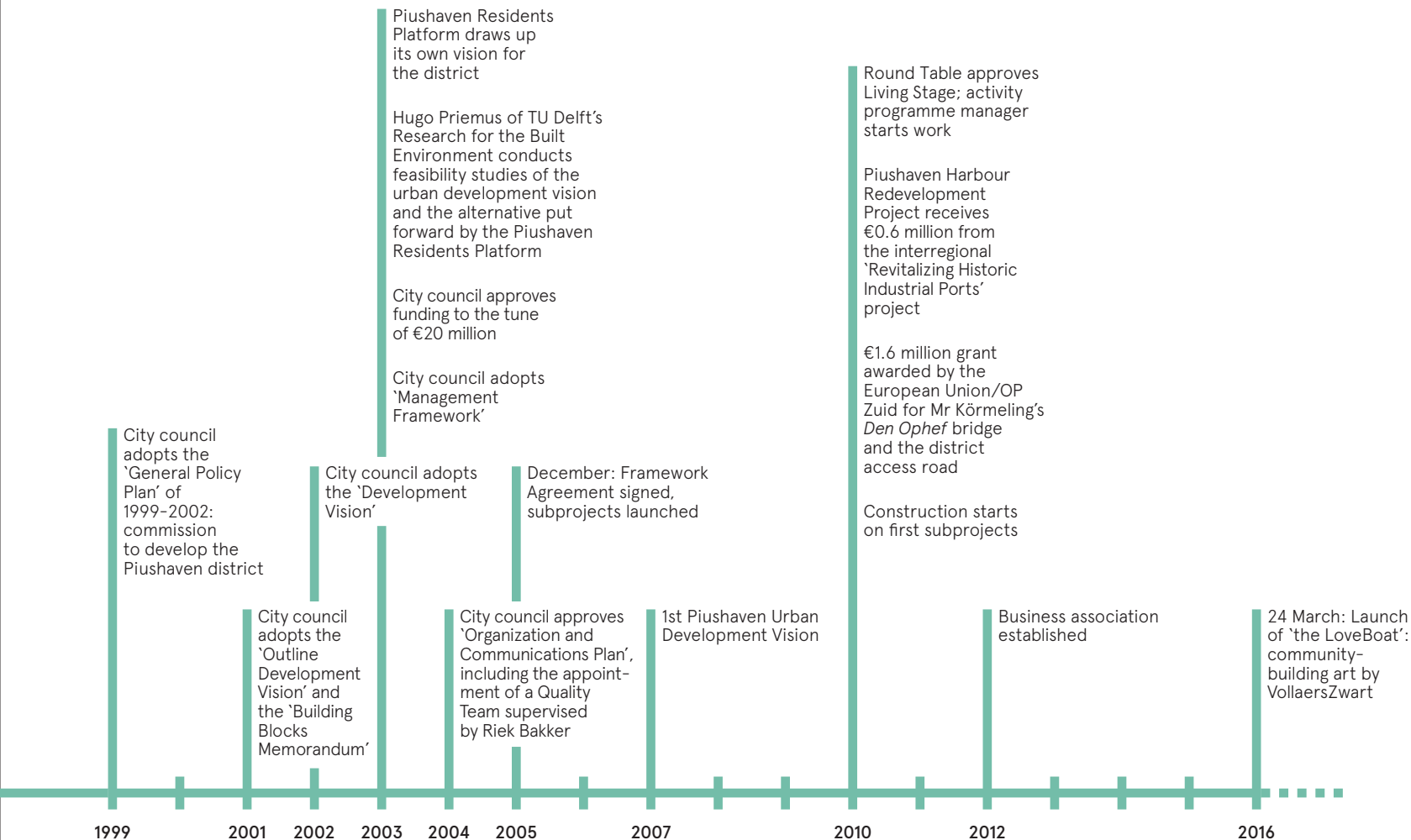
Piushaven in the 1930s (view from Cafe Havenzicht)

## TIMELINE

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**1500** new homes

**568** homes completed by 2016

**132** homes put on the market in 2016

Public sector housing:

20%

Private sector housing:

80%

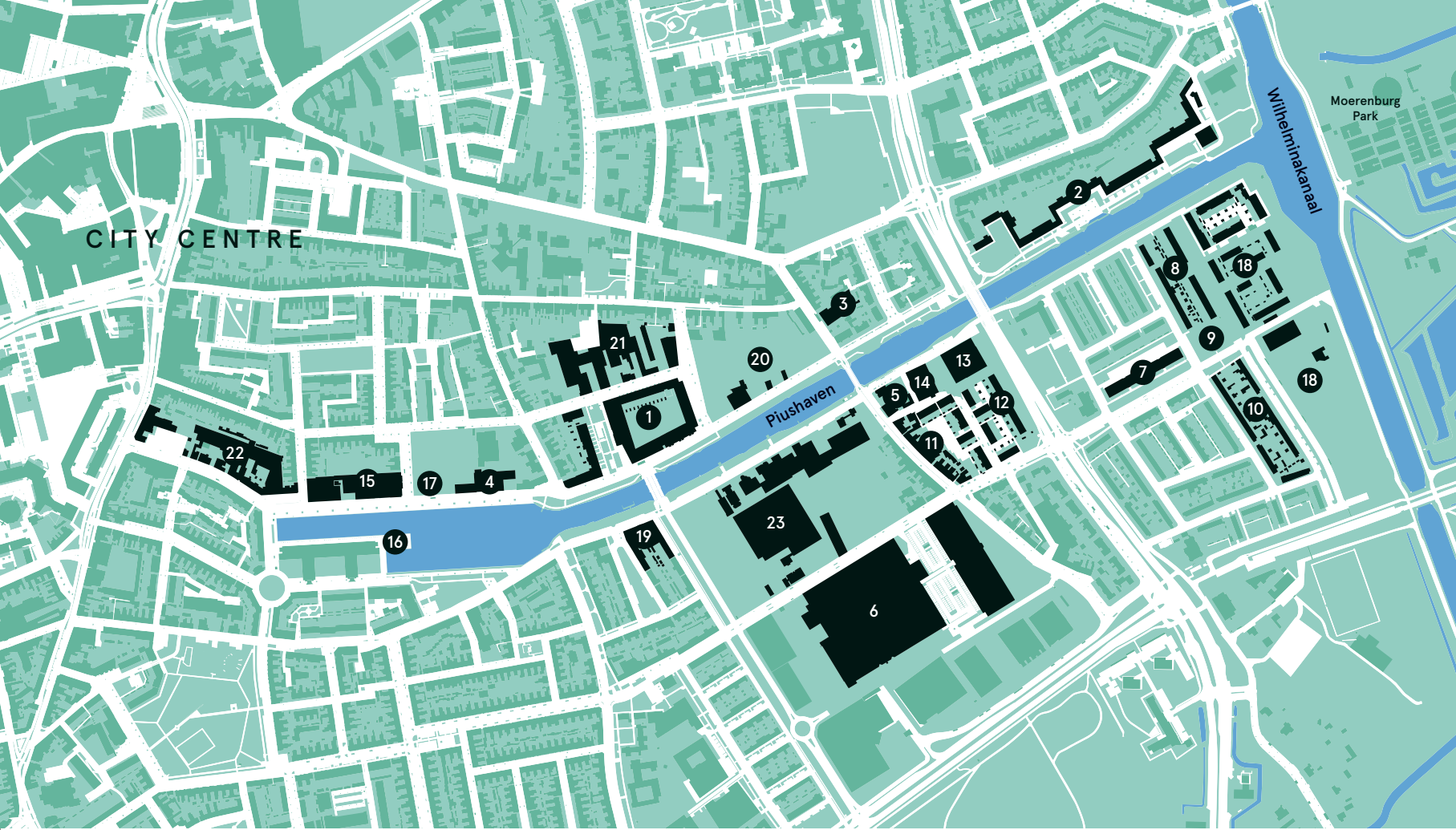
Apartments:

50%

Terrace housing:

