# Morgen

#07

Real estate with a heart

AHAM VASTGOED



# Newbuild in an old city



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# Welcome

Second chances and new steps. This seventh edition of *Morgen* offers a glimpse of how we collaborate to create more appealing real estate at existing locations, and how our tenants are increasingly using these properties for more sustainable purposes. HANS Tweedehands on Utrechtsestraat and Millesime Vintage on Haarlemmerplein are two great examples of this. Both shops offer attractive vintage clothing at magnificent locations. AHAM has great affection for 'vintage' properties and these entrepreneurs adore 'classic' clothing. Both of us believe that products which were originally designed and produced with such dedication deserve more than one life.

In terms of development projects, this time we highlight OpRapenburg — a wonderful project near the mouth of the IJtunnel — and 89-93 Ostadestraat, the renovation of a monumental property in the De Pijp district. On Rapenburg, Jaap Dijkman Architecten demonstrates how adding finely detailed premises transforms what used to be a problematic location into the gateway to a historical section of Amsterdam. In De Pijp, in collaboration with Ronald Janssen Architecten, our project retains the building's historical façade while constructing rooftop additions, creating a real gem in the street. Besides giving these two properties new lives, we also worked with De Regenboog Groep in De Pijp, offering housing and support to people who are temporarily unable to independently manage their lives due to the challenges of modern urban living.

Daisy's Daycare and Pompadour are tenants who built on their own previous experience to set up new enterprises, just like the Nelemans law firm did some ten years ago. More recently, we launched partnerships with Bonarius (engineering and maintenance) and Schoonmaakwoede, two companies that contribute significantly to customer satisfaction. We aim to build long-term relationships with all our partners.

The Sint Antonius Stichting has a new Managing Director, Jasper Oei. He introduces three projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, which were made possible in part thanks to our shareholder. Here too, second chances and new steps play a prominent role. The Luminos Fund in particular resonates with me. It focuses on children aged eight to fourteen who, through no fault of their own, have received little or no education. Luminos ensures these children get the right education after all, by means of a fast-track programme, resulting in lasting impact on their self-confidence and development.

Once again, this edition of *Morgen* illustrates how AHAM Vastgoed, together with its long-term partners, works hard to make Amsterdam and the rest of the world, just a little bit better.

Tim van Schijndel
managing director AHAM Vastgoed

# ‘We got incredibly lucky’

**In May, Nynke van Giffen (27), product specialist at Holland & Barrett, and Pim Statema (26), operational coordinator at Gire Mobility, moved into 8 Foeliedwarsstraat, part of the OpRapenburg newbuild complex.**



**How did you two end up on Foeliedwarsstraat?**
Pim: ‘Nynke and I wanted to move in together and we posted on Instagram that we were looking for a place to live. A friend of mine, Noortje, was working on this AHAM newbuild project and she tipped us off a few weeks later that there was going to be a viewing. One Saturday, we went to check out the show home. We liked it right away and were really excited.’

Nynke: ‘We both already lived in Amsterdam, but many homes in the city are quite cramped and dark. Here it’s all open and bright. The tall windows are gorgeous and everything is finished really nicely. The apartment feels much bigger than the 67 m² it actually measures. Indoors, you hardly hear the bustle and traffic outside. That’s very special, especially in the centre of town.’

**Presumably there were lots of candidates?**
Pim: ‘We submitted our income details and were entered into a lottery. We applied for several apartments, but our preference was for the show home on the first floor. And that’s the one we were allotted.’









Viewing day for tenants







*‘It makes the neighbourhood feel like a village, even though you’re in the middle of the city’*



Nynke: ‘We got incredibly lucky. We never thought it would only take a few months to find a home that suited us so well. We painted the place and installed lights and curtain rails ourselves, but other than that hardly any work was required. I designed and decorated the wall behind our bed myself. But the wooden floor, for example, was already finished. The basics were already taken care of.’

Pim: ‘They even gave us a maintenance kit for the wooden floor. We have to oil it twice a year. Those sorts of things are really well organised.’

### Was there anything that took some getting used to?

Nynke: ‘Mostly the unfamiliar neighbourhood. We were both used to living on the other side of Amsterdam, so we had to find out where to shop and exercise here. We’ve gradually discovered lots of other great places. For instance, we often go running at the Marineterrein, where you can also swim. And when we walk in the direction of Artis Zoo, we often hear birds and sometimes even the elephants or lions.’

Pim: ‘Here in the centre of town there are lots of fun pubs, full of locals who have lived here for years. It makes the neighbourhood feel like a village, even though you’re in the middle of the city. That’s what makes this location unique.’

### Did you consider buying a home rather than renting?

Pim: ‘No, that’s not realistic for us at the moment. We’ve just moved in together, and we feel this is the right arrangement for us. We have friends who have bought properties, and we’ve seen what that involves: renovation, maintenance and unforeseen expenses. For the time being, we really enjoy being able to live a carefree life here.’

Nynke: ‘Besides, we’re the first tenants in this apartment. Everything is new, and that has a certain special vibe. Whenever we’ve been away for a weekend, we’re always really glad to be back. That tells you a lot about how much we feel at home here.’





For years, there used to be a Spar supermarket on the corner of Nieuwe Foeliestraat and Rapenburg. The location has changed unrecognisably since AHAM built OpRapenburg here: a complex comprising 24 apartments, commercial premises and basement storage units. Construction engineer Rik Nahuijsen, who led the project on behalf of AHAM, talks about OpRapenburg, from purchase to delivery.

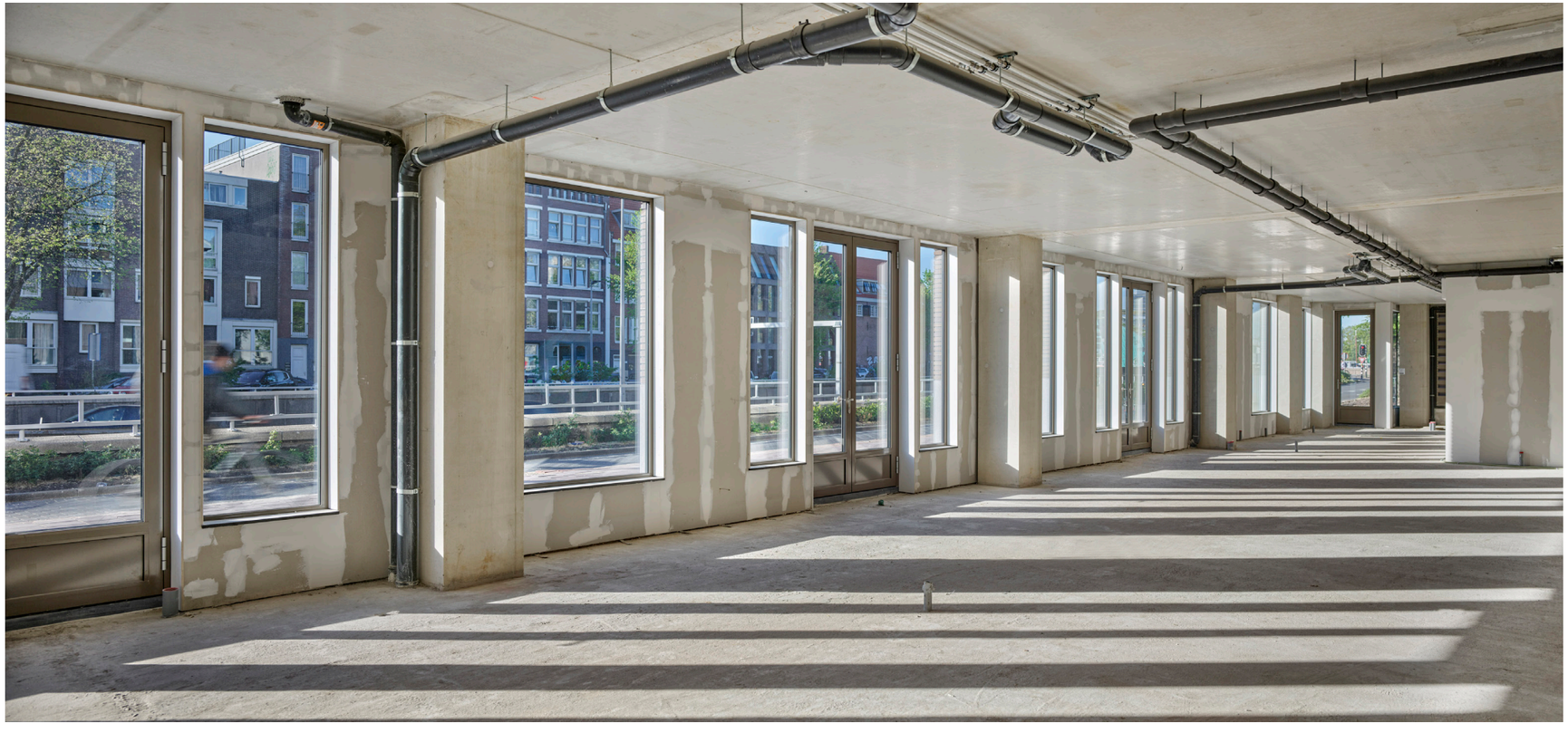
# OpRapenburg: newbuild in the old city centre

We're at 24 Foeliedwarsstraat, the final apartment still to be completed. All that's left are a few finishing touches, such as painting the skirting boards and oiling the oak floor. Tenants have already been found and in a couple of weeks they'll be moving in.
Standing at the back door leading onto the garden, Rik Nahuijsen tells us what's unique about the apartment. 'Not only has it got its own garden, it's also the only two-floor apartment.' AHAM selected distinctive interior details such as door handles and designer closets, and in the adjoining room a built-in wine fridge is an eye-catcher.

The three-metre tall ceilings also enhance the luxurious vibe, as do the boxed-in radiators and the herringbone parquet throughout the flat. The wooden floor, installed in all the apartments, is an example of AHAM's attention to high-quality residential comfort.
Nahuijsen: 'Instead of using artificial laminate flooring which wears down within a few years and has to be replaced, we prefer to use sustainable, natural products. It's an investment that easily pays itself back. After about ten years the wood is buffed, leaving the floor looking as good as new.'
A staircase leads down to the sub-basement, where there are three bedrooms — also with wooden floors — and a tiled bathroom fitted with a bath tub.













*At the busiest time, about fifty people were working on the construction site at the same time. Different tradespeople, from carpenters to engineers and painters, worked alongside each other*

## Buro Amsterdam

To understand how this brand new home came into being, we have to go back in time. In 2023, AHAM purchased the OpRapenburg project from Buro Amsterdam as an ongoing 'property development'. Nahuijsen explains there was already a construction plan and a building licence. The first step was to demolish the Spar supermarket. A major part of the project was constructing a basement. This is a specialised and risky undertaking in the centre of Amsterdam, so AHAM hired a separate contractor for this job. 'A lot of contractors get nervous at the prospect of constructing a basement,' says Nahuijsen. Van Os en Van den Berg, basement specialists, however, didn't flinch. They laid the foundations and created the underground structure, after which the construction contractor completed the above ground section.

Before construction of the residential units could start, archaeologists investigated the four to five metre deep remains of historical building work. They discovered remnants of a wharf dating from the time of the VOC (the Dutch East India Company). This remarkable find held up construction for a while, but thanks to an excellent partnership between the archaeologists and the basement builders, the research didn't seriously delay the ultimate completion of the project.

The complex is situated alongside the mouth of the IJtunnel, which means windows on that side of the building can't be opened due to the noise. On the quiet side, however, residents can open their windows, and the result is striking. Inside the building, you hardly notice the traffic passing outside.

## Challenge

Indeed, the biggest challenge turned out not to be a technical problem, but rather logistics. The construction site is situated in town. The building borders directly onto the road. 'There was hardly any room for loading and unloading, or for storing construction materials,' says Nahuijsen, pointing at the narrow pavement in front of the premises. 'This little strip was all there was.'

The contractor had to constantly









figure out where to store construction materials, what the best time was for trucks to arrive and how staff could work safely. In addition, all the work had to be carefully coordinated with the council and the surrounding neighbourhood.
At the busiest time, about fifty people were working on the construction site at the same time. Different tradespeople, from carpenters to engineers and painters, worked alongside each other.
For the most part, the construction contractor delivered the houses shell and core, and a separate contractor took care of the finishing.
Included in the initial purchase was a neglected nineteenth-century property next to the newbuild complex. The ground floor was part of the Spar supermarket and above that was a residence. During construction, the property was used as an office and a site cabin. Since then, AHAM has acquired a licence to turn the building into apartments.

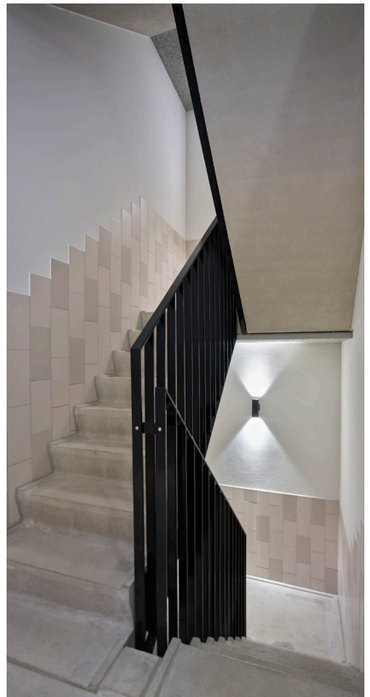
## Supermarket

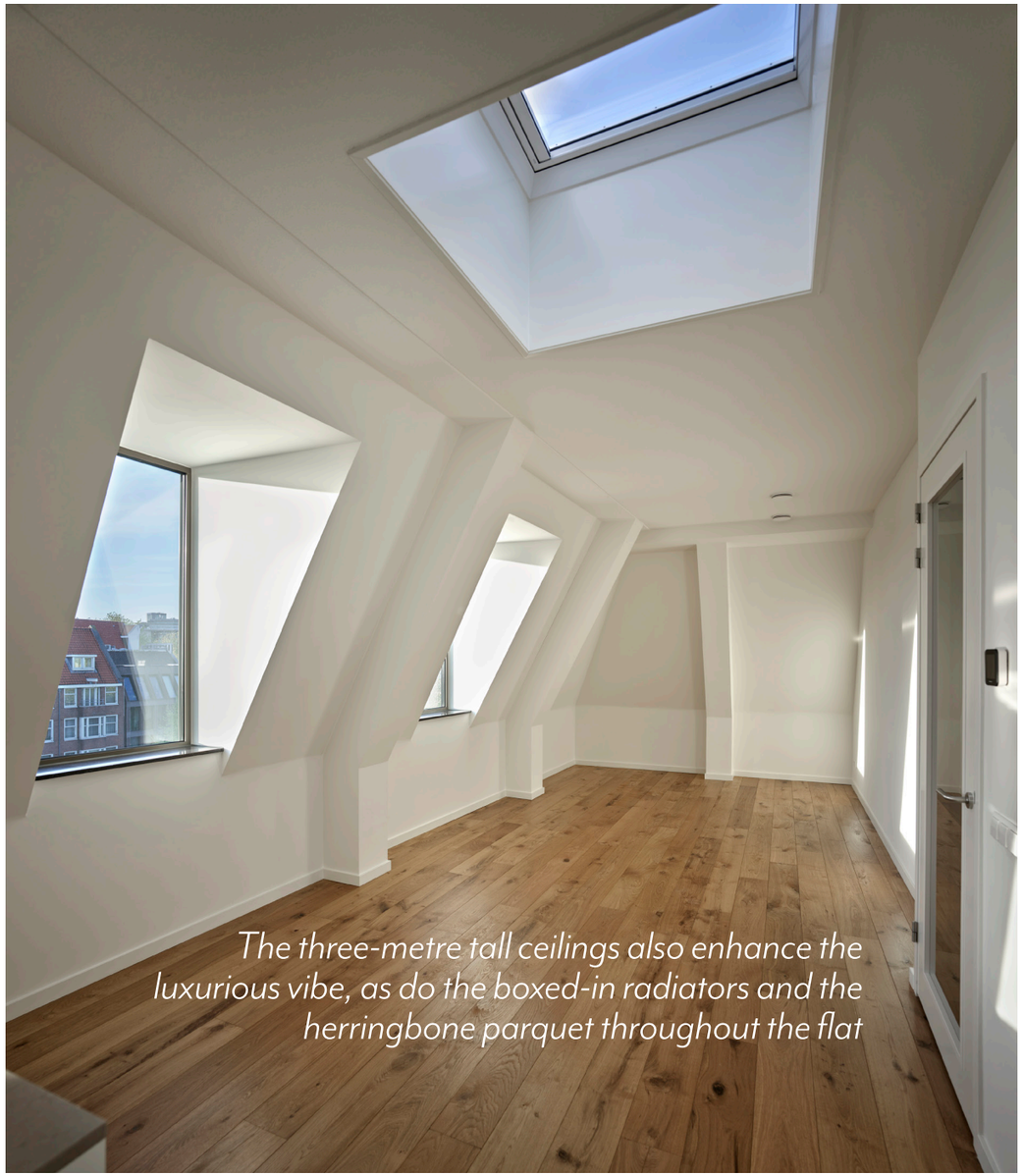
Initially, a large section of the ground floor was earmarked for the Spar supermarket to return. Ultimately, though, Spar declined the rental contract. 'It's a real pity for local residents,' says Nahuijsen. 'Now they no longer have a supermarket in the immediate vicinity.'
Meanwhile, AHAM is developing a plan to turn the ground floor into office space. 'Many potential office tenants prefer to relocate to premises that are ready to use,' Nahuijsen explains.

## Futureproof

In terms of climate control and energy, a futureproof system was the obvious choice. The building is heated by a heat pump connected to geothermal energy. In the winter, hot water is extracted from underground and used for heating; in the summer heat from the building is returned to the earth to cool the building. In addition, all residential units include balanced ventilation systems with heat recovery. 'So you don't lose any energy,' says Nahuijsen.
Parking for private vehicles is another contemporary issue. Newbuild residents no longer receive parking permits from the Amsterdam council. They can, however, purchase a subscription to one of the local public car parks.
Owning a car, though, is no longer a given for urban residents. 'We quickly and easily found tenants for the apartments,' says Nahuijsen. Far more potential tenants registered for the lottery than ultimately received an apartment. One of the reasons for OpRapenburg's appeal is the complex's central location.
There's more than enough space for bicycles, though. Every home has its own spacious storage unit in the basement, which is accessible by stairs and a lift. There is no trace left of all the work that took place here.







*The three-metre tall ceilings also enhance the luxurious vibe, as do the boxed-in radiators and the herringbone parquet throughout the flat*

# Caring for the little ones

**AHAM believes the city should be liveable for everyone, including families. Which is why we opted for a preschool centre on Van Hogendorpstraat. Daisy's Daycare offers a home from home for children up to age four.**







Claire Moulijn (left) and Kim Groot-van Denderen

*Daisy's Daycare focuses on providing a calm environment, in which children receive adequate attention and are encouraged to grow.*

Daisy's Daycare was launched this spring. Following a year-long refurbishment, the completely empty, roughly 300 m² premises were transformed into a cosy, small-scale preschool facility, perfectly adapted to meet the needs of children aged 0–4.
There is a separate group for each age category (0–1, 1–2 and 2–4), enabling kids to develop to their full potential. Each group is run by a dedicated team, creating an atmosphere that feels as safe and familiar as home for the children.

## Focus

Daisy's Daycare focuses on providing a calm environment, in which children receive adequate attention and are encouraged to grow. 'We believe dividing the children according to age benefits their development and creates more peaceful groups,' explains co-founder and educational coach Kim Groot-van Denderen. 'Infants need more peace and quiet, whereas toddlers are busy discovering the world around them, and preschoolers are developing their language and motor skills, among other things. Children develop most before the age of four, so they require intensive supervision. This is what we provide here, in small groups.'
Given the premises were completely empty, Daisy's Daycare was able to design the space according to its own preferences, in keeping with the founders' professional vision. 'Of course, this was unique,' says co-founder Claire Moulijn. 'Our groups are much smaller than usual, so we can give each child the time and individual attention it needs. All the children attend at least two days a week, so they quickly become familiar with one another and with their caregivers. Kim and I are also always present.' Daisy's Daycare is run by a professional team of educators and coaches.
Claire: 'We assess the children every quarter, and we pay more attention when parents have specific issues they want us to focus on, for example about sleep problems. In consultation with the parents, we formulate a care plan, and work together to address the issue.'

## Meals

Besides play and exploration, Daisy's Daycare also focuses a lot on meals. 'We start each day with a delicious breakfast of fruit. Later we serve lunch including dishes like mashed vegetables, omelette, wraps or soup. Later in the afternoon we offer an afternoon snack, including coleslaw, yoghurt and crackers. Children are often hungry at the end of the day. At 16:30, the kids enjoy an organic meal, catered by Moekes Maaltijd. This enables parents to pick up their kids after a long day at work, and focus on enjoying a relaxed evening together.'