50%

- 1 **HAVENMEESTER**  
Van der Weegen,  
housing corporation  
WonenBreborg  
homes: 237  
public space: 1400 m<sup>2</sup>
- 2 **DE WERF**  
Triborgh  
Gebiedsontwikkeling  
homes: 99  
public space: 140 m<sup>2</sup>
- 3 **HEALTH CENTRE**  
Van Helden & Thomas  
public space: 2100 m<sup>2</sup>
- 4 **DE ADMIRAAL**  
Van der Weegen,  
housing corporation  
homes: 24  
public space: 2300 m<sup>2</sup>
- 5 **VILLA PASTORIE  
BED & BREAKFAST**  
public space: 500 m<sup>2</sup>
- 6 **AaBé FACTORY**  
Bouwinvest, Rialto  
public space: 28000 m<sup>2</sup>  
project completion:  
2014–2017
- 7 **HOUBENSTAETE  
(JERUZALEM)**  
Tiws, housing corporation  
homes: 54
- 8 **TWENTESTRAAT NOORD  
(JERUZALEM)**  
Tiws, housing corporation  
homes: 24  
project completion: 2016
- 9 **TWENTESTRAAT VELUWE-  
STRAAT (JERUZALEM)**  
Tiws, housing corporation  
homes: 25  
project completion: 2017
- 10 **TWENTESTRAAT ZUID  
(JERUZALEM)**  
Tiws, housing corporation  
homes: 22  
project completion: 2016
- 11 **LOURDESPLEIN FASE 1**  
Van de Ven Bouw  
& Ontwikkeling  
homes: 42
- 12 **LOURDESPLEIN FASE 2**  
Van de Ven Bouw  
& Ontwikkeling  
homes: 16  
project completion: 2017
- 13 **LOURDESPLEIN FASE 3**  
Van de Ven Bouw  
& Ontwikkeling  
homes: 77  
project completion: 2017
- 14 **IJZERGIETERIJ**  
Krens Ten Brinke  
homes: 18  
public space: 130 m<sup>2</sup>  
project completion: 2016
- 15 **PIUSHAVEN 20/21**  
public space: 1800 m<sup>2</sup>
- 16 **RESTAURANT ON THE PIER**  
Orion  
public space: 150 m<sup>2</sup>  
project completion: 2017
- 17 **STADSKADE**  
BPD gebiedsontwikkeling  
homes: 49  
project completion: 2017
- 18 **AAN DE WATERKANT**  
Triborgh  
Gebiedsontwikkeling  
homes: 297  
project completion  
in phases: start in 2015
- 19 **WOLSTAD**  
Triborgh  
Gebiedsontwikkeling  
homes: 20
- 20 **SPINAKE**  
homes: 126
- 21 **GALJOENSTRAAT NOORD**  
Van der Weegen and others  
homes: 79
- 22 **KOOPVAARDIJSTRAAT**  
various property  
developers  
number of homes  
to be determined
- 23 **FABRIEKSKWARTIER  
NOORD**  
Triborgh and others  
homes: 294









# FROM A PROCESS TO CON- STRUCTION

# 1

In 2001, Tilburg's city council made a major decision: the dilapidated industrial zone of Piushaven was to be transformed into a lively residential area. Although only a short distance from the city centre, the water flowing through the district would give it its own unique character. The council reserved €20 million to develop the project. Although this was not the first plan for the Piushaven district – the harbour area had been saved in the nick of time from an inglorious future as an access road to the city centre – the council's decision proved to be the start of a dynamic process, strongly influenced by the initiatives of local residents, barge skippers, businesses, property developers, and the council itself. This process has not reached its conclusion yet, but it has already resulted in a mosaic of projects, all connected by the theme of water. This publication celebrates the 15th anniversary of the partnership between the Piushaven Urban Development Project and the City of Tilburg.

The reader can get a taste of the power and energy of this district in seven articles. The first article attempts to describe the spirit of the area: what underpins the identity of Piushaven and the development process itself?

Of course, the history of the Piushaven district goes back much further than the urban development projects of the past fifteen years. The harbour was dug in the 1920s as a branch off the Wilhelminakanaal. It was to be used by the local industries to transport goods over water. Lorries gained popularity in the 1950s, but they could not get through the narrow streets surrounding Tilburg's harbour area. Businesses started to leave the district and by 1981 most of the harbour was vacant property. The council needed land to build social housing and decided to fill in the top end of the harbour and grant the land to the social housing developer Woonzorg Nederland under leasehold. In 1984, a complex of 120 social houses arose, a development that now sadly clashes with the surrounding area.

The city council prepared a masterplan for the development of more housing and this plan was confirmed in a management document in 2003. The plan was to build 2500 houses and make drastic changes and improvements to the public spaces and the accessibility of the harbour area. The council planned to do this together with property developers (in fact this was a requirement; the council owned almost

none of the land) and signed an agreement with them in 2005. A new project leader was also installed in the same period, Thérèse Mol. 'In the fifteen years preceding my appointment there had been many different project leaders. The director at the time, Adri van Grinsven, welcomed me with the words: "process, process, process and cranes",' Mol says. Van Grinsven meant that Piushaven is all about processes, from an action group for each individual tree to communicating with residents, barge skippers and property developers. 'And the city was really ready for the cranes,' explains Mol. They had spent plenty of time talking; now it was time



for action. Piushaven was to be transformed into an inviting, beautiful, but not too polished residential area.

From creating to growing

We feel more comfortable in spaces that have developed naturally than in spaces that people have created artificially. An urban development that has been strictly laid out with new buildings is less pleasant to be in than an area that conveys a sense of organic growth. Organic design is a slower process and makes use of already existing elements. The original character of the area is retained, and the art is to contribute something meaningful that at least respects the existing values, but preferably results in revitalization. The layers of history make an area recognizable and pleasant to be in. An area that has reached its final form – or where history has been added through theme park-like interventions – may well be an attractive place to live or work in, but it will remain one-dimensional. An area such as the Palace District in Den Bosch has been overdesigned; the pendulum has swung too far towards the new-builds, and so the area must develop a completely new identity to make it attractive. The historical stratification is lost. This is an example of a rigid dividing line between modern design and historical elements. For the user, the area lacks soul. At the same time, the new-build developments are planned to last for years, and so the area feels static. It requires tremendous courage to recognize this and subsequently



a gigantic effort to change it. Piushaven was also once constrained by a fixed and systematic plan. Ludo Hermans, an urban planner for Tilburg's municipal Council explains how this plan was changed drastically after 2003. The original plan to build 2500 homes was changed to 1500, of which approximately half have been completed. 'The first design was for apartments only, but over the years we saw that this would not meet the demands of the housing market in Tilburg and the Piushaven region,' he explains. 'But with the advent of the crisis, the market for apartments ground to a complete standstill.' In the end, the number of apartments was reduced and more

single-family homes were planned, which has led to a smaller scale and more diverse building development plan. 'We are careful to ensure that every project harmonizes with the district as a whole,' says Hermans. 'We do not want to become just another version of the standard suburban housing estate.' Mol thinks it is the diversity of the district that gives it its strength. 'The residential developments each have their own character, offering various products,' she says. 'You can choose for a rural setting, a terrace house, a high-rise apartment, or a typical city home, all in the Piushaven district.' There is also a vibrant mixture of residents, she continues. 'Young families, people whose children are out of the house and who want to return to the city, people who regretted their decision to move further out of town to the Reeshof district; all these groups might otherwise never have moved to this district. Now they live here.'

Piushaven still has more homes per hectare than the surrounding districts. Urban planner Hermans stresses that this is why it is so important for the council and the property developers to jointly invest in the district's public spaces. The people live closer together and so public spaces are more important to them. 'The harbour itself is the perfect open space,' he explains. To protect its character, he cancelled the original plans to demolish all the old buildings. Some of these buildings have been redeveloped, so now you can still see old warehouses and factory buildings. This enormous area has been divided into

a great many small and clear-cut subprojects that together form a whole. But still the designers have been able to prevent it becoming a jumble of miscellaneous and random ideas; the district has remained strongly cohesive. The key to this cohesion is the water.

#### Water as a barrier

The water means different things to different people; so much became clear from the interviews that were held for this publication. It is not always easy to describe these meanings in clear terms. Of course, in the beginning, the long canal was primarily an enormous barrier between the districts, despite the two existing bridges. The viaduct that carries the eastern ring road rises far above everything and will not get you to the harbour. The small swing bridge, operated by a bridgemaister, was more of a bottleneck than an effective connecting road. The residents to the north and south also experienced the harbour as a watery barrier. There were huge cultural gaps between the Armhoef and Jeruzalem neighbourhoods, on opposite banks of the water. It was mainly the Armhoef residents who, in the early stages of the project, worried that too many houses were planned. They were not against housing development per se, just as long it was not on their side of the harbour.

The barrier was removed in a single stroke thanks to the construction of the *D'n Ophef* bridge. 'Together with the residents, we drew up an illustrated programme of requirements

for a bridge to connect the two sides of the harbour,' explains Mol. This formed a source of inspiration for John Körmeling, the bridge's architect.' The effect of this intervention was enormous, resulting in two new routes to the harbour and connecting a complete neighbourhood (Fatima) to Piushaven.

#### Private space

The water now brings people together and at the same time creates important personal space, as it is described in the branding campaign for the district and the subprojects. The majority of the building developments face the water and have a relationship with the harbour, but they are all very different. The space required by an individual building project can be compared with the personal space that people require to feel comfortable. The more disparity between old and new and between the various subprojects, the more space required to bridge these differences and create a harmonious whole. The water is this space.

In talks with residents and other actors such as the architect John Körmeling, it became clear that the rawness that characterized the old Piushaven continued to define the sensation of the place. Fortunately, the design moved away from the originally-planned monotony of large apartment blocks on the quayside. The decision to develop individual projects for each section of the district and to cast aside the masterplan was a good one. If the designers had tried to

create harmony with bricks, they would have wasted an opportunity; the harmony is achieved through the water. Wandering through the area, the surprises are the architectural icons, dotted throughout the district. The rawness and pureness has been retained because old and new are able to coexist. Moreover, Piushaven is not just a single story, and certainly not only the city council's story. The interviews reveal a mosaic of stakeholder participation; a catalogue of experiences, successes and ambitions. Some are thrilled by the increase in cafes and restaurants, while others are concerned about the nuisance these may cause. Success has many fathers, and behind it lie many stories.

#### Give and take

One way to ensure you make the right choices is to work together with the stakeholders: the residents, the business people, the property developers and the council. In some ways this is just like a game, with rules of play and right and wrong ways of cooperating. Mol believes it is one of the reasons for Piushaven's success, although the process was not always entirely harmonious. In 2003, BPP, the Piushaven Residents Platform, submitted its own urban development plan, in which all apartments were placed on the south side of the harbour, while the north side remained thinly populated. The plan proved unfeasible, but the residents were given a voice in the management committee, together with the property developers, which gave them the power to impede the plans. 'The concerns of

Tilburg recently re-evaluated its core values. They are summarized in a promotional book about the city centre, *Bidbook van de Tilburgse Binnenstad*, as 'experimental, social and decisive'. They apply perfectly to Piushaven!



the residents were understandable, because the first plans provided for lots of high-rises that would be built against the existing low-rise housing,’ says Mol. ‘But it ended up costing me years to manoeuvre the residents into a more suitable advisory role.’

The residents now have real advisory powers in all projects, including changes to the public spaces. Their ideas are taken seriously, and if they are rejected, the council and the property developer must be able to provide good reasons why. The management committee was transformed – without the residents – into the Round Table, a consultative body that only decides on the promotional activities for the district and Living Stage (the foundation that organizes activities in the district). The commitment of the residents – and certainly also the business community – to Living Stage and other activities in the district is one of the pillars of Piushaven. But this commitment is also visible even when no activities are planned. An example was the recent presentation of the Love Boat, a work of light art that floats in the harbour.

From east to west

The Round Table consultation, chaired by supervisor Riek Bakker, proved a useful instrument because it suited another important choice that was made in the urban development plan, which was to separate the plan into phases. ‘We had earlier decided to work from east to west, or north to south,’ says Mol. ‘It is a very



good thing we did not do that, because otherwise the subprojects would have delayed each other, and a lot less would have been achieved. We at the council now see ourselves more as a spider in a web. The first plan we made for the district was a finished document, and we thought: ‘now we can sit back and watch it happen.’ But that’s not the way it works. We adapted to the realities of the real estate market, engaged in a dialogue and searched for feasible solutions. The Round Table is an example of that dialogue.’ In this consultation, all the independently working property developers come together and so ensure that the individual subprojects do not become isolated from the rest. Such consultation is rare in urban development and typical for the Tilburg approach.



In this approach, all the stakeholders have the opportunity to leave their own stamp on the district. It started with mobilizing people to prevent the harbour being filled in, but the call to 'keep your hands off our Piushaven' also resounded in the resistance to the endless lines of apartments that were original planned along the banks of the harbour. Today, many residents participate with rubbish sticks and bags in the annual clean-up day to make 'their' Piushaven litter-free. The businesses that moved into the district have also since made a place for themselves by assuming 'ownership' of a piece of Piushaven. Ownership takes many forms, such as active citizenship or entrepreneurship. The question is whether you can have too many owners. Paradoxically, it is the formal owners – the property developers with their 'hit-and-run' methods – who often display a lack of ownership. To be fair, their primary objective is to turn the value of their real estate into money. Property developers need space to do their work, and without their work, Piushaven would not have an economic foundation to build on. However, if you left them to do their thing, you would risk a uniformity in design that nobody would benefit from. Just like the barge skippers, residents and businesses in the district, they needed to be convinced of the importance of heterogeneity as a core quality of the area, so that their plans would also result in nuance, flexibility and liveliness. The article about the development of the AaBé shopping complex explains how this worked in practice.

I live in Piushaven

'The residents say they live in the Piushaven district, and not in *De Matroos* or *De Haven-meester*,' says Mol. She says the 'sense of we', as she calls it, is mainly thanks to Living Stage. 'On the advice of Riek Bakker, the property developers and we in the council decided to make Living Stage the driving force behind the district's promotional activities,' she says. 'Social and cultural activities are important. We appointed an activity programme manager and gave them a budget for five years. The property developers saw that the vibrancy in the district was good for sales and decided to renew their financial contribution.' Piushaven has become a sum of many parts. Currently, there are no less than five construction cranes dotted around the district. At a certain point, the district will have developed to the extent that it is no longer part of an official Urban Development Project. 'After that point, maybe one or two projects will still be ongoing,' says Mol. 'These will be completed by the project leader of that specific subproject.' In the meantime, Mol is looking forward to the completion of a number of major subprojects. The AaBé complex is one example. 'That's going to be really beautiful,' she promises. Mol says that several challenges still lie ahead, such as finding a solution for the unsightly bus depot in a location that is yet to be developed. But this does not prevent her from celebrating each small success. 'I can see that it's working when I walk through the streets of the district. That's what gives me energy!'



**WHAT CAN  
YOU ACTUALLY  
SEE?**

**2**



Tilburg, the sixth city of the Netherlands, is often thought by the rest of the country to be one of the ugliest. John Körmeling once said that Tilburg cannot be described in terms of 'beautiful' or 'ugly'. 'Tilburg is first and foremost a good city. It offers lots of opportunities. It is a mix of everything at once,' he says. The Piushaven district is a good example of this. Mr Körmeling calls it a 'raw, but good district'. It was a harbour that never fully matured. Now it was to become a lively and attractive residential area for both its residents and visitors. How have these developments changed the face of the district and how have these changes influenced its character?

Piushaven has little in common with many other 'cool, industrial, hipster harbour districts', as these are promoted in many European cities. The raw and ready character of these harbours seems lacking in Piushaven, perhaps because it was never really a proper port. In fact, if you look critically, the area appears somewhat disneyfied; the boats that are moored to the quaysides today and are supposed to recall its rich history never actually called at this harbour. There are no traces of loading and unloading facilities. In actuality, Piushaven was a shabby, poorly accessible industrial area, entirely disconnected from the rest of the city. Today, Piushaven is described with slogans like 'nightlife hotspot', 'vibrant harbour district' and 'attractive part of town to shop and go out in'. But is this recognizable in the design and materialization of the district? What feeling do the buildings, streets and bricks of Piushaven give the residents, businesses and visitors who use the area?

A pleasant mess. Let us take a walk through Piushaven. The living climate in this rediscovered harbour district is unique in Tilburg and its environs. There is a friendly atmosphere, and although the variety of structures on the quaysides verges on appearing 'disorderly', the water ensures a harmony between them all. The different characters and identities of the hinterland are also reflected in the streets of Piushaven. The district has a heterogenous identity; it is a mosaic composed of many



colours and forms that can be recognized in the surrounding neighbourhoods. This mosaic forms a pleasant ensemble, and many different kinds of residents and businesses feel at home in it.

Piushaven does not offer visitors grand views across the harbour, but rather glimpses of friendly looking urban quaysides on the opposite bank. As you walk the quays of the harbour district, you pass by sidewalk cafes,

pubs, restaurants and concept stores that give a vibrancy to the area. The harbour is a hive of activity at all hours of the day thanks to the mix of functions: businesses, homes, nightlife and daylife. The waterside boasts one or two historic-looking buildings, interspersed with dynamic new-build frontages and dilapidated or rejuvenated industrial buildings, with in between them all the housing developments. The architecture is urban, but it develops a rural character between the old swing bridge and its eastern edge; an area that is 'sheltered by the city'. From this point, the quaysides rather resemble green riverbanks, with walking paths bordered by reeds. The rural character is reinforced by the community vegetable garden and a vacant lot where two curious Highland cattle greet passers-by.

#### Rough edges

As you walk along the quayside, your attention will be called to the new drawbridge. John Körmeling, the designer of the bridge, named it the 'Welcome Bridge' for the way the bridge is constructed so that people waiting on either side for it to open or close do not lose sight of each other or the boats. In a referendum, the people of Tilburg gave the structure a new name, which caused a major tumult.

Mr Körmeling participated in the bridge design contest, he says, because he loves competitions. 'Winning is my hobby,' he explains. Why did his design win? The entire structure is above

the ground, which made it a cheap and straightforward design, as befitted Piushaven. The bridge does not only join the two sides of the harbour, it is also part of a new access road connecting Piushaven to the city centre. As such, the bridge is both an iconic marker in the harbour and a critical link in the new route to the city.

#### A teahouse in the bridge keeper's house

This bridge, that forms such an important link with the city, resembles a classic building crane, but with an alienating, gleaming bridge room where the counterweight would usually be hung. People passing by – whether over land or water – cannot ignore it; this is the gate to Tilburg. The bridge connects the three elements that make the harbour so special: its tangible history, the sense of excitement that 'this is a happening place', and a taste of the future of this urban development plan. We meet up with Mr Körmeling to talk about his bridge. He believes in 'honest architecture'; a structure like his bridge should not be ashamed to flaunt its function. He hopes that the bridge room will actually be used, for example as a tearoom that the bridgemaster could run in his free time.

Mr Körmeling points out a couple of megaphones and explains that bridgemaster Piet can talk to us through them. The bridge is also fitted with cameras, so be warned: 'Piet sees all!' The steel used for the bridge is thicker than in his original design, but he thinks this has given the bridge 'a little eccentricity'.

**This bridge, that forms such an important link with the city, resembles a classic building crane, but with an alienating and gleaming bridge room where the counterweight would usually be hung. People passing by – whether over land or water – cannot ignore it; this is the gate to Tilburg**







'It reminds me of a bundle of muscles; it's got something macho,' he says. The lights are not only a reference to Tilburg's annual fair, they were actually bought off a fairground operator. In fact, the bridge is entirely inspired by a fairground attraction: the 'pendulum ride'. Mr Körmeling once watched this ride at Tilburg's fair. It was placed right in front of an apartment building and it looked like the people on the ride were about to be launched right over the balconies into the apartments. 'It was brilliant!' he exclaims. He has managed to recreate this effect in the relationship between his bridge and the apartment building *De Havenmeester*. The local residents responded well to his design, and in this respect it has helped to create the great atmosphere in the district, says Körmeling.