## Westerpark

On the one hand, Kim and Claire chose this location because of the space and the garden, but also because it's located close to Westerpark. 'All the kids can play to their hearts' content in the adjacent courtyard playground. Almost every day we take the infants out to Westerpark. That's because being outside, experiencing nature and having new experiences are all valuable for their development.'
Daisy's Daycare provides Amsterdam-West with an additional preschool facility, where children, parents and staff alike feel heard, seen and appreciated.

**Daisy's Daycare**
**Van Hogendorpstraat 93-95, Amsterdam**
**https://www.daisysdaycare.nl/**




# Deep clean

**The Schoonmaakwoede company cleans residential buildings in the Netherlands and Belgium. AHAM is one of their clients.**

In 2010, 24-year-old Kasper Verhoek met Adriaan Moerman and Roel Hellemons at a charity rally in aid of Africa. Moerman and Hellemons were joint owners of Schoonmaakwoede (Cleaning Frenzy) and invited him to come and work for them. Kasper was studying commercial economics at HES (college of higher economic education) in Amsterdam, and to graduate, he still needed to complete an internship and write his thesis. He accepted their offer of an internship with a guaranteed job to follow and began researching ways for the company to improve its operations and increase the number of returning customers.

'Four years later, the guys got into an argument about the future of the company, and they decided to sell it,' says Kasper. 'They had purchasers lined up and the price had been agreed, but they were willing to give me priority if I could stump up the cash within two weeks.'

## Quirky

With help from friends, family and a bank, Kasper managed to raise the required amount. So, since 2015, Kasper Verhoek has been the owner of the company with the quirky and original name. By now the firm's turnover is ten times what it was when he took over. He runs the enterprise together with Operations Manager Sietse Lakeman.

*'Fortunately, we receive a huge amount of positive feedback from our customers'*

Kasper concisely characterises what the company does as deep cleaning of residential buildings. 'Our clients range from major companies managing multiple residences, to private individuals who are relocating and are required to leave their home behind in a pristine state, plus everything in between. Moreover, we're the only company in the Netherlands that has this as its core business. We distinguish between a so-called "handover clean" (preparing a property for new tenants) and a "major clean". It's also worth noting that if you enter your postcode and house number on our website, it takes just three clicks to receive an estimate and an available date, and you can place your order right away. Any other details we need, we get from the public real estate registry. We work with certified cleaners, so you don't need to supply any cleaning materials yourself. And we'll be on your doorstep within 48 hours.'

## Cleaners

Schoonmaakwoede works with some 100 cleaners all across the Netherlands and Belgium. They run the entire outfit from their headquarters in Hilversum.

AHAM has been one of their clients since 2021 and Schoonmaakwoede cleans numerous stairwells for them every month. When properties are vacated, the company is also often hired to clean up, especially following refurbishments or repair work, in order to render the premises spotless for the next tenant.

'For us, word of mouth is the best way to grow the business,' says Kasper. 'Many people have already heard of us, but it's still a big decision to contract us. It's not like deciding to buy an ice lolly. Fortunately, we receive a huge amount of positive feedback from our customers, which is very gratifying.'

When asked what he would like to accomplish in the next five years, Kasper answers: 'Our aim is to make our name more widely known. We will be actively approaching real estate companies and estate agents. In five years' time, we're definitely going to be at least twice our current size.'

**www.schoonmaakwoede.nl**

# Luxury vintage

**Building on the success of their shop on Leidsestraat, Millesime Collection has now opened a second branch on Haarlemmerplein.**

‘Amsterdam is the most ecologically conscious city in Europe, maybe even in the entire world. As a result, the people of Amsterdam are really into secondhand clothing,’ says Francesco Esposito, the Italian owner of vintage clothing outlet Millesime Collection. According to him, this is one of the reasons he was able to open a second branch in the city this summer.

Millesime Collection launched its first shop on Leidsestraat in late 2025, which consists of three entire floors. They mostly stock designer clothing, including treasures such as a 1990s Versace halter dress, a Dolce & Gabbana white woollen trenchcoat, a pair of Louboutin men’s loafers and high-heeled suede sandals by Bally. In addition they offer a wide range of denim and sports clothing.

## Easy to navigate

The second Millesime Collection is located at a prominent location, on the corner of Haarlemmerstraat and Haarlemmerplein. The former ABN AMRO building is bright and easy to navigate. There are niches for headwear and scarves, and a large wall displaying bags. The clothing racks are categorised according to type — from trousers and tops to jackets — enabling customers to easily assemble an entire outfit. The racks are also ordered according to style and era. There are lots of items from the nineties, and even more from the noughties. ‘That style is currently popular among Gen-Z,’ says Esposito. Matching shoes are arranged underneath the racks.

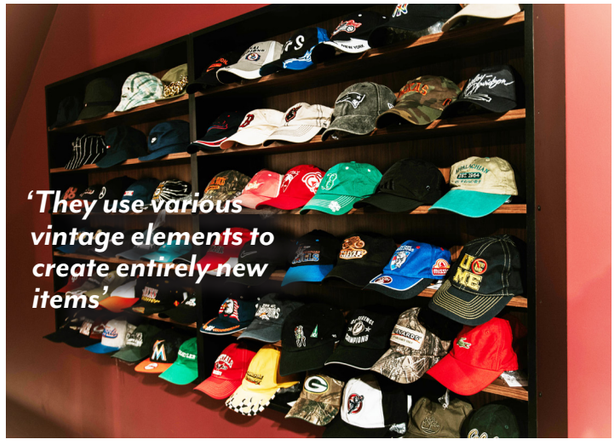
The basement, where the safe used to be housed, has been transformed into a space with fitting rooms and a large collection of upcycled items from the Italian brand DDPR. ‘We work closely with DDPR’s designers,’ says Esposito. They use various vintage elements to create entirely new items.’ He holds up a coat into which a pair of trousers has been integrated and a sports shirt to which a ruffled skirt has been added. ‘They’re all unique pieces.’

**Millesime Vintage**
**Leidsestraat 64-66, Amsterdam**
**Haarlemmerplein 2, Amsterdam**
**https://www.millesimecollection.com**







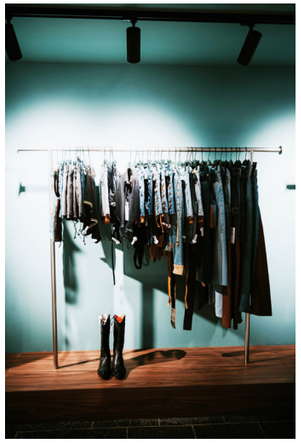















# De Teunis: living, work and leisure in Amsterdam-Noord

**In Amsterdam-Noord AHAM is building three sustainable tower blocks on the riverfront, combining residential, commercial and hospitality units. If everything goes according to plan, the De Teunis newbuild project will be completed in 2029. Peter Rijsbergen and Freek Tames, both involved in developing and implementing the project, explain more about this project.**



AHAM managing director Tim van Schijndel (left) with Brahim Abid, former Amsterdam-Noord neighbourhood liaison officer



Mischa van Os, director of the construction company Van Os en Van den Berg, signs the first pile

On a sandy expanse in the Buiksloterham district, construction work has begun on an underground car park. This marks the start of work on De Teunis, a residential-commercial project consisting of three sustainable newbuild tower blocks on the riverside, to be erected on top of a communal car park.
Between the towers, a semi-public area has been designed, bordering on the banks of the Johan van Hasseltkanaal waterway. A jetty will enable small boats to moor there. The waterway has been deliberately integrated into the project's design. Project leader Freek Tames: 'We're working hard on designing the quay. The Amsterdam council has stipulated that the quayside must be able to last at least a hundred years.'
The highest of the towers will have a view of the waterway, and will measure about 30 metres. That's quite tall for Amsterdam-Noord standards, even though there are 70- to 100-metre high-rises in other districts, such as Amsterdam-Zuidoost. This modest size aligns with AHAM's view of urban design and, according to head of property development Peter Rijsbergen, 'its attention to human scale.'

## Architectural agency

The modern complex was designed by Dutch architectural agency Studioninedots, in collaboration with the Swedish Up4 agency. Rijsbergen says the plans grew out of the Europan international contest for European architects, a competition with several fixed requirements.
One such requirement was the preservation of commercial activity in this former industrial zone in Noord. The notion of combining a variety of purposes is based on the area's history. Originally, Buiksloterham was an industrial area, and as part of its transformation into an





Impression of De Teunis in the future

### De Teunis in numbers:

There will be a total of **48** apartments in the three tower blocks, consisting of **14** controlled rental residences and **34** homes in the private rental sector.
The apartments will vary from about **50** to **80** square metres of floor space.
All told, that will amount to about **4,000** square metres of residential floor space and some **4,000** square metres of commercial floor space. The controlled rental units are very deliberately included in the plan.

urban residential zone, a deliberate decision was taken to retain some of its enterprises. Rijsbergen says the mixture of functions was central to the project's design. 'Living and working are not totally separated.'
There used to be warehouses on the site where De Teunis is going to be built, but these have all been demolished. Construction of the underground car park is expected to be completed mid-2027. Unlike some similar projects in the historical centre of the city, the excavation challenges here are not archaeological, but rather environmental. 'This area is heavily polluted,' explains Rijsbergen, 'due to its industrial past. Multiple clean-ups had to be carried out, including removing oil from the ground, before any construction work could commence.'
As soon as the basement contractor's work reaches ground level, another contractor will build the tower blocks. Rijsbergen says this approach is not only related to the specific expertise required for constructing basements, it also helps to spread the project's financial risks.

## Occupancy

Each of the three buildings will have its own mix of occupants. The ground floor of the first tower, on the waterfront, will house hospitality and the floors above will be residential. The second tower will host productive enterprises on the ground floor, and five floors of office space above that. The third tower also mixes commercial spaces on the ground floor with residential units on the floor above. Freek Tames emphasises that it's not entirely a residential project. 'The idea is for the commercial activity, hospitality and coming and going of staff on the ground floor, to generate vibrancy.'
Architects have more freedom here than in the historical centre of the city. For example, all the apartments will be built with balconies rather than loggias, which are often required in the city centre for aesthetic or noise pollution reasons. Tames: 'There will be open



*This modest size aligns with AHAM's view of urban design and 'its attention to human scale'*



**Aerial view of the future tower blocks**



balconies on all sides of the building. Residents will have a lot of outdoor space.'
De Teunis symbolises the way Amsterdam-Noord is developing. What used to be a traditional industrial area is now a mixed-use urban district, combining living, work and leisure activities.