#### Always in transition

Standing on the bridge, Mr Körmeling surveys the two sides of the harbour. He punctuates his narrative with several powerful mottos: '*Never demolish anything before you have conceived something better to replace it with,*' or '*Open the city up!*' and '*If you need space then just make it!*'. He has an aversion to what he calls 'CDA architecture' (the CDA being a Dutch Christian democratic party in the political centre). He would prefer to see a road and parking spaces instead of the current lawn area in front of *De Havenmeester* building. He thinks the quays should be left alone. All the industrious activity along the

quayside is a good thing. 'Don't let the planners change it!' he exclaims. The industrial character of Piushaven has saved it from becoming 'just another place to take the dog for a walk'.

Looking north, you can see the residential areas of Hoogvenne and Armhoef. To the south are the unwelcoming working-class neighbourhoods of Jeruzalem and Fatima, 'neighbourhoods to be avoided' for many people of Tilburg. The new connection has created an exciting and new dynamism; the two sides of the water were always close to each other, but yet they remained separate. Now, identities on both sides of the water are merging together, and Piushaven lies at the interface between them.

*Too tidy* Mr Körmeling describes Piushaven with the words 'raw' and 'pure'. The warehouses still retain their rawness; only the sidewalk cafes betray their new function as places for eating and drinking, which is enough for him. His biggest fear is that the district will become 'too tidy'. That is why it is important that somebody continues to oversee the development, he says. 'If you combine too many parts of too many plans, however good, you will end up with a bad plan.' It is important not to emphasize the history of the harbour too much, he thinks: 'you do not want to turn it into a theme park. There's one just up the road, if that's what you are looking for!'



# THE ROAD FROM Aa TO Bé

# 3

Property developers are important stakeholders in any urban development plan. If they believe in the potential of a location, they will be willing to take large risks. Their position is that of a spider in a web; they are the link between the commercial interests of the various stakeholders, they act precisely when it is needed, and they know that they stand to profit if they can satisfy their end users. A look behind the scenes.



You could say it all started with the interests of workers in the construction industry. Or rather, with ensuring their pensions were safe. But it actually began in 1929 when Adolf van den Berg established *AaBé Wollenstoffen en Wollendeken Fabrieken*, a woollen goods manufacturing company on Hoevenseweg. That is the history of the AaBé complex, but this blanket factory also contains a story about a real estate investment. In 1952, the pension fund for the construction industry (Bouwinvest) started investing the members' pension capital in real estate. Their goal was to ensure long-term and stable returns so that they could pay out the pensions when they were due. One of their purchases was the AaBé complex, in 2000. The decision to sell the complex to property developer Rialto in 2010 was also based on careful deliberation; would Rialto be able to successfully develop a shopping centre?

The business of property development needs to be done by people with a sense for the market and the right timing. The principle is simple: you see a location and an opportunity, you buy the location, build on it or renovate it, and then sell it on for a healthy profit. Property developers seem to be driven by a 'hit and run' motive, which goes hand-in-hand with an image problem. So, let's do a reality check: does the property developer really think in such straight lines? Is property development really only about filling your own pockets? Or does it also involve understanding and translating the interests of others?



#### A spider in a web

Let us start with a definition. A property developer assumes responsibility for the development and construction of a building, either for the user or for a yet-unknown buyer. He is responsible for the entire process: purchasing, planning, finding tenants and delivering the completed buildings to their new owners. Users, land and money are linked together to give added value to the real estate. The keyword here is *linking*: linking users, investment capacity and real estate.





These activities appear to follow after each other, as if the property developer starts with buying land and ends with reselling it at a profit. But that is not how it works in practice. To cover the risks, the property developer will preferably have sold and tenanted the real estate *before* he invests in it himself. A property developer is not part of a chain, but rather a spider web. Their role is to try to link all the interests, which start out as loose ends.

But what are these loose ends? Kees Schipper of Rialto explains how the AaBé complex involved signing tenancy agreements, reaching agreement with contractor Wijnen, and signing a purchase agreement with the investor, the European Retail Fund (ERF). Then there was the council, with whom they had to agree on what kinds of shops would occupy the building. If you do not have signed tenancy agreements, you cannot agree anything with the investor. If you do not have a building design, the tenants will not sign. The prospective tenants will want to know who else is going to set up shop in the building. Everything is interlinked. Only when all these agreements have been finalized can Rialto decide to start work on the AaBé complex. So, one activity does not follow the other; they all happen more or less at the same time, in the middle of that spider's web.

Hand over the baton

The development of the AaBé complex is an example of what you could call 'linking

interests'. Bouwinvest bought the property in 2000. Investing in real estate has several important advantages for pension funds: there is a good chance of earning stable returns thanks to the constant stream of rental income and – because rental prices usually follow inflation – you are adequately protected from the costs of this inflation. Jan Bruil worked for Bouwinvest on the redevelopment of the AaBé complex for many years. During that time, Mr Bruil saw Bouwinvest shift its focus to investing in prime central city locations. 'Mainly thanks to the building's existing tenants, the AaBé complex was a feasible business case with sufficient returns,' he explains. 'But it was less and less in line with Bouwinvest's new investment strategy.' This is not to say that Bouwinvest simply abandoned the project, believes Mr Bruil. 'We supervised the plan up to and including the integrated spatial environment permit, which was an important milestone in view of the historic character of the building. Only then, in 2013, did we sell the complex to Rialto. A perfectly logical moment.' Bouwinvest made a wise decision: an historic factory complex with an official building permit is many millions of euros more valuable than that same complex without a permit.

Bouwinvest left a firm mark on the project before it handed over the baton to Rialto, explains Mr Bruil. 'A project like this requires the support of a councillor, and a city that not only has a vision of its development,



but that sticks to this vision. It's no good allowing a shopping centre to be built in Piushaven if you also allow one on another, nearby location. This was not achieved without a struggle, but it ultimately worked out. All the people at the council, including the responsible councillor, stood behind this redevelopment project, and that was an important condition for its success.'

From Aa to Bé

The property developer Rialto of Den Bosch bought the complex from Bouwinvest. Although it was no newcomer to the region – it had previously built shops in the centre of Hilvarenbeek and Etten-Leur – this was a major step upwards for Rialto, who even laid down its own money to make the purchase.

An important factor to ensure the backing of a serious, international investor was that the property developer had to stay on the scene, even after the sale. Or, in the words of the new owner: 'the developer, Rialto, will continue to provide management services'. Rialto will be the first point of contact for the tenants in the daily operation of the complex for at least another five years, which means the investor will have a whole lot less to worry about. This translates into more profits for Rialto, up to 10% (which is fairly standard). We can conclude that the job of the property developer is hardly a case of 'hit and run'.

Sale of the shopping complex to investment fund ERF in 2015: approx. €15 million

17,000 m<sup>2</sup> of a total floor area of 28,000 m<sup>2</sup> will be created in existing buildings

Renovation: the historic part of the former blanket factory will be renovated to accommodate five concept stores for the Blokker chain (on the Fatimastraat side)

New build: A new build on Wethouder Baggermanlaan will accommodate the electronics chain BCC.





**‘All the loose ends always come together at an unexpected moment,’ says Kees Schipper. We needed to close all the agreements for the AaBé complex before a certain date. That was the weekend my family and I were to depart for our holiday in Italy. My mobile phone rang just after we left. I spent the entire journey on my phone, a single thought going through my head: ‘when we get there and have unpacked everything, shall I drive straight back, or wait till tomorrow morning...?’**

### Adding value

The development of AaBé illustrates how the property developer has increasingly become a link between various interests. That may well be their most important added value. 'The process is very intensive; you need to have your finger on the pulse,' explains Kees Schipper of Rialto. 'Most of the tenants are entrepreneurs or store managers, with a certain budget. These are typically people who trust in their instincts. You can set it all down in contracts, but it will only work if you all have faith in the outcome.'

Piushaven is unique. But what will make this shopping centre special, with all those familiar big brands like Jumbo, Xenos and Beter Bed? How can these bricks-and-mortar stores survive in an age when webstores are dealing a deathblow to so many urban centres? Schipper sees a difference between Piushaven and urban centres where some retail chains are failing: 'this spot is easily accessible from both the motorway and the city centre, with plenty of parking spaces. It is also a place where there is always something going on. These factors really make it different to other city centres.'

One thing is certain: without the major national retail chains, a development like this would never get off the ground. 'A project like this needs time to find its feet,' says Schipper. 'You need to work with partners who will not threaten to abandon the project at every setback. Even with all the major chains,



we still have plenty of space for smaller start-ups.' The level of investment, the type of investor, and the required efficiency of management all demand the backing of a number of strong stakeholders who are prepared to commit for the longer term. That is the reality the property developer must deal with.



## TOTAL FLOOR AREA

28,000 m<sup>2</sup>  
gross floor area

730 parking spaces

### PHASE 1

opened  
in 2014

community  
shopping centre

Jumbo  
Gewoon Vers  
Zeeman  
Kruidvat  
Lidl  
Bakker Van Iersel  
Fabriek Optiek  
Koffie & Room  
Primera  
Amanda's Hair  
Cosmetics

### PHASE 2

opened  
in 2016

home & garden,  
sports & games,  
brown & white  
goods, automotive

Beddenreus  
Beter Bed  
Boonman Bedden  
Leen Bakker  
Pronto Wonen  
Horeca  
Blokker Tuin  
Intertoys  
Big Bazar  
Xenos  
Buitenhof  
Tuinmeubelen  
BCC

### PHASE 3

opened  
in 2017

home & garden,  
sports & games,  
brown & white  
goods, automotive

Henders & Hazel  
Profijt  
Swiss Sense  
Xooon  
Horeca





# RED DISTRICT IN A YELLOW CITY

# 4

Councils increasingly promote their neighbourhoods and districts based on lifestyle surveys. The lifestyles are expressed in colours. For example, the typical inhabitant of Tilburg – easy-going and spontaneous – has a yellow lifestyle. Property developers also sell and promote their houses as lifestyles and transform their project into a 'brand'. But how do you do that? How can you turn a district or a building into a brand?



The people of Tilburg feel at home in their city, with its convivial atmosphere and social ties. They are easy-going, spontaneous and honest. This was the conclusion of the urban developer Triborgh and the housing corporation Tiwos based on a study they conducted into the DNA of Piushaven. Their question was: 'How can Piushaven's profile be made to reflect that of "typical Tilburg" while at the same time sufficiently distinguishing the district from the rest of the city.'

In lifestyle surveys, lifestyles are expressed in colours. People with yellow lifestyles want to live in different houses than people who attach importance to status and control, the blue lifestyle. Each colour needs to be promoted in a different way. Property developers are increasingly convinced that they use such promotional strategies to reach specific target groups. The question is whether this actually works: do more 'blue' people actually live in De Werf, a housing development that was marketed to the blue lifestyle group?

#### DNA

These days, every city, district and building project is engaged in 'branding': positioning itself in the market. Piushaven and all the building projects in the district are no exception. The right type of branding can help to accelerate sales, but it must be adapted to the specific area, market and intended buyers. The most well-known lifestyle branding strategy

was developed by the firm SAMR (Smart Agent Market Response). This branding strategy positions Piushaven in the red lifestyle, characterized by 'vitality'. Residents with a red lifestyle feel young and energetic and like to push their boundaries. They enjoy a challenge and are unconventional. Piushaven is thus branded as a red district in a yellow city. It is a living environment with a raw edge, ideal for people who are looking for something unique.



But there are also differences within Piushaven district. The neighbourhoods each have their own character and the subprojects are required to be distinctive, just as the lifestyles of the people who live in them. But how did they decide which lifestyles to associate with the new projects? Ingeborg Verheijen is the director of Triborgh Gebiedsontwikkeling, the urban developer responsible for designing the new neighbourhoods of *De Werf* and, across the water, *Aan De Waterkant*. She explains how the chosen market strategy and the associated lifestyles of the new projects were strongly influenced by the districts adjacent to Piushaven, while the water was the connecting link between the various projects within the Piushaven urban development. 'Piushaven is the only district in the central city area with water and water-related activities. This makes it exclusive, while at the same time being accessible to all,' says Verheijen. She explains how the water gives space and openness to Piushaven. This space is what makes it possible for various types of people to live and work next to each other. Disparate lifestyles find it hard to tolerate each other if they are forced to live too close together. The Piushaven logo, with the multi-coloured letters, reflects the fact that this district is a mosaic of different neighbourhoods.

#### Different identities

To illustrate the diversity in the district, we will now examine a few of the subprojects. We will start with the De Werf ('the wharf') apartment

building. This building was completed in 2012 and is the gate to the Armhoef neighbourhood. The De Werf project comprises 34 owner-occupied apartments, 47 single-family homes and 25 rental apartments. Triborgh is also developing 24 terrace houses across the water, in the Jeruzalem neighbourhood, which it is marketed as *Aan de Waterkant* ('down by the riverside'). The first block of houses has been completed, the second is under construction.

De IJzergieterij ('the foundry') building is of an entirely different calibre. Here they are developing 18 harbourside lofts in a historic factory that survives from the time that Piushaven was still a working harbour. The building was designed in 1899, converted into Lourdes Church in 1920, and in 1979 it became the first branch of the Jumbo chain of supermarkets. These are all three very different complexes with their own identities, but one thing that binds them all together: they are all part of Piushaven.

#### "The Wharf" / De Werf

To brand "The Wharf", the property developers looked for a connection with the adjacent Armhoef neighbourhood. Based on the SmartAgent method, the residents of that neighbourhood have a green lifestyle. The people represented by this lifestyle want to feel safe and that they tend to be conservative. 'This was clearly noticeable during the discussion of the plans for "The Wharf",'









says Ingeborg Verheijen. 'The residents of Armhoef were concerned about what the developers were building "in their backyard". Triborgh subsequently branded "The Wharf" under the blue lifestyle, which harmonizes well with Armhoef's green. 'The plans for the building were largely complete by the time we conducted the survey, but we were still able to apply the brand to the landscaping. The blue, streamlined and unambiguous character of the design distinguished the neighbourhood and the building in the market,' explains Verheijen. The lifestyle profile of the adjoining neighbourhood, and the influence this had on the choice of target group for the new-builds, determined the marketing style and tone that Triborgh would adopt to approach potential buyers. 'We deliberately chose to approach the target group for "The Wharf" with the formal Dutch word for you ("u"),' explains Verheijen. 'To market the "Down by the riverside" the project, we communicated with people who were interested in the houses with the informal "jij".'

"Down by the riverside" / Aan de Waterkant  
A good branding strategy was even more important for the housing development on the other side of the water, the "Down by the riverside" project. The Jeruzalem neighbourhood in which Aan de Waterkant is situated has always had a bad image. People who did not have business in the neighbourhood would avoid it. Only 18% of the potential Tilburg market said that it would be an attractive neighbourhood to live in.

So, the developers used lifestyle branding to discover what kinds of houses would be most likely to be sold in this neighbourhood. Most residents of Jeruzalem fit in the yellow lifestyle target group.

The primary characteristics are conviviality and spontaneity, lots of social contact, and honesty. This is a lifestyle that is not attractive to blue people, but red people, who show an interest in others and are less inclined to 'put up fences', are a good fit.

Red people are looking for a unique home in a lively environment. "Down by the riverside", facing the canal, had the right potential, and the design of the project took this into account. "Down by the riverside" is a small neighbourhood of unique houses, where the residents have a lot of input in the choice of fascias, window layouts and the colour of the bricks used in their homes. The fact that the first two blocks have been sold out and the third for 50% proves that the chosen branding strategy has done its job. A happy side-effect is that Jeruzalem no longer forms an island in the Piushaven district. Jeruzalem is now completely integrated in the Piushaven branding strategy as an attractive red-yellow neighbourhood.

"The Foundry" / IJzergieterij  
Rik Krens, the property developer responsible for "The Foundry", wants to emphasize that this building is more of a product than



a project. The historic layers – factory, church, supermarket – are all still recognizable in the current ‘housing product’ that is currently being marketed. Although Krens believes that a building needs a diversity of people living in it, the branding of “The Foundry” focused on the red target group. “The Foundry” concept includes elements such as ‘robust and urban living’ that form a perfect fit with the identity of Piushaven. The water that characterizes the whole of Piushaven is also reflected in the building’s design as a ‘canal house’, while the history of the old factory and church was used to define the building’s logo. The historic experience was reinforced by choosing a suitable name, and the property developer also chose an appropriate slogan: *ik woon in de IJzergieterij* (‘I live in the Foundry’). Where “The Wharf” communicated with their target group in the formal ‘U’ and “Down by the Riverside” used ‘jij’, Krens chose to use ‘I’. The branding strategy was successful here too: once selling started, all 20 homes were sold within one month.

What is it like to live in Lifestyles?

“The Wharf” is blue, “The Foundry” is red. Is it really as simple as that? Can the inhabitants of those buildings really be so easily pigeonholed? In a new lifestyle survey, the residents of “The Wharf” and those who bought homes in “The Foundry” revealed that the reality of the situation cannot be defined quite so easily. The projects prove to harbour more differences than were taken into account in



the branding strategy. The residents of the apartments in De Werf and the future inhabitants of “The Foundry” both represent the complete cross-section of colours. Red, yellow, green and blue all live happily next to each other in one building. Fortunately, Piushaven is indeed a mosaic.



The district branding strategy and the individual projects in Piushaven followed SAMR's BSR model Agent Market Respons<sup>1</sup>. This method can be used to describe the motives, values and needs of the target groups. The model is based on two axes; one axis displays the degree to which people are inwardly or outwardly focused, the other displays the degree to which people are open or closed. The outcome is a chart depicting four different lifestyles: red (vitality), blue (control), yellow (harmony) and green (safety).

<sup>1</sup> The SAMR Smart Agent Market Response colour scheme was borrowed from: G.J Hagen, *Leefstijlen; de klant in de mand*, Boss Magazine, 2006.

#### Freedom and flexibility

People with red lifestyles can be described as intelligent, unconventional and assertive. They attach much value to their freedom and independence.

In the marketing world, people with red lifestyles are described as early adopters (people who start using a certain product or technology earlier than the rest).

They often live in multiple-family housing in or nearby dynamic areas.

#### Commitment and harmony

People with yellow lifestyles are social and extrovert. They attach much importance to their social network both in the area where they live and at their work.

They feel most at home in a 'normal' neighbourhood. They typically live in terrace houses or rental apartments. They prefer their houses to be cosy and traditional.