## Suitable users

For AHAM, this poses more than just a construction challenge. The real estate firm also wants to find suitable users. Tames says one of the biggest conundrums of the De Teunis project is identifying enterprises whose activities will appropriately enhance the area's vibrancy in a few years' time.
To that end, an AHAM team is looking far

*'The idea is for the commercial activity, hospitality and coming and going of staff on the ground floor, to generate vibrancy'*



ahead, because the technology incorporated in the tower blocks might have to be adapted to future users' demands. For example, a coffee roasting firm might need a specific type of fume extraction. At the same time, some types of industry that were permitted in the old warehouses, such as breweries, are no longer permitted without restrictions due to modern environmental requirements.
Although it is quite a challenge, construction of De Teunis is making AHAM eager for more. It is now developing several other similarly mixed-use initiatives in Amsterdam-Noord. Ultimately, Buiksloterham and the NDSM site will be home to some 12,000 residents. But the three tower blocks will probably have been

# *Strength through connection*

**SAS-P supports African organisations which have proven they can make an impact and centre their efforts on local ownership. This results in a multi-faceted network of initiatives that all have one major thing in common: they bring together people and organisations to facilitate sustainable change.**

Sometimes this will be on an international scale, other times within a single village or community. In this magazine, we would like to share three inspiring initiatives with you, which in part have been able to grow thanks to rent from AHAM tenants.
One great example is African Collaborative. This organisation supports local partners in their growth and development. Thanks to multi-year funding, organisations acquire sufficient resources. Just as importantly, they are also given trust and time to learn, experiment and develop further. This way, sustainable change can grow from within, rather than being imposed externally.
The Luminos Fund also demonstrates how powerful collaboration can be. By connecting parents, schools and authorities, they make education accessible to children who would otherwise miss out. Together, they ensure more children are given an opportunity to develop their talents and build a future.
In Zimbabwe, Friendship Bench promotes connection in a very personal way. Specially trained grandmothers offer a listening ear to people with mental or psychiatric problems. Their approach is surprisingly simple, but extremely effective. As one of the participants puts it: 'Often they don't need medication, but rather someone who really listens to them.' It's that human attention that makes a world of difference.



Warm regards,
Jasper Oei
Managing Director SAS-P

**Want to know more about SAS-P?**
**SAS-P.nl**

# ‘Often, they don’t need medication, but rather someone who really listens to them’

**The Zimbabwean NGO Friendship Bench provides assistance to people suffering from burn-out, stress or anxiety issues.**



‘This African initiative, in which ordinary people support each other, has grown into an internationally recognised model for easily accessible mental healthcare,’ says Friendship Bench CEO and physician, Esther Tumbare.

Friendship Bench started in 2006 as a practical solution for a major problem: most people in Zimbabwe had almost no access to mental healthcare. Back then, the country’s population stood at about twelve million, but there were fewer than ten psychiatrists. Almost all of them worked in the major cities, whereas most people who needed help lived in the countryside.

Psychiatrist Dr Dixon Chibanda, who had a practice in the capital Harare at that time, treated a young woman with severe depression. She lived with her mother, a three-hour trip from the city. When her mother could no longer afford the lengthy and expensive bus ride, her treatment had to stop. Ultimately, the young woman ended her own life.

‘Her passing affected Professor Chibanda profoundly,’ relates Friendship Bench’s current CEO Esther Tumbare. ‘He asked himself whether her death could have been prevented.’

## Communities

Chibanda discussed the loss with his grandmother. She told him older women in local communities had always played an important role as counsellors and confidantes. ‘Grandmothers are perceived as wise, affectionate individuals who take the time to listen to other people,’ says Tumbare. ‘That’s when the psychiatrist realised that they were exactly the right people to support people with psychiatric problems.’

That’s how Chibanda came up with the idea for Friendship Bench. Seated on simple wooden benches in the public space, a network of elderly women — and the occasional man — offer a listening ear to fellow villagers who suffer from mental problems. These ‘grandmothers’ are given some brief training in problem-solving talk therapy, giving them the tools to help fellow villagers find solutions to their own problems.

According to Tumbare, the concept is both simple and effective. ‘Many people find it easier to speak with a friendly grandma on a bench than a psychiatrist in a white coat.’ This easy access is key, because many people are ashamed of their psychological complaints. Some still attribute anxiety and depression to witchcraft or evil spirits. However, Tumbare has noticed superstition and stigma are gradually losing ground. ‘Effective education is helping people understand that your mind can fall ill just like your body.’

## Clinical study

After some time, Friendship Bench commissioned a randomised clinical study. It compared the help provided by the trained grandmothers with standard care provided by medical staff. ‘The results were impressive,’ says Tumbare. ‘Depressive symptoms decreased by over eighty percent. It turned out

*‘Increasingly, people feel lonely and are searching for meaning and connection’*












the grandmothers were just as effective, sometimes even more effective, than traditional healthcare.'

People with serious psychiatric disorders, such as psychoses, are always referred to a psychiatrist. But most people present with mild or moderate symptoms. 'Often, they don't need medication, but rather someone who really listens to them.'

According to Tumbare, poverty is a major factor. 'People worry about money, food, relationships and jobs.' Following their conversations, participants are invited to join self-help groups. For instance, they might set up a vegetable garden together, or sell handcrafted goods. Not only does this generate income, it also creates social contacts. 'When we ask them what helped them most, they don't mention money. They tell us they're no longer alone, that they have friends again.'

## New role

It transpires that the grandmothers also benefit greatly from their new role. Supporting other people gives their life renewed purpose. This is important, because close relationships in Zimbabwe are coming under increasing pressure. Families fall apart because people migrate to cities or to other countries. Social media, economic insecurity and the rise of hard drugs also present new challenges.

'We face the same problems as the rest of the world,' says Tumbare. 'Mental health is not a local problem, but a worldwide challenge. Increasingly, people feel lonely and are searching for meaning and connection.'

For this precise reason, it turns out that the idea behind Friendship Bench has surprisingly universal appeal. The programme is now being implemented in the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and several other African nations.

The lesson Zimbabwe is teaching the world through this project is perhaps simpler than you might expect. The road back to mental health doesn't necessarily begin with a prescription or a diagnosis. Sometimes recovery just starts with two people sitting on a bench, and one of them asking the other, without judging: 'Tell me, how are you doing?'

**Want to know more?**
**https://www.friendshipbench.org/**

*'Many people find it easier to speak with a friendly grandma on a bench than a psychiatrist in a white coat'*



# African Collaborative: building a more equitable funding system

**African Collaborative helps locally led African organisations acquire funding, knowledge and international networks. Co-founder and co-CEO Katie Bunten-Wamaru advocates for a new model based on confidence in local expertise.**

'It was actually a blessing in disguise,' says Bunten-Wamaru. 'We started in 2020, just when the Covid pandemic exposed the international aid system's vulnerabilities. Now, with USAID being withdrawn, we see once again how important locally led African organisations are.'

Bunten-Wamaru worked in philanthropy for many years. She lived and worked in Kenya and Tanzania for almost nine years, where she witnessed firsthand how effective local organisations are.

'They know their communities, they understand the political and social context and can adjust to societal change far more rapidly. At the same time, I realised these organisations hardly received any direct funding. Less than five percent of money spent on global philanthropy goes directly to local organisations. Most of the funding is channelled through major international organisations.'

## Co-founder

African Collaborative co-founder and co-CEO Atti Worku also had on-the-ground experience of this problem. For fifteen years she


Atti Worku (left) and Katie Bunten-Wamaru





headed up a social organisation in Ethiopia and she was frequently confronted with the limitations of the international funding system. The two women met in 2019 at the Skoll World Forum in Oxford, an annual global gathering for social entrepreneurs and philanthropists. They began partnering in earnest a year later. In 2020, following the death of George Floyd, Worku wrote an article about how prejudice and racial inequality influence the philanthropy sector.

'When I read her piece, I thought: we both see this problem in exactly the same way,' says Bunten-Wamaru. She called Worku, and what started as a passing encounter expanded into a partnership that became the foundation for African Collaborative. Due to the Covid pandemic, their initial communication was almost all on Zoom.

What distinguishes African Collaborative is that its funding system was developed in collaboration with African partners. 'We didn't want a top-down approach to determine what organisations need.' Eight African social entrepreneurs joined the biweekly Zoom sessions to help develop the organisational model. In addition, they spoke to over fifty local aid organisations. 'They almost all said they didn't need more training or workshops. What they needed was funding to be able to put what they'd already learned into practice.'

According to Bunten-Wamaru, many locally led African organisations are trapped in a vicious cycle. 'They're told they have to grow first before they can be eligible for higher subsidies. But they need the capital to grow in the first place.'

Initially, the Covid pandemic looked like it was going to be a major challenge for the young organisation. But very soon, the crisis highlighted how essential their approach was. 'When Covid happened, many international organisations withdrew their management teams from Africa. But local organisations stayed put. They filled the gaps without additional funding, simply because their communities needed them.'

In Bunten-Wamaru's opinion, something similar is happening now due to the withdrawal of USAID. Now, too, as international funding decreases, local organisations are taking over and continuing the work. 'That shows you how important it is to fund them directly.'

*'They're told they have to grow first before they can be eligible for higher subsidies. But they need the capital to grow in the first place'*

*'But local organisations stayed put. They filled the gaps without additional funding'*

## Call for applications

In 2022, African Collaborative issued their first public call for applications. Within three weeks over eight hundred initiatives from thirty African countries had applied. To process this enormous number of applications, the organisation partnered with a Moroccan software company to develop a digital system that also works on a slow internet connection and is available in multiple languages. When the new system launched in 2024, they received more than three thousand applications. 'We were overwhelmed.'

Since its founding, African Collaborative has invested $12.3 million in 45 locally led organisations, spread across 15 African nations. In addition, African Collaborative managed to mobilise another $10 million of additional funding for their partners from other donors. Using this funding, the local organisations can invest in the further development of their staff, as well as communication and/or IT systems.

Soon African Collaborative will be focusing on yet another new intermediary task: 'Powered By'. This will enable wealthy private individuals to invest in carefully selected local-run African organisations, without having to set up their own foundation or fund.

'This is a pivotal moment,' says Bunten-Wamaru. 'The question is whether we're going to hold on to the old, colonial way of funding, or instead finally place out trust in the people who know their own communities best. I believe the future lies with local African leadership.'

**Want to know more?**
**https://www.africancollab.org/**





# Education is what matters most

**The Luminos Fund offers African children who have missed out on education, an opportunity to integrate into mainstream education after all. The organisation operates in Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia and Lebanon, and has already taught over half a million children. What follows is a conversation with Luminos CEO Caitlin Baron.**



**How did you get involved with the Luminos Fund?**

'I used to work in South Africa, where I came into contact with the Legatum Foundation. They were already experimenting in Ethiopia with various ways of giving a second chance to kids who had never attended school. They had developed several very promising initiatives, which they asked me to further expand. Luminos was the result of that work.'

**You decided to go to Ethiopia yourself. What did you encounter there?**

'It was an intense, amazing experience. After driving for hours along an unpaved road, we arrived in a remote village. Before I even entered the modest, tin-roofed school building, I heard singing. Once my eyes adjusted to the dark, I saw a vibrant classroom, brimming with life. Children were learning songs and playing games using local materials. It made a tremendous impression on me. I knew right away I wanted to commit to this.'

**What makes your fast-track educational programmes so distinct?**

'It's all focused on active learning. Many educational projects result in small improvements, but our accelerated courses yield enormous advances. Children develop as much in a single year as they would normally in three. It never ceases to impress me.'

**Which children do you target?**

'We provide services for children who have been excluded from the educational system. In Ethiopia, for example, they might be boys who were forced to work as shepherds, or girls who had to stay home and care for younger siblings or elderly relatives. By the time they reach the age of ten or eleven, they can no longer hope to get an education.'

*'Children develop as much in a single year as they would normally do in three'*

**How do you manage to get these children back into school?**

'Most parents understand this is the last chance for their children to get an education. Around the age of fourteen or fifteen, these children will usually be working full-time in the family business or in the home. Through us, children learn basic skills but just as importantly, they regain self-confidence.'

**Do they learn more than just reading and writing?**

'Absolutely. Their self-confidence increases, they discover their talents and begin to believe they can create a better future for themselves. Education doesn't only alter what a child knows, it also changes how they view themselves.'

**So Luminos is now operating in several African countries?**

'That's right. We started in 2016 in Ethiopia and we subsequently expanded into other countries. For example, in Ghana we work with families who migrate from the north of the country to the south in search of work. Their children often speak a different language to the one spoken at their new school. Our programme helps them make the transition, enabling them to integrate into mainstream education after all.'

*'When a child learns to read, write and calculate, that often changes the future of an entire family'*

**What kind of impact has your work had?**

'By now, we have educated about 500,000 children. We're proud of this, but at the same time we're aware that one in five African children still doesn't even get any primary education. So there's still a huge amount of work to do.'

**You currently live in Boston. Why is that?**

'It's easier to fundraise from our headquarters in Boston, and to organise our finances and administration. But the vast majority of our staff are Africans who work in Africa, because that's where the real work happens. We teach in nine different African languages. That's only feasible if you work with local communities. Education is most effective when it's supported by people who are really familiar with the local culture, language and the children's life circumstances.'

**What drives you?**

'When a child learns to read, write and calculate, that often changes the future of an entire family. It's a privilege to work for these families. In Liberia I once saw children walking to school carrying chairs on their backs. It turned out the school had no chairs, so every child brought their own chair in every day. That affected me profoundly. It shows you how committed these children are to getting an education.'

**Want to know more?**
**https://luminosfund.org/**





# Technical maintenance

**Bonarius services some 270,000 boilers. As of this year, the firm also provides maintenance for AHAM.**

Managing Director Jeroen Smolders relates: 'The history of Bonarius goes back to the eighteenth century. Back then it was a coppersmith's firm in Heemstede. Over the course of centuries, it developed into a plumbing company which by the 1950s was operating out of Haarlem. That was when the gas network was rolled out in the Netherlands, and Bonarius installed entire central heating systems consisting of a boiler, piping and radiators. That's how the company significantly expanded. Inevitably, Bonarius was asked to provide maintenance services too. Increasingly, the company sold installations to housing corporations, which also needed servicing. Around 2000, the Bonarius family handed the firm over to Herman van Heusden, who at the time was working as a real estate manager at a large housing corporation. That was the beginning of Bonarius as we know it now: a partner that provides technical maintenance.'

## Regular servicing

'Bonarius works for major clients such as housing corporations, property management companies, and homeowner associations. On the one hand we provide complete maintenance services, which consist of regular servicing of boilers and dealing with repair requests. At the same time we offer clients like AHAM advice about their properties. For example, if certain devices might need replacing. We present recommendations and implement the work.'

Bonarius currently employs about 1500 staff, spread across four branches in Amsterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and, since last year, Zwolle. Jeroen Smolders has worked for Bonarius for twelve years and became Managing Director last year. AHAM has been a client of Bonarius's since April 2026.

'I think AHAM was looking for a partner that is able to work at scale,' says Smolders. 'We have our own academy, where we train upcoming mechanics. In addition, we have a large team of experienced mechanics as well as fully digitalised systems, which allow us to record exactly what we've done in every single property. Using this data, we advise our clients on how to future-proof their inventory.'

## Swarm approach

Smolders is particularly proud of the firm's innovative methodology, which he calls the 'swarm approach.' The company describes this as follows on their website: every day, three teams of mechanics, technical experts and maintenance technicians set out in three different districts. Two maintenance teams, consisting of some 60 mechanics, carry out large scale preventative boiler maintenance in roughly 300 homes every day. In addition, an installation team of fifteen mechanics checks boilers and flue gas outlets in about twenty households daily.

Smolders: 'This enables us to help residents right away with whatever problems a device might present.'

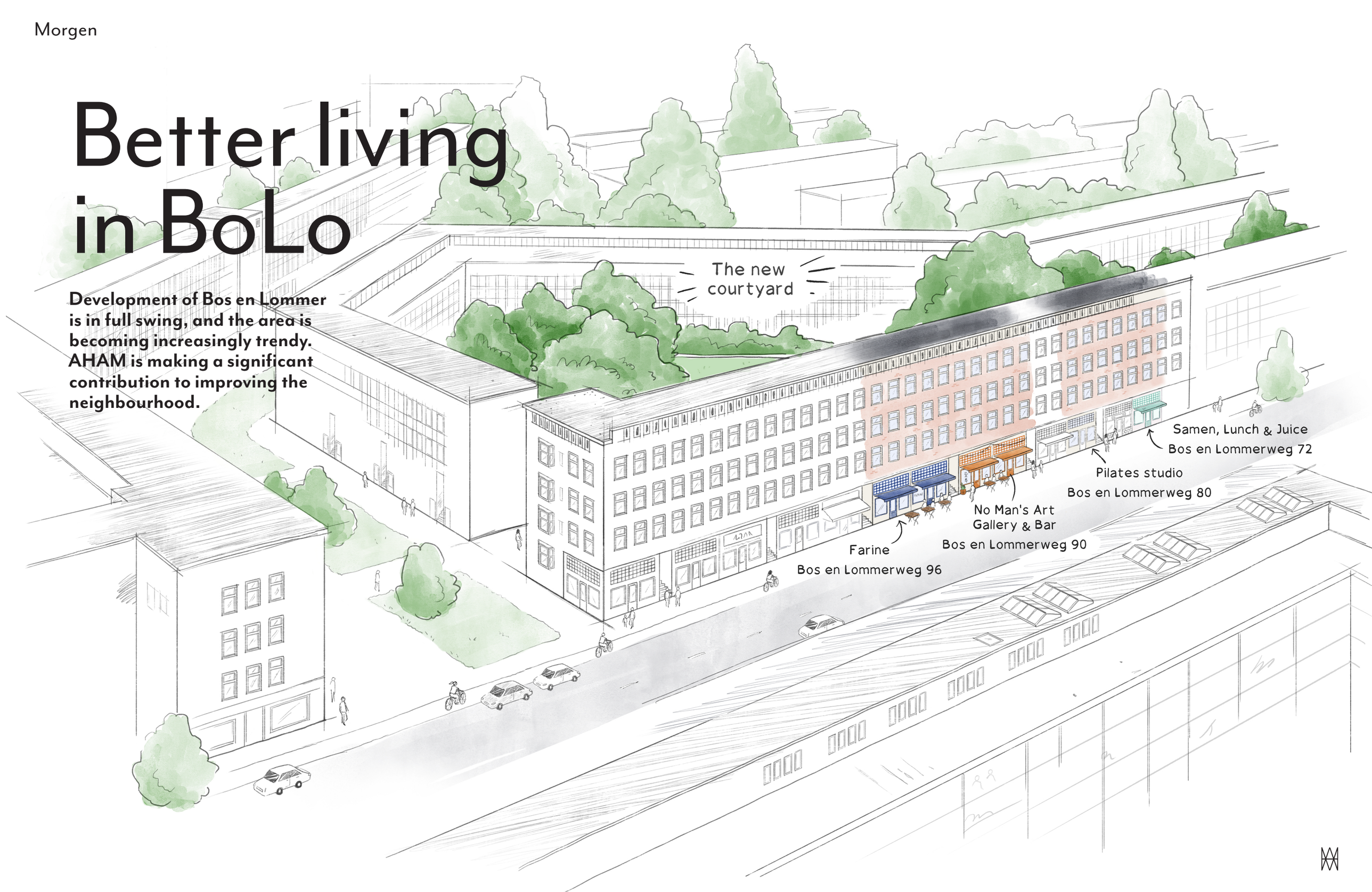
*Smolders is particularly proud of the firm's innovative methodology, which he calls the 'swarm approach'*






# Better living in BoLo

**Development of Bos en Lommer is in full swing, and the area is becoming increasingly trendy. AHAM is making a significant contribution to improving the neighbourhood.**



The Bos en Lommer neighbourhood in Amsterdam-West is also known as BoLo. The name was coined years ago, at a time when the area still had a pretty bad reputation. In fact, until about twenty years ago, the 'Kolenkitbuurt' (coal shuttle neighbourhood) — so called because its Church of the Resurrection resembles an old-fashioned coal scuttle — was considered one of the country's most vulnerable neighbourhoods, according to Abdellah Tallal, Amsterdam Council's neighbourhood liaison officer. In 2002, a documentary called *De Akbarstraat* was even made about the area. At the time, Akbarstraat was dubbed 'a dark, neglected street, rife with tensions.'

But all that is history now. 'BoLo is on the rise,' says Tallal. 'A mid-range home in the 'Kolenkit' neighbourhood now costs seven to eight hundred thousand euros. Some entrepreneurs are selling apartments adjacent to Bos en Lommer as located in "Bois & Lombre."' Tallal laughs. 'That speaks volumes.'