#### Ambition and control

People with blue lifestyles focus on performance. These people are usually very ambitious, and they see a successful career as an important goal in life.

They prefer to live in well-to-do areas among 'their own kind'.

#### Safety and security

People with green lifestyles are also social, but they are much more introvert than the yellow lifestyles. Green people lead a quiet life and socialize with a small circle of family, friends and/or neighbours with whom they have intensive contact.

This target group will usually not appreciate experimental or distinctive architecture. These people prefer to live in new housing estates or decent and comfortable apartments nearby amenities.



# LETTING GO OF THE HELM

5

The city council played an encouraging and facilitating role in the Piushaven urban environment project. Historically, the course of projects like Piushaven would be dictated as much as possible by the city council, but in recent years they have been adopting a more flexible approach. However, this is not to say that anything was left to chance.



The early days of urban development plans were to be looked back on with mild amusement. This was a time when the city council was single-handedly rolling out masterplans all over town and the builders were stamping out their homes according to rigid designs in the new estates. It has been more than fifteen years since we discarded this approach for a new one: the public-private partnership. In the new approach, city councils and private parties tried to manage contradictory interests precisely and for the longer term by drawing up strict contracts. However, these contracts were often already outdated at the moment of signing.

This manner of government was also cast aside when the crisis came and threw all the stakeholders into confusion. House hunters stopped looking for homes, and property developers responded by selling their investments at a loss. For their part, the city councils ceased laying down the law in urban development and adopted a more facilitating role in planning for the shorter term: facilitative urban development. The motto became: 'if you have a good plan and the money to build it then we're interested.' Now the city council was happy to leave urban development up to the market. After all, no one understands the buyer as well as the market. Fifteen years ago, Piushaven itself was also the subject of one of these council masterplans. But it did not work, and so the council stepped into a facilitatory role here too. And that *did* work.

No good at property development

This idea of facilitative urban development came up before the crisis – and existed alongside the standard top-down 'permissive planning' model – but the crisis itself ensured the necessary urgency. Permissive planning assumes a whole range of initiatives that meet the council's conditions, while facilitative planning assumes it is 'quiet on the other side' – the market side. And so the boundaries between the market and the council fade. The council's legitimacy is now derived more from its interaction with citizens and interest groups than from the power it has been granted by the electorate. The website [gebiedsontwikkeling.nu](http://gebiedsontwikkeling.nu) describes it as follows: 'Instead of being in full control, the council of today facilitates initiatives and brings the various needs together.'

The combination of activities that arose in the Piushaven Urban Development Project is a good example of facilitative government. The crisis hardly affected the construction cranes in this district; thanks to joint funding (the council, the province and the housing corporation Woning Breburg), a building like De Havenmeester was able to be completed even though few of the apartments had been sold to justify its construction. Was this a case of simply 'leaving it to the market', without governance or vision? In some Dutch cities, 'weak' facilitation and lack of vision has led to disorderly and inhospitable areas.



The facilitation of Piushaven would need to be based on a forceful vision and occasional decisive interventions. Both the council and the other stakeholders were part of a continuous process of moulding, breaking, connecting and negotiating. As Professor Riek Bakker, a supervisor of the Piushaven project, explains: 'Many firms have the expertise to draft good urban development plans. That's the easy part. Providing good government so that the plans are implemented; that's the important part.'

This means that — as paradoxical as it sounds — good facilitation requires decisiveness, and the ability to make subtle interventions that bring people together. 'It takes a real effort to let things follow their own course,' admits councillor Berend de Vries.

The facilitative planning approach is a good fit with the modern network society. The implication is that councils can encourage and profit from societal resilience and dynamism. It presents a positive and welcoming picture, based on commitment and modesty. But beware: in networks, too, all parties are ultimately working towards achieving their own interests. Although the contact between the networks in facilitative planning feels natural and supple, the rules of play are not always based on friendliness and creativity. The council participates in the same game, but from the position of a bureaucratic and political organization, with all the limitations this entails. This sometimes

Berend de Vries: 'In 2008, on one of my first days as councillor, I had an appointment with a lady in my office,' tells Berend de Vries. 'She pointed a finger at me, looked at me at grimly, and said: "Now you listen carefully. You are not going to let Piushaven down!" I was fresh at the job and nodded obediently. Later, I found out who it was I had the appointment with. Riek Bakker? I'd never heard of her.'

Riek Bakker: 'In 2004, I made it clear to the council that they had to make some choices in the city,' says Riek Bakker. "You can't half-heartedly divide your attention over all the different parts of town and just let the local contractors do their thing," I told them. And they listened. They set an ambitious goal for Piushaven. Councillor Aarts had understood; I was able to work together with him. But then this new young councillor was appointed, dressed in a flashy suit. I saw this smooth-talking young man arrive and I thought: "I am going to tell this young chap a thing or two." He got the message; he's been doing just fine.'



involves finding compromise between official procedures and the predominantly informal management of the process.

Quality management team

The property developers have discovered how effective the informal government approach is in practice. Prior to 2005, they would draw up a plan to conform with a rigid vision of urban development and then formally apply for a permit, with all the obstacles this entailed. Today things are done differently. Piushaven has a Quality Management Team, in which the supervisor, representatives of the 'Integrated Spatial Environment Committee', the project leader and the urban planner jointly assess the quality of the plans. These parties drew up an objective: the creation of an inviting, beautiful, but not too polished urban living environment. Now, the party applying for building permission and the Quality Management Team enter a dialogue. The developer is advised on how to harmonize the plan more effectively with the objective, whereby the team does not hesitate to insist on changes to elements that clash too much.

Remarkably, this form of intervention does not have a legal basis, but is instead based on mutual trust. 'The developers understand that we are trying to help them,' explains Riek Bakker. 'We do this by giving them tips and smoothing the road ahead for them. A fruitful discussion with the Quality Management Team

will also give the developers more confidence that their plans will be approved by the Integrated Physical Environment Committee.'

And if this confidence in the objective or the approach is lacking? Then the council will fall back on the tried and trusted approach of public intervention. This could be in the form of a preliminary decision to freeze the development process and prevent something undesirable from happening.

Round Table

Another form of facilitative government in Piushaven is the Round Table of property developers. Every three months, the property developers come together and discuss their building plans and the construction companies harmonize their plans and schedules. This form of consultation is unique in the Netherlands. Although there was some unwillingness in the beginning, the parties now meet in a relatively open atmosphere. The parties contribute a one-off fee of €200 per home to the events and activities organized by Living Stage. They have discovered that these activities give a huge boost to the district's image, which in turn helps them to sell more homes. One or two of these stakeholders are not contributing to these promotional activities, which is 'very unwise,' according to Riek Bakker. 'These people are freeloaders. In hindsight, the contribution should have been based on floor surface area.'



**Smooth cooperation often depends on individuals. For example, the input of Wim Timmermans, long-time director of Van der Weegen (a partner of Triborgh) is widely praised. His warm personality and hearty laugh helped to open many doors and really contributed to fostering mutual trust in the district.**

Meanwhile, at the town hall

The freedom that is required to facilitate practical cooperation, rapid decision-making and flexibility is at odds with the style of government that has been adopted by Tilburg's city council. This yields a permanent governmental paradox. 'Obviously, you need to gain the confidence of the council; demonstrate that this approach works in practice,' says Riek Bakker. 'Once you have their confidence, it's best to ask them to keep out of your way.'

But how can you demonstrate accountability in Tilburg's firmly anchored planning and control cycle? 'Thérèse, the project leader, meets with me here every week,' Berend de Vries answers. 'In a couple of minutes, she brings me up to date on the progress. That's much more effective than all those formal progress reports. The council is given a tour of the project two times a year and we never get complaints from the district. We have confidence in this informal approach because we are kept informed of what is going on.'

Polder in the harbour

So, is Piushaven a typical example of the Dutch polder consensus model? Is everybody invited to contribute? In fact, in the early years they really tried to achieve just that. Residents were invited to participate in a Management Group, in which the course of the urban development was set out. In the long run, however, the consensus model mostly only resulted in irritated people and misinterpreted expectations. Project leader Thérèse Mol decided to do things differently.

Recipe for sustainable urban development

Jointly define the objectives so that any discussions can always fall back on this mutually agreed starting point.

Never stop enquiring after facts and motives to ensure that you always stay up to date.

Follow an informal route and only fall back on formal rules if there is no other way out. Force the market parties to communicate with each other and so prevent unnecessary competition.

Reflect on the progress throughout the process and so prevent complacency taking hold.

Provide accountability by letting the results do the talking and let others evaluate whether or not it has been successful.

'If you have an opinion about something that's not in your remit, we want to hear what you have to say, but we'll be the ones to decide how to use your contribution.' Direct stakeholders (residents and businesses) have real advisory powers; their opinions weigh heavily in the decision making. In short, there are no endless meetings to reach consensus, but the users and investors are invited to contribute. For example, the council holds a meeting with representatives of community groups and businesses once every three months to plan events and discuss developments in the district and the use of public spaces. Councillor Berend de Vries explains that he prefers to keep the lines short. 'So, you want a blue parking zone? Officially, council policy does not provide for such specific requests, but that can't be the intention. I will see what I can do for you.' This does not mean that they are able to please everybody all of the time. There have been plenty of disappointed people, although De Vries always tries to take the expectations of the community into account. De Vries gives the example of a car park, about which they received a lot of complaints from the community. In this case, they allowed the residents to design the car park themselves. 'You are not going to be happy with this car park, but hopefully a little bit happier because you had a say in the design of it yourselves.'