In 2020 a plan was drawn up to thoroughly revamp Bos en Lommer, not just physically. 'It became a placemaking project, which is a type of urban planning that goes beyond demolition, construction and refurbishment,' explains Tallal. Placemaking — Tallal prefers the term urban renewal — focuses not only on buildings and the aesthetics of public spaces, but also on people. Residents and local enterprises are involved in local development alongside the council and architects. They all join forces to decide how to improve social cohesion, safety and vibrancy, to create a neighbourhood in which the local community feels more connected. 'Not only have the public spaces been redesigned,' says Tallal. 'Social issues affecting people's private lives are being tackled too. Some great initiatives are emerging too, like the founding of the Eureka! housing corporation, through which people from multiple generations and backgrounds have managed to build a hundred homes.'

*The bare plaza, which once hosted a poorly performing market, was transformed into the 'neighbourhood living room', featuring abundant greenery and shops with renovated storefronts*

## Placemaking

Elsewhere in Bos en Lommer, the results of placemaking are also noticeable. The monumental Central Market Hall, which stood vacant for many years, has been transformed into a cultural incubator where people present workshops and bands perform. Bos en Lommerplein has also undergone a metamorphosis.

The bare plaza, which once hosted a poorly performing market, was transformed into the 'neighbourhood living room', featuring abundant greenery and shops with renovated storefronts.

Bos en Lommerweg — the long road winding all the way through the neighbourhood — has changed dramatically too. The roadway has been narrowed and the cycle paths and pedestrian walkways are wider now. Space has been created for outdoor seating on the pavement in front of numbers 70 to 90.

'AHAM has played an active and major role in the refurbishment of Bos en Lommerweg,' says Abdellah Tallal. 'AHAM owns multiple commercial properties and is very selective when it comes to placing new tenants in vacant premises. Yet another barbershop or shawarma restaurant isn't going to improve life in the neighbourhood. AHAM takes great care to ensure there's a healthy variety of enterprises.'

## Residential complex

Betty Tania, AHAM's head of commerce, agrees. She's giving a guided tour of Bos en Lommerweg on this sunny day. The entire residential complex, reaching from number 30 to 120, has belonged to AHAM ever since it was built in 1934. The complex stretches all the way to Kijkduinstraat and Solebaystraat, and consists of 292 apartments and 15 commercial units.

'Previously, AHAM would engage estate agents to organise the leasing of commercial units. They would rent the property to the first entrepreneur to show interest. These days though, we select the tenants ourselves. We don't necessarily go for chains or businesses with the most robust financial security. Instead we look for enterprises that will add diversity to the street. These might even be first-time entrepreneurs.'

As a result, this part of Bos en Lommerweg is extremely vibrant. Seated at wooden picnic tables under huge parasols, mostly young residents enjoy food and drinks from the hospitality businesses which have been set up in recent years, alongside a dentist's practice, a midwifery centre and a laser clinic. One of the more recent arrivals is Farine, a French bakery that launched in January 2025 at number 96.

'The opening was preceded by major renovations,' says Betty Tania, 'which makes sense in the context of placemaking in BoLo. In the old days, we would deliver a commercial property core and shell. Nowadays we actively participate in discussions about finishing, and we design the interior together with the tenant.' According to her, Farine is a great example of this. Apart from the original 1930s terrazzo floor, almost everything was refurbished.




The boulangerie's bright blue door, window frames and transom windows are striking. This was one of the things the tenant wanted, because in France a traditional bakery is often recognisable by its blue façade. Farine offers classic French products like croissants, *pains au chocolat* and tartlets. A display case on the long counter proudly presents their sandwiches and shortcrust pastries, which customers can enjoy while sitting on outdoor benches or on the windowsills, or upstairs on the mezzanine overlooking the spacious bakery below. Betty Tania points this out. 'This property used to have a cramped, dark vibe that wasn't appealing for a bakery. AHAM fitted glass façades on the double-height ceilinged ground floor. This has created a bright space, with a view of the back garden from the counter.'

*Placemaking focuses not only on buildings and the aesthetics of public spaces, but also on people*

## Renovation

On our way to Bos en Lommerweg, we dropped in at the newly renovated offices of real estate agents Van Huis Uit Makelaars on Admiraal de Ruijterweg, another major project recently completed by AHAM. The rear wall of the property was replaced with a glass façade reaching from the semibasement up to the first floor. Part of the floor on the ground floor has been removed, so the semibasement




receives a lot of daylight. That made it possible to create workstations with a view of the green courtyard garden.
No Man's Art Gallery & Bar, nicknamed NMAG by the art aficionados who are by now its regular clientele, is located at number 88–90 on Bos en Lommerweg. The gallery, which has exhibition rooms on the ground floor and first floor, has become a household name in the art world. The name refers to the numerous international artists whose work is exhibited here. 'Many artists encounter restrictions on artistic freedom in their home countries, or find it difficult to present their work to the public,' explains the gallery's owner Emmelie Koster. 'We aim to build new markets for them, to give them more creative freedom. No Man's Art refers to the no-man's land the gallery has created.'
Besides art, NMAG also offers a wide variety of food and beverages. In the conservatory behind the bar and in the exhibition room, they serve breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner. It's the perfect place to try a steamed bun with kimchi, oyster mushrooms, pickled vegetables and sriracha mayonnaise, or just to sit and work peacefully on your laptop.
For those who prefer a chickpea salad with grilled cauliflower or a juice called Griepprik (Flu Jab), consisting of lemon, ginger, carrot and grapefruit, the place to be is Samen Lunch & Juice at number 72.
This modest AHAM property also serves a BoLo smoothie, named after the neighbourhood, made of strawberries, mango, yoghurt and mint.
Soon, local residents will be able to go for a workout before they grab a smoothie. During our stroll in the summer heat, the doors at number 80 are wide open and we can hear music from the construction workers' radio. 'They're turning it into a

*'We look for enterprises that will add diversity to the street. These might even be first-time entrepreneurs'*





pilates studio,' says Betty Tania. 'We think that will be a great addition to what the street already has to offer.'

## Connection

The courtyard garden, which Farine and No Man's Art Gallery back onto, is part of AHAM's residential complex. 'Over the past few years,' relates Tania, while we enter through the gate that gives residents access to some four thousand square metres of green, 'we have also significantly redesigned this garden, in order to enhance the local sense of community.
'It used to be a huge wasteland which only certain residents could get to through the cycle shelter. Some residents chucked rubbish down into the garden, or dumped old furniture there.' Stichting De Gezonde Stad (The Healthy City Foundation), whose goal is to make Amsterdam greener, became involved in the redesigning project. Residents were asked what they wanted to do with the enormous garden. 'Based on their responses, landscape architect Ed Joosting turned the wasteland into a kind of park with footpaths and allotments where residents can grow vegetables,' says Tania. According to her, the result is more than just a lovely garden. For example, when the repurposed garden was opened, one resident told her that by jointly reflecting on how to design the garden and maintaining it together, neighbours have developed closer relationships.
The entire Bos en Lommer project makes Betty Tania very happy. The same goes for Abdellah Tallal. 'BoLo has the perfect mix of residents and enterprises,' he says. 'We've got expats, students, Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch residents. In addition, there are chain pharmacies, organic supermarkets, trendy coffee bars, a high-end cake shop and a bookshop. We are in constant dialogue with local enterprises in order to maintain the right balance. We don't want Bos en Lommer to turn into a place where a loaf of bread or a cup of coffee costs seven euros, which is what happened in De Pijp. That also used to be a working-class neighbourhood, but it's become unaffordable for many households. We want everyone to continue feeling at home here. That's what we're aiming to accomplish through placemaking in BoLo.'




*By jointly reflecting on how to design the garden and maintaining it together, neighbours have developed closer relationships*

# Pure enjoyment on Huidenstraat






**Chocolate aficionados come all the way from Maastricht and Rotterdam to buy bonbons and cakes at Pompadour in Amsterdam's Jordaan neighbourhood.**

For some sixty years, the chocolaterie and patisserie business has been housed in this characteristic AHAM property on Huidenstraat, with its red and white striped bullnose awning. The interior is just as stylish as its exterior. The glass display cases filled with exquisite bonbons, chocolate artworks and pastries are an absolute pleasure to behold.
Owner Martijn de Haan became acquainted with the shop when he was training to be a baker. 'It was during my internship at Pompadour that I first saw how much passion goes into the patisserie trade. They only used the finest ingredients, such as artisanal Valrhona chocolate, and all the chocolates were made by hand. No two bonbons are identical.' The product range also impressed him. 'What they produced was far more sophisticated than at your average patisserie.





*'They only used the finest ingredients, such as artisanal Valrhona chocolate'*

Later, when I ran my own patisserie in Hoorn, I used to sell Pompadour bonbons for Christmas. So I stayed in touch with the previous owners.'

## Retirement

When one of the previous owners, chocolatier and pâtissier Escu Gabriels, retired, he asked De Haan to take over the business. 'My partner Marisca and I knew almost immediately it was the right choice for us. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. This renowned shop, the gorgeous premises, its magnificent location — what more could you ask for? Plus, chocolate is such an amazing product.' De Haan is still mastering the art of making bonbons, but he's well on his way. Gabriels is still working at Pompadour, transferring his expertise one step at a time.

**Chocolaterie Pompadour**
**Huidenstraat 12, Amsterdam**
**https://www.pompadour.amsterdam/**

# A home for the financially homeless

**De Regenboog Groep (The Rainbow Group) assists needy unhoused people in Amsterdam, and frequently partners with AHAM. There is a new, unique property on Van Ostadestraat, in which three apartments will be made available for De Regenboog Groep.**

On entering 89-93 Van Ostadestraat, you walk into a property with a very colourful history. In the early nineteenth century, an unmarried woman named Femina Muller opened a nursery school here for children of single mothers. She went on to become a prominent pioneer of childcare in Amsterdam, establishing no fewer than five nursery schools across the city, all designed to support working mothers. Femina was renowned for her progressive views. When the school management was reluctant to admit children of mothers who lived 'immoral lives', she made short shrift of their objections. 'What is immoral?' she asked. 'If such a mother is willing to pay seven cents a day for her child, doesn't she demonstrate she has a heart for the child?' And that was that.

## Socially conscious

Given the building's history as a nursery school, it's gratifying to see the property partly taking on a socially conscious role again. In collaboration with De Regenboog Groep, AHAM is earmarking three of the five apartments for people who have become homeless due to a crisis situation (such as a divorce). This temporary accommodation will enable them to recover and get back on their feet. Tamara Kuschel heads up the Temporary Accommodation team at De Regenboog Groep. She advocates for this particular category of unhoused people. 'We call them "financially homeless,"' she says. 'Their numbers have risen sharply in recent years in the city.

*In the early nineteenth century, Femina Muller opened a nursery school here for children of single mothers*

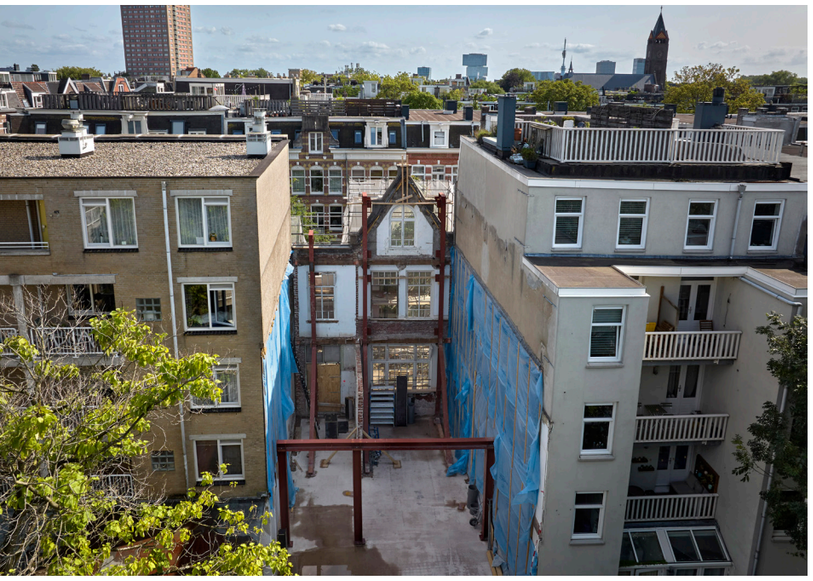





Wij bouwen
bij in de Pijp











About ten years ago, we first saw these people turning up at our shelters. Smartly dressed individuals, carrying laptop bags. We wondered who these people were, so we researched the question together with the Ombudsman's office. Our study revealed this was a new category of unhoused people, consisting of individuals who found themselves living rough following a divorce, a break-up or some other major upset. They didn't have addiction or psychiatric issues, but they also had no prospect of finding alternative affordable accommodation. So they were stuck between a rock and a hard place. We didn't want to house them in our shelters, because we didn't want to risk them regressing further into an unhoused life. That's why we launched several projects dedicated to supporting the financially homeless. One such project is 'bedsit rentals', in which Amsterdam residents offer a spare room for rent. Another is 'Parents Houses', for divorced parents. Unfortunately, there are more and more unhoused people in this category. Some 1500 people come to us for accommodation annually, but we can only house about 500 people at a time on average.' To create more accommodation, De Regenboog Groep is turning increasingly to vacant properties and buildings slated for refurbishment or demolition. For these unhoused people, a temporary place to live can make a world of difference.

## Partnership

'My department is a bit of an outlier within the world of care', says Tamara. 'We have one foot in the care system and the other in the realm of real estate and housing corporations. Initially, AHAM inducted me into the amazing world of real estate. What does rental law

**Tamara Kuschel of De Regenboog Groep**



*'Everything behind the frontage is newbuild. The façade is a historical monument, and we wanted to restore it to its former glory'*







*'The combination of real estate and unhoused people doesn't necessarily sound obvious'*

entail? What's the difference between various property management firms and property owners, and what institutions are a combination of both? That's how I got to know AHAM, which itself is an outlier within the world of real estate because it also has a charitable mission.'

AHAM has offered properties to De Regenboog Groep in the past too. For example, a family home used by Parents House, where three divorced parents live together and where their children can come to visit. Now, the two organisations have joined forces once again.

'Real estate and unhoused people may not sound like a very obvious combination,' says Tamara. 'These particular unhoused individuals pay rent, but only to cover costs. Of course, the fact that AHAM doesn't charge us commercial rates is amazing. They're willing to make concessions if that means they can help people.'

## Temporary accommodation

The new residences on Van Ostadestraat are going to be used as temporary accommodation. Eligible tenants will be able to stay for one year. Tamara: 'We can allot two tenants to each apartment. After just three months you already see a difference in these tenants. They are relaxed. They are no longer in survival mode because they no longer have to spend every day finding a place to sleep for the night. Living an unhoused life really is a full-time occupation. Even more so if you have a job and you also want to see your kids whenever possible.'

The refurbishments at 89-93 Van Ostadestraat are almost finished when we meet project leader Dion Alderden. What you notice immediately about the property are the large, tall windows in the façade, and a steel curtain wall with an openwork motif, adding a floor on top of the nineteenth-century building. The design is by architect Ronald Janssen, manager Raymond van Zandbergen of De Waard Bouw construction company stood with his coworkers on a neighbouring rooftop, guiding the slabs to their destination. That's how we built three storeys.'

As in all nineteenth-century buildings, the ceilings are high, ranging from three and a half to four metres. The ground floor will house a commercial unit. In addition two privately rented apartments will be completed, one of which has a loggia (a recessed porch) and the other a roof garden at the rear of the property. Of the three units intended for De Regenboog Groep, one also has a loggia and another a roof garden. Thanks to a smart arrangement of the floorplan, we were able to build two bathrooms in the largest of De Regenboog Groep's apartments, to ensure maximum privacy. In the other two units, tenants will share the bathroom, toilet and living room with open-plan kitchen. 'The handover is scheduled for September 18, as long as the new connections are ready,' emphasises Dion. 'We already had gas connections because it was a pre-existing building, but we had to apply for licences for new connections. In addition, the subway runs past here, and we had to open up the road. That requires a lot of coordination between the various parties involved, which takes time.'

## Sustainability

'We paid special attention to insulating the property. We used high-performance low-E double glazing for the windows, and the façade as well as the roof are insulated. The rooftop will be covered with a green roof for additional water absorption. That means it will remain nice and cool indoors, in spite of the sun shining on the front of the building.'

construction work is by Metadecor.

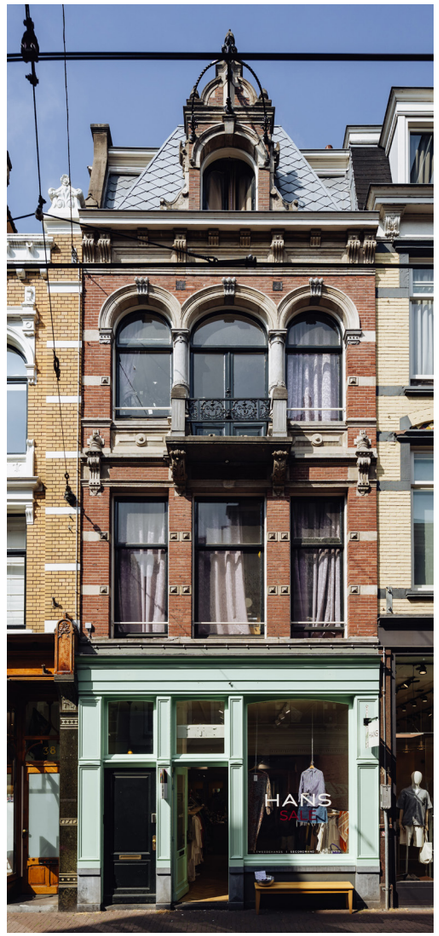
'The façade has been completely restored to its original shape,' says Dion Alderden. 'We replaced the window frames and renewed the natural stone coping. The only thing that remained as it was, is the frontage; everything behind it is newbuild. The façade is a historical monument, and we wanted to restore it to its former glory. We demolished the building itself in two stages, during which the entire façade was clamped in a steel frame, enabling it to remain standing. Subsequently, we rebuilt everything, from the foundations up. Firstly, we poured the ground floor surface, after which we used sand-lime blocks to construct structural walls on every floor. We installed pre-fab hollow-core floors on these walls, which was quite a challenge. We had to use a crane to lift eight-meter-wide, 5,000-kilogram concrete slabs over the frontage directly into the back garden, on this narrow street in the middle of De Pijp district. Construction

# HANS Tweedehands





**In May, a new boutique opened on Amsterdam's Utrechtsestraat, selling secondhand clothing.**






*'HANS caters to a wide variety of tastes and budgets'*



*'Also not trivial: you'll be helping to make the world a better place'*

You won't find any dated clothing here. Instead, it's all trendy items and designer pieces by the likes of Dries van Noten, Prada and Gucci. 'HANS caters to a wide variety of tastes and budgets,' says Nikki Wiesman, who runs and co-owns the shop with her two sisters.
Nikki inherited her love of secondhand clothing from her mother. She hopes HANS will inspire people to opt more frequently to buy secondhand instead of new clothing. 'In new collections you often no longer find the kind of gems and unique items our shop offers. Besides, according to some sources, the world is currently producing enough clothing to last another six generations.' Another thing Nikki finds wasteful: 'People never wear about eighty per-cent of the clothes they own because, say, a pair of trousers turns out to be the wrong size or a jacket isn't as stylish as they first thought.'

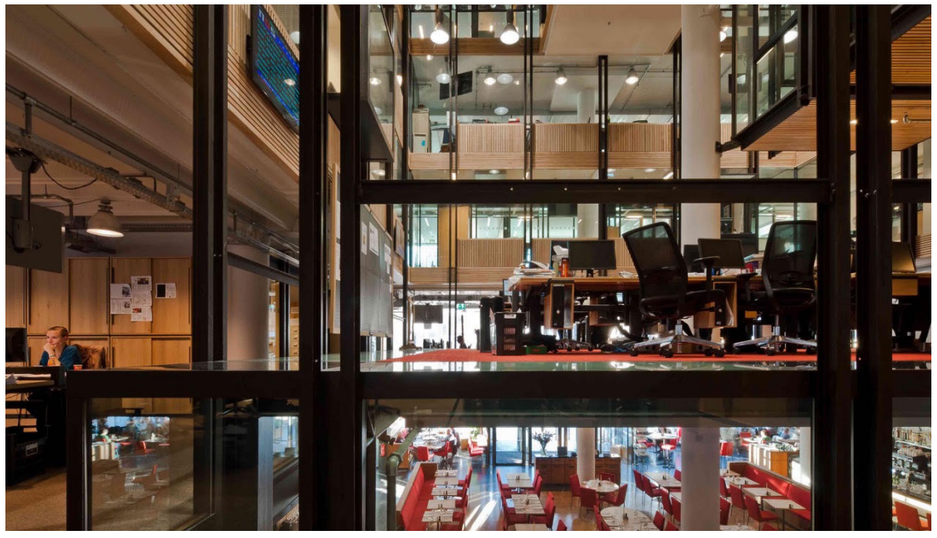
## Unworn

'Often, people's wardrobes are so full they don't even remember all the items they own, so they never wear the majority of their clothing,' says Nikki. Her recommendation is: clear it out! 'A chock-full wardrobe causes distraction and restlessness. Bring the high-quality clothes you no longer wear to HANS. That will give you more space and you'll enjoy what you keep more. Plus you'll be making someone else happy with your clothes and you'll earn some money at the same time. Also not trivial: you'll be helping to make the world a better place.'
Nikki hopes the community of secondhand clothing purchasers will continue to grow. She envisages three branches of HANS in Amsterdam. 'There's room for that in this city.' And the name HANS? 'It's a homage to our late entrepreneurial father.'