The most important interventions of the Piushaven urban development plan give



the impression that the council has simply let things 'run their course'. However, it only appears to be so. In actual fact, the council has moved away from the top-down approach to the more time-consuming approach of 'listening to the grass roots'. One example of this is daring to ignore the influence of individual residents. Another example was successfully raising enough funds to build De Havenmeester, despite the crisis. And listening to an authoritative figure such as Riek Bakker, who does not beat around the bush: 'If they don't cooperate, we'll undermine their position.'







**MANY  
CAPTAINS IN  
THIS HARBOUR**

**6**

The success of the Piushaven project depends on commitment and an entrepreneurial spirit. A district like Piushaven can only come alive if the local residents and businesses take the initiative and organize activities. By letting them share responsibility, they will gradually assume the ownership of their community from the planners and the council. This is precisely the intention.

The current Piushaven is the product of active citizenship. The original plans to create an access road (known as the *Havendijkroute*) to the city centre through the middle of Piushaven was unpopular with many of the local residents. They started a campaign with the slogan 'NO to the *Havendijkroute*'. The barge skippers John La Haye and Caroline Docters van Leeuwen were among those who saw the potential of the district and decided to act. In 1996 they established the Home Port Tilburg foundation. La Haye and Docters van Leeuwen wanted to prevent the access road and promote Piushaven as a district with its own identity.

The local community also campaigned against the *Havendijkroute*. Hundreds of local children sent postcards to the council from their holiday addresses. Residents in the neighbouring districts also started to see the importance of the Piushaven district. Pepijn Jansen, who lived in the Armhoefse Akkers district at the time and now operates the city beach, explains how he and other residents stepped into a rowboat to campaign against the access road. All this resistance culminated in the plans for the access road being discarded. From this auspicious start, Piushaven grew into a district that many residents and businesses now call their own. Piushaven has many 'owners' who feel a sense of responsibility for their district.



Community vegetable garden

An urban development is always in transition. Vacant lots and buildings are often left empty for a time, pending the definitive plans for them. These locations are sometimes temporarily used by community members so that they become the 'property' of the residents. They walk their dogs there, race mountain bikes, just hang out, or sow beds of flowers. More far-reaching forms of temporary use





include moving small businesses into vacant factories or, in Piushaven, grazing Highland cattle on empty lots. Urban developers are increasingly part of such 'placemaking': encouraging temporary activities that enhance the atmosphere and make a place inviting to visit. This is facilitated by signing short-term user agreements, often with cultural entrepreneurs or operators of cafes and restaurants.

Placemaking is an attractive phenomenon for both entrepreneurs and the owners of the buildings and is increasingly seen as an important part of Piushaven. One example of temporary land use in Piushaven is the former site of the laundry company Lips. As long as there are no definite plans for the site, the *Het Werkt* foundation is using it for a community vegetable garden. Some even ask why a temporary solution that is so successful must remain temporary. Should it not be made permanent? The temporary solution is now what makes this site special.

#### Crossing the water to Jeruzalem

You can see the same thing happening at city beach, a real sandy beach of 4000 m<sup>2</sup> that has been created on a future housing development with a view of Moerenburg park. In 2013, various entrepreneurs established businesses at the beach on the site of *Aan de Waterkant*, a housing development that is to be built by Triborgh, a combination of several building contractors and two housing corporations.

The beach was the first placemaking initiative in Piushaven, and it was not easy to establish a business there. 'All the established businesses I spoke to said: "Paul, not in Jeruzalem! Don't do it! It'll be the ruin of you!"', says Paul de Kanter, initiator of city beach. In fact, the opposite was true: his city beach attraction *De Waterjump* was visited by no less than 100,000 people during the last three seasons, where they barbequed, participated in tasting sessions and danced to silent discos.

The Jeruzalem neighbourhood is a real working-class neighbourhood, built to answer the major housing shortage after the Second World War. Until recently, people used to avoid going to Jeruzalem. 'My father attended the opening of the beach in 2013,' says De Kanter. 'He had never been there before, because "that was Jeruzalem"'. That was how Tilburgers saw the neighbourhood.' With the construction of 120 new-build homes between 2014 and 2016, the neighbourhood has diversified considerably. All types of different people share city beach on beautiful summer days. 'Like my father, many other people eventually crossed the water to Jeruzalem,' says De Kanter. 'That's really wonderful to see. It removes a barrier for people to buy a home here. Some people visit our beach and decide to check out the new-builds in the neighbourhood afterwards. The beach attracts people to Jeruzalem.' Today, a few years later, Triborgh wants its land back to build the planned houses and the beach is looking for a new location, inside or outside Piushaven.

### Leading the way

There is a complex interplay between the district and the activity that takes place within it. Piushaven is Piushaven thanks to the cooperation, commitment and confidence of the local residents and businesses. The council has appointed a project leader, but success depends on the community members who are willing to lead the way. A single person cannot accomplish an urban development project on their own. The leaders – the pioneers – are people who are bold enough to be the first to settle in the new area. When Corné Snels began his hairdressing business Hardy's in 2006, the plans for Piushaven were practically non-existent, yet he saw opportunities in the area. 'I saw the potential; the space, the peace and quiet, the water,' says Snels. 'This is a place where you can combine work and recreation.' He opened his business in a barge, floating in the middle of Piushaven. 'The arrival of the barge was all over the media. We even made the 8 o'clock news!' 'All it takes is initiative!' he adds. I ordered the largest single-compartment concrete barge ever built in the world and had it towed to Piushaven by the oldest tugboat in the Netherlands.' After Hardy's had been open for half a year, he felt a change in the energy of the district. Major property developers started arriving in the harbour. Snels has since exchanged the barge for a post-modern building on the other side of the water.

In 2012, when entrepreneur Michel Deneef and his wife established their business in Piushaven, a lot of people still did not understand what they thought they were doing. 'And it was a mess,' says Deneef. He chose to establish his bed & breakfast, *Villa Pastorie*, in the former rectory on Hoevenseweg because of the environment. 'It's the only place in Tilburg with water, and I was also attracted by the fact that it was a district on the up, even though it was nowhere near as lively as it is now. Piushaven remained a little-known district for a long time, but in the last two or three years it has suddenly exploded.'

### Fun park on the water

'The activities that take place here are preferably small in scale, with a cultural flavour and in harmony with the district. That means no events that go on into the early hours; you have to deal with a somewhat older public here,' explains Deneef. 'You won't find many students coming here who want to go out to all hours of the night. Of course, we welcome new initiatives, but we don't want it to become one big fun park on the water. But if someone has a good idea, the council will give their consent. Piushaven does not only belong to us entrepreneurs.'

Citizens' initiatives are not always clearly visible. It also takes time for new residents to become active citizens; in the first year, most of their attention goes to doing up

**People who feel a sense of responsibility for a place sometimes have difficulty accepting new 'claims of ownership'. Before cafe Burgemeester Jansen was purchased by the current owners, eleven years ago, it was called cafe Havenzicht and was a typical Dutch brown cafe with Persian rugs on the tables and schlager music. The new owners restyled and renamed it: one and a half centuries ago, Mayor Jansen was the brain behind the construction of Piushaven. By no means all Piushaven pioneers were enthusiastic; many wanted to keep things the way they were.**





their new home. After that first year, the new community members will start looking around more. They will start getting to know their neighbourhood better and think about what could be improved. The Piushaven 'Arts and Classics' foundation is an example of a collaboration between residents and local businesses. Businesses can show their commitment in all sorts of ways, such as by fostering a local customer base, sponsoring local events and cooperating with other local businesses. For example, the restaurant Don Curado presents its dishes at city beach. The outside world will gradually come to associate businesses with the district they are established in. Now these businesses *are* Piushaven.

#### Captains

Alongside all these minor activities, Piushaven also hosts major events, such as the Dragon Boat Festival and the 'welcoming of Sinter-klaas' (Saint Nicholas). This is when the district threatens to become the 'fun park on the water' that Deneef warns of. Is party-going Tilburg taking over the district? The owners of cafe Burgemeester Jansen, Erwin Van de Velde and Dennis Meijer, would not be happy with this development. They came to Piushaven because it is a relatively peaceful and quiet, albeit lively district. 'The businesses in the city centre mainly focus on generating maximum turnover,' says Van de Velde. 'Piushaven can also cater for large events, but it is important that these are distinctive, convivial and family-

oriented. These are special events that only recur once every five or ten years. If we accept too many of these big events, then Piushaven won't be Piushaven anymore.'

Piushaven has many captains on board.

All these 'owners' work to ensure that the special local character is retained.

The residents and businesses are part of the city, but they do not want the whole city to come to Piushaven. Alongside the land-owners, the owners of the buildings and the council, the residents and businesses in the district also have a strong voice in the urban development process, and they are not afraid to use it. And of course, happily, they do not always agree with each other.





**WILL IT EVER  
BE FINISHED?**

**7**



After 15 years, surely any urban development plan should nearly be finished? When you take a look around Piushaven, you can see that this is not yet the case. The district is still a hive of development activity. Construction cranes tower over the streets and a few projects have yet to begin. But at some point, the plan should be complete. Or not?