**HANS Tweedehands**
**Utrechtsestraat 36, Amsterdam**
**https://www.tweede-hans.com/**

# 8 questions for architects Jaap Dijkman and Reine Nust

**Together, Jaap Dijkman and Reine Nust are Jaap Dijkman Architecten, a small architectural agency with a big reputation. Known for projects like Stedelijk Gymnasium in Haarlem, the *NRC* offices and De Waag in Amsterdam, and recently for AHAM's OpRapenburg project.**



**The *NRC* offices**

## 1
### How did it all start?

RN: 'My father ran an architectural agency. Back then, they operated from our house, and the vibe of the agency and the work they did really appealed to me. People sang at their drawing boards. My mother was part of the firm too; she did the administration. So at quite a young age I already knew what I wanted to do when I grew up. After high school, I went to Delft University, which at the time was still called an Engineering College. You learned design and you were taught a lot of technical skills, but there was no practical work in the field. Which is why I found myself a job as soon as I could.'

JD: 'After high school, I trained as a furniture maker. There's a tradition of craftsmanship in my family, but most people thought my choice was strange, that I was underachieving. I really enjoyed it, but I wasn't sure I wanted to do it for the rest of my life. So I went to Delft to study engineering. I've always continued making furniture, though.'

## 2
### Who did you learn the most from?

RN: 'From Rein Geurtsen, the urban planner. He always used to call architecture "a form of madness", and he was right. The most





Property on Buiksloterdijk




Property on Hazenstraat



Ceylonpoort in Haarlem



important thing he taught me was to look carefully. I graduated in urban planning and architecture, but I actually still think urban planning is more important than architecture. If you look at Amsterdam, what you see most of all is its seventeenth-century structure, with its famous ring of canals. Individual buildings are less conspicuous; they've been adapted over the centuries. The same is true, say, in Paris. There, the huge boulevards are the main players, lined with silver linden trees and the grids in which they are maintained. The buildings there are less dominant.'

JD: 'I learned a lot from Egbert Philips who taught interior design at Delft, and who was an expert on Japan. My furniture has a Japanese style, so his approach appealed to me. I also learned a lot from Kees Klaase, former Managing Director of Strackee, a major construction engineering agency. He taught me everything I know about restoration and construction, but most of all he taught me how important it is to enjoy the work. Maybe that's the most important thing of all. By the way, I never actually completed my studies in Delft, but ultimately I was awarded my qualifications retrospectively in 1988. By then I had completed so many projects that they considered to be of sufficient quality, that I was awarded the titles of architect and interior designer anyway. I already had my own agency by then.'

## 3

### What's your favourite building?

RN: 'My first association is the Eames House in Los Angeles, right near the Pacific Ocean. It was built by Charles and Ray Eames. It's actually a simple, rectangular box, constructed from separate prefab components. It's very modest, consisting of a home and a studio, but it's the simplicity that makes it so remarkable.

Here in Amsterdam, I'd say Jan Duiker's Openluchtschool (Open-Air School). It's a little hard to find. It's a square, concrete building, part of which is open to the elements, hence the name.'

JD: 'The most beautiful building I've ever seen is a little church in Palermo, Sicily. The original construction was supervised by the Normans, who landed in Sicily many centuries ago. What I find particularly interesting is that you can see the different influences in the architecture. The Normans came from the north and built thick walls, partly because of the colder climate. The Arabs, who had been in Sicily earlier, had developed building traditions that provided protection from the heat. In that little church in Palermo, these different architectural styles came together. In Amsterdam, I really like the Noorderkerk, as well as Aldo van Eyck's Burgerweeshuis.'

*'If you look at Amsterdam, what you see most of all is its seventeenth-century structure, with its famous ring of canals'*

## 4

### What criteria should every building meet, whether it's a residence or an office?

RN: 'A good building is there for the long term. It must be able to cope with the changes inherent in a long lifespan. It has to be able to adapt over time. As an agency, we've carried out numerous renovations, such as De Waag in Amsterdam. Originally, the building was a city gate and later it was used for executions. Doctor Nicolaes Tulp hosted his anatomical theatre on the top floor, after which it became a museum, and now it's a restaurant. That shows you how adaptive a building like that can be.'

JD: 'Every building has an interior and an exterior. In turn, its exterior is the interior of the street. So you have to think very carefully about that. For example, here in Amsterdam's Zuidas district, there are places where there is so much space between the buildings it's hard to sense any cohesion. Everyone builds their own pet project, but no one considers the spaces in between them. Of course, there is a zoning plan, but that doesn't fill the leftover spaces. You



**Eames House, Los Angeles.** Photo: Carol M. Highsmith / Library of Congress



**Church of San Cataldo, Palermo.** Photo: Matthias Süßen, CC BY-SA 4.0



Property on Hazenstraat



Hospital in Rennes, France



Het Stedelijk Gymnasium in Haarlem

have to make choices inside a building too. It's nice to have a variety of routes, for instance. A simple example might be having an entrance at the rear of the building as well as at the front.'

## 5

### What's the worst thing to encounter in the constructed world?

RN: 'Anything which wasn't constructed with love. Unfortunately, that's quite common. A simple example of that would be industrial areas. I call that "carchitecture". Buildings constructed along the side of motorways, for example, are only built there for visual effect; you see them while you speed past. The funny thing is, as soon as you drive onto one of these industrial areas, everything appears far more peaceful. That's when you see it's just a collection of quiet little boxes.'



JD: 'I have trouble with the categories of beautiful and ugly. When I taught at Rietveld Art Academy, I once asked students to design the prettiest and ugliest tables. Ultimately, students liked about ninety percent of the ugly tables. Because they were heartfelt. The prettiest tables were often clichés; the students just imitated beautiful tables.'

## 6

### Which project are you proudest of?

RN: 'I think the recently completed OpRapenburg project has turned out very special. It was originally launched by Buro Amsterdam property developers and later AHAM took over. It's a very special location in the city. As you drive out of the IJ-tunnel, it's the first building you see. I must say, AHAM managed this magnificently and really designed the location with love.'

JD: 'We recently developed a hospital in Rennes, in France. I'm also its co-owner, so that makes it very special. In addition, I helped *NRC* with their decision to relocate from Rotterdam to a different location. And, a long time ago, I developed a property on Hazenstraat, which I'm still very proud of. As an architect, the great thing about developing properties yourself, is that you take back control.'

## 7

### Is there such a thing as a typical Nust and Dijkman style?

RN: 'I don't think in terms of styles. When I design, I try as much as possible to return to basic conditions. I do feel you should be able to read a building. You need to be able to see how it's constructed and how it fits together.'

JD: 'Many people say there is. For example, our work often uses natural materials, which I call having fun with steel and wood. But we always draw up three or four proposals and let the client choose. We never say: this is how it has to be done.'

## 8

### What distinguishes your agency?

RN: 'As architects we are sometimes our own clients. Jaap started doing this some forty years ago. He would purchase a project or a plot of land and then we developed our own building there. That's very distinctive and still quite uncommon.'

JD: 'It allows us to take back control. It's actually similar to the way master builders operated in the past. It also means our order books are always full.'

**Jaap Dijkman Architecten**
**https://www.jdarchitecten.nl/**

# ‘AHAM also invests in sound contracts’

**Nelemans Advocaten is a boutique law firm, specialising in construction and tender law. The agency has worked for AHAM for years, in a role that has expanded as AHAM has grown as a property developer.**



Colin Nelemans of Nelemans Advocaten and AHAM Managing Director Tim van Schijndel have a long history together. Colin Nelemans: ‘I was already working for Tim as a lawyer when he was still in his previous role. I was working for a different firm at the time. In January 2017, I set up my own company and AHAM was one of the clients that migrated with me. By now I’ve been working for AHAM for over ten years.’

‘My first passion was tender law, which consisted largely of litigation. However, it became increasingly difficult to win cases against tendering parties, so that source of work began to dry up. As a result, early in my career I focused more and more on construction law, in order to remain involved in litigation. By now that’s the main focal point of my practice.’

## Litigation

On his firm’s website, litigation is prominently displayed. ‘We are still very eager to litigate. In the past, we dealt with numerous disputes and legal cases for AHAM. But AHAM increasingly invested more time and money in drawing up sound contracts. As a result, the number of court cases dropped significantly. Of course, there are still disputes, but we hardly ever have to go to court anymore because the contracts are clear and unambiguous. That almost always enables us to come to some kind of agreement, as long as the other party adopts a reasonable position. That’s why AHAM is very rarely involved in litigation these days. We still do a lot of consultation, in particular on improving contracts. AHAM is well aware that it pays dividends to invest in its contracts, because if you run into trouble you know exactly what’s been agreed.’

‘This development aligns with AHAM’s changing role. In the past, the company mostly rented out residential and commercial properties, but over the past five years it has become much more involved in property development and purchasing newbuild projects. Obviously, this means it’s crucial for all contracts to be extremely precise, because these are often huge projects requiring substantial investments. Moreover, you encounter different risks when you’re no longer just the landlord. One of the first projects was Oostenburg in Amsterdam, which was followed by numerous other new projects.’

## Small team

Nelemans heads up a small team, consisting of himself, Pim van der Lee and David Sewdien. ‘We currently have a vacancy, but once that’s filled our team will be the ideal size as far as I’m concerned. It allows me to oversee every single case, and I want to keep it that way. So if you were to ask me what Nelemans Advocaten will look like in five years’ time, I’d say it will still be a small, specialised team. And we will definitely still be located in our new premises, also on Oostenburg.’

**Nelemans Advocaten**
**www.nelemansadvocaten.com**



# Colophon

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**Concept and realisation**
Editio

**Chief editor**
Bob van der Burg

**Project management and final editing**
Santi Wester

**Coordination AHAM Vastgoed**
Annita Schuiten

**Editors AHAM Vastgoed**
Chelly Blok
Michelle Oudhuis
Freek Tames
Lisa Duin
Ruby van Vugt

**Art direction**
Hein van Putten

**Text**
Marlies Bonnike
Alies Pegtel
Astrid Theunissen

**Photography**
Kees Hummel
Jelle Draper
Cecilia Di Benedetto

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