Piushaven is visibly still under development. The north bank boasts the impressive De Havenmeester and De Admiraal buildings, and further on "The Wharf" tower dominates the skyline, but the district does not feel complete. A few construction cranes reach to the sky nearby "The Foundry", while the rundown warehouses on the south bank appear to be dormant. Towards the west, in the direction of the city centre, you can see the boring housing development where it all started at the head of the harbour, now more than 30 years old. A lot has happened in Piushaven. Old factories have been replaced by new residential neighbourhoods, but the history of the district is still clearly recognizable. Industrial activities have been replaced by services such as shops, cafes and restaurants. You no longer have to drive around the edge of Piushaven; you can go straight through the middle, both by bike and by car.

Piushaven has been put on the map, but it has not become just another sleek, suburban housing estate. Instead, its raw edges and dynamism are what makes it attractive. Such a large area involves a project for the long term. The urban development has kept up a steady pace all those 15 years; there was no time for delay, the show had to go on, it had to be completed. But will Piushaven really be improved by being completed? As you survey the district from the bridge, the feeling of 'incompleteness' is actually quite pleasant;

it conveys a sense of potential, and that there is still plenty of room for new initiatives. But can the dynamism that has grown in Piushaven be maintained? The urban development project is expected to be more or less finished by 2020; when it will be proclaimed 'complete'. But what will this mean for the residents and businesses? Will the bond they have formed with the rejuvenated district generate sufficient energy to keep up the dynamism?

#### Share your success

One of the instruments that was chosen to encourage dynamism and connectedness in Piushaven was the Piushaven Living Stage foundation. The foundation was established with a grant from the council and property developers to organize all manner of activities. In 2018, the grants will come to an end and the foundation will become dependent on the local businesses for its survival. 'In this phase we are embedding all the initiatives,' explains the chairman of Living Stage, Ralf Embrechts. 'We want people to continue organizing activities in the district, even after the funding has dried up.' Mr Embrechts has complete confidence that it will work. 'Many of the initiatives have already been taken over by local residents and businesses. Take the creative play day for children, for example. We used to have to pay people to organize this day, but now the welfare organization Contour de Twern has assumed responsibility. Another good example

is the series of concerts that is organized by local businesses.’ Embrechts realizes that the continuation of all the initiatives is not a matter of course. ‘Some projects may not make it, but that may well be because there is not enough demand for them. Over the past eight years, the district has become more friendly and cohesive, with something for everyone, and that is what’s most important. Piushaven will continue to buzz, don’t you worry!’

The owner of Villa Pastorie, Michel Deneef, is a little concerned that Judith van Loon is losing her funding. Van Loon is Living Stage’s activity programme manager and a highly active figure in Piushaven. ‘Judith is the cement that keeps Piushaven’s activity programme together,’ he says. ‘If we lose her, it will be impossible to organize such an extensive range of activities every year, and Piushaven will become a lot quieter. Maybe the business community here needs to consider how we can retain the services of Judith as Piushaven’s activity programme manager.’ Living Stage provides cohesion in the district through the activities it organizes. This cohesion is also helped by the fact that the organizers regularly get together. This cooperation, sometimes between businesses who are also each other’s competitors, is characteristic of Piushaven. ‘You need to be willing to share your success. If you are not, and you want to keep everything for yourself, then you lose the cohesion,’ thinks Deneef. He works together with the other local businesses in all kinds of ways,

for example by pointing his guests towards the restaurants, events and attractions operated by other entrepreneurs in the district.

### Resilience

But how does the dynamism in an urban development area like Piushaven actually work? The trend is mostly as follows: a rundown but promising area attracts young, innovative and creative entrepreneurs, all the more if it is close to the city centre. They are attracted to the low rents, ample space and proximity to the heart of the city. Their businesses and stores subsequently attract other people to the area who are looking for something special. New entrepreneurs follow in these people’s stead, and after a while the area becomes a hotspot, attracting the interest of both the city council and property developers, for example. This latter group notes how the value of the property is increasing and sees an opportunity to invest. This is exactly what happened in Piushaven.

A good example is cafe Burgemeester Jansen. When the new owners were looking for a property, they found a characteristic (and neglected) cafe going cheap on the edge of the harbour. They only required a modest turnover to be able to live off their business. The low costs meant the business could take its time to grow, and so Burgemeester Jansen slowly but steadily developed into the popular cafe it is today. It was aided by the fact that



**The urban development has kept up a steady pace all those 15 years; there was no time for delay, the show had to go on, it had to be completed.**



there was hardly any competition from the city centre. The cafes in the centre mainly serve the city's students, while cafes like Burgemeester Jansen focus on the over-thirty market. Other businesses in the district have also profited from this lack of competition.

#### Loosening the reins

The next step in the growing dynamism of an area is the deliberate encouragement of young businesses, such as 'pop-ups'. The corporations and the council have noted how cultural entrepreneurship makes a district more attractive and so more valuable, so they encourage temporary, 'hip' activities as a cheap way of establishing the identity of an area. A consequence of this increased attractiveness is that the rents rise, and so the start-ups can no longer find cheap warehouse or studio space. And so the pop-ups are forced out more or less as soon as the property developers start to build. The consequence is that the dynamism plummets again. The continuance of an area's dynamism is highly dependent on the resilience that the area as a whole can develop by the time the project is branded as 'complete'.

Piushaven will have to demonstrate that it can adapt to the changing conditions. Two important concepts that will affect this are 'value growth' and 'bonding'. As mentioned above, the growth of property values can dampen dynamism in an area. Hopefully,

however, the increasing bond that the people feel with their district will help Piushaven to keep its dynamism. A number of successful businesses have bonded with Piushaven. These are the entrepreneurs who deliberately chose this district. This could encourage the further development of Piushaven's identity and help ensure that there is always space for new initiatives. It also means that, alongside the business community, the city council will also need to accept a role, sometimes by decree, but also by loosening the reins. 'You need to retain some spots where you exert less control but that still harmonize with your vision,' says Jessie Wagenaar of BPD gebiedsontwikkeling.

#### Never finished

People give meaning and a purpose to an area, but this takes time. When the one project is finished, the next is waiting to begin. The residents of the Fatima housing development on the south side of the harbour, that has hardly felt the effects of the development, have started to become restless. 'When is it our turn?' they ask. The lease on this reviled residential complex at the head of the harbour terminates in 2033. Project leader Mol cannot wait for that moment, because it will offer new perspectives for ideas and development. Like the city itself, Piushaven will never be complete.







## List of interviewees:

### RIK KRENS

Director of Krens Ten Brinke Projectontwikkeling, the property developer responsible for De IJzergieterij

### KEES SCHIPPER

Director of Rialto Vastgoedontwikkeling, the property developer responsible for the AaBé complex

### JESSIE WAGENAAR

Director of Sales and Marketing for BPD Gebiedsontwikkeling, the property developer responsible for Stadskade

### RIEK BAKKER

Landscape architect and urban planner, responsible for the urban development processes as Piushaven supervisor

### JOHN KÖRMELING

Sculptor and architect, designer of the D'n Ophef bridge

### MICHEL DENEËF

Owner and operator of the Villa Pastorie Bed & Breakfast

### THÉRÈSE MOL

Piushaven Urban Development Project manager for the City of Tilburg

### INGEBORG VERHEIJEN

Director of Triborgh projectontwikkeling, a partnership between various Tilburg building contractors and housing corporations

### LUDO HERMANS

Urban planner for the City of Tilburg

### JOHN LA HAYE

Skipper, initiator of the Home Port Tilburg (*Thuis-haven Tilburg*) Foundation and the Tilburg on the Water (*Tilburg te Water*) Foundation

### CAROLINE DOCTERS VAN LEEUWEN

Skipper, initiator of the Home Port Tilburg (*Thuis-haven Tilburg*) Foundation and the Tilburg on the Water (*Tilburg te Water*) Foundation

### BEREND DE VRIES

Tilburg city councillor

### RALF EMBRECHTS

Independent chair of the Piushaven Living Stage (*Levend Podium*) Foundation

### ERWIN VAN DE VELDE

Owner and operator of cafe Burgemeester Jansen

### DANIËL MEIJER

Owner and operator of cafe Burgemeester Jansen

### CORNÉ SNELS

Owner of Hardy's

### PAUL DE KANTER

Operator of *De Waterjump* attraction at city beach

### JAN BRUIL

Development and construction manager at Bouwinvest

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ELINE SIPS  
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COLLECTIE STICHTING THUISHAVEN TILBURG

**Text:**  
IVO BASTIAANSEN  
MIEKE VAN DEN BRULE  
EDWIN VAN DEN HEUVEL  
MARIEKE PRINS  
THIJS SCHOUTEN  
ROB DE WIT  
EVA WITTE  
MAX VISSER  
JAAP VROMANS  
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**GEMEENTE TILBURG**











The new Piushaven residential area is unique. It is a melting pot of industrial history, quiet living and modern urban dynamism. Fifteen years of urban development in Piushaven has resulted in many new buildings in the district with a strongly individual character. Raw and many-faceted, bursting with potential and special thanks to the proximity of the water that binds it all together. This publication describes how the district has developed in seven in-depth articles, to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the partnership between the City of Tilburg and the Piushaven Urban Development Project. In images and stories, it explains the many facets of the project and the special form of cooperation between the council, the property developers, the business community and residents in this innovative approach to urban development. This approach that has put Piushaven on the map in Tilburg and in urban development circles throughout the Netherlands.

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