



Ring stad

Making a city over the Ring

Ringstad

2022

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FOREWORD

As a uniquely dynamic city, Antwerp has undergone many urban transformations over the centuries; each more historic and spectacular than the last. Urban renewal therefore was and still is in our Antwerp blood.

The creation of Nieuw-Zuid, the development of Park Spoor Noord, the makeover of the 7 km long Scheldt quays including the construction of the 'Kaailine', the new 7ha Zuidpark that appears on the former Gedempte Zuiderdokken, etc., these are all equally captivating and uniquely impressive chapters that we are currently writing in the area of urban development.

However, the story of urban transformations is far from told. On the contrary. Take the Antwerp ring zone for example. That area initially formed the Brialmont rampart, then it became a busy ring road. Soon, thanks to the covering of the ring road agreed in the 'Toekomstverbond' (Covenant for the Future), the ring area will evolve into a new metropolitan open green public space. These agreements are now given concrete form in 'De Grote Verbinding' (The Big Link), which will connect existing and new neighbourhoods on both sides of the Ring, with more greenery, less noise and cleaner air. And there is more. New vibrant districts will be created; the RINGSTAD!

Until now, the city centre almost literally had its back to the Ring. By covering the Ring, the inner city will be linked to the outer city in a very organic - and above all open and green - way. Indeed, with the creation of RINGSTAD, we are perhaps creating the most intriguing twist in terms of urban development.

"Having united our efforts, this city administration wants to make Antwerp the most liveable city in the country by 2030. Antwerp has resolutely opted for a city where quality of life, well-being, cleanliness and sustainability are paramount".

De Grote Verbinding Administrative Agreement 2019-2024

That is the challenge we face in the next decade and beyond; from both a historical and urban development perspective, this is actually an extremely short period of time. RINGSTAD is a project on a seldom-seen scale, which is taking shape in various sub-projects. The nice thing is that these sub-projects are all cleverly linked together and are fully integrated into the city as it is today.

For example, the Large-scale Covering is activating a new urban fabric and creating a new qualitative space in Antwerp; and with the Railpark - from Het Eilandje via Spoor Noord and the 'Centres' to the Draakplaats in Zurenborg - we are welcoming a new park in a part of the city that currently has a conspicuous shortage of greenery.

RINGSTAD is an ambitious programme of different urban projects that will be realised at the same pace as the various Ring Parks. That way, we will ensure a new urban programme in which, among other things, vibrant new residential areas can immediately enjoy a Ring Park in their own neighbourhood.

New urban development in the different locations is making an essential contribution to the 'building shift'. Moreover, the added value on public land will flow back entirely to social objectives such as neighbourhood and community green spaces, public facilities for the area and affordable housing.

That RINGSTAD is a unique and captivating urban development project should be obvious by now. But precisely because this is such a complex and also layered story, it is important to tell it as clearly as possible. In this brochure, together with atelier stadsbouwmeester and AG Vespa, we therefore provide the necessary details for each aspect of this major project. This will help provide insight and understanding... and no doubt whet appetites for RINGSTAD!

Annick De Ridder,
vice-mayor of the city of
Antwerp, responsible for
the port, urban development,
spatial planning and patrimony

1

A city in transformation

A city is always changing. What is more, as the intersection of people, knowledge and economy, a city is the driver of its own transformation. The urban fabric is the spatial reflection of successive social evolutions. At the same time, a city must continually adapt to social changes. This is certainly the case for a city like Antwerp.

In the 1990s, under the influence of the social movement 'Stad aan de Stroom' (City on the Stream), Antwerp started transforming the city's historic port areas. This included Het Eilandje, the Scheldt Quays and Het Zuid. In recent years, the focus has been shifting from these areas on the Scheldt towards the Ring, and the areas beyond.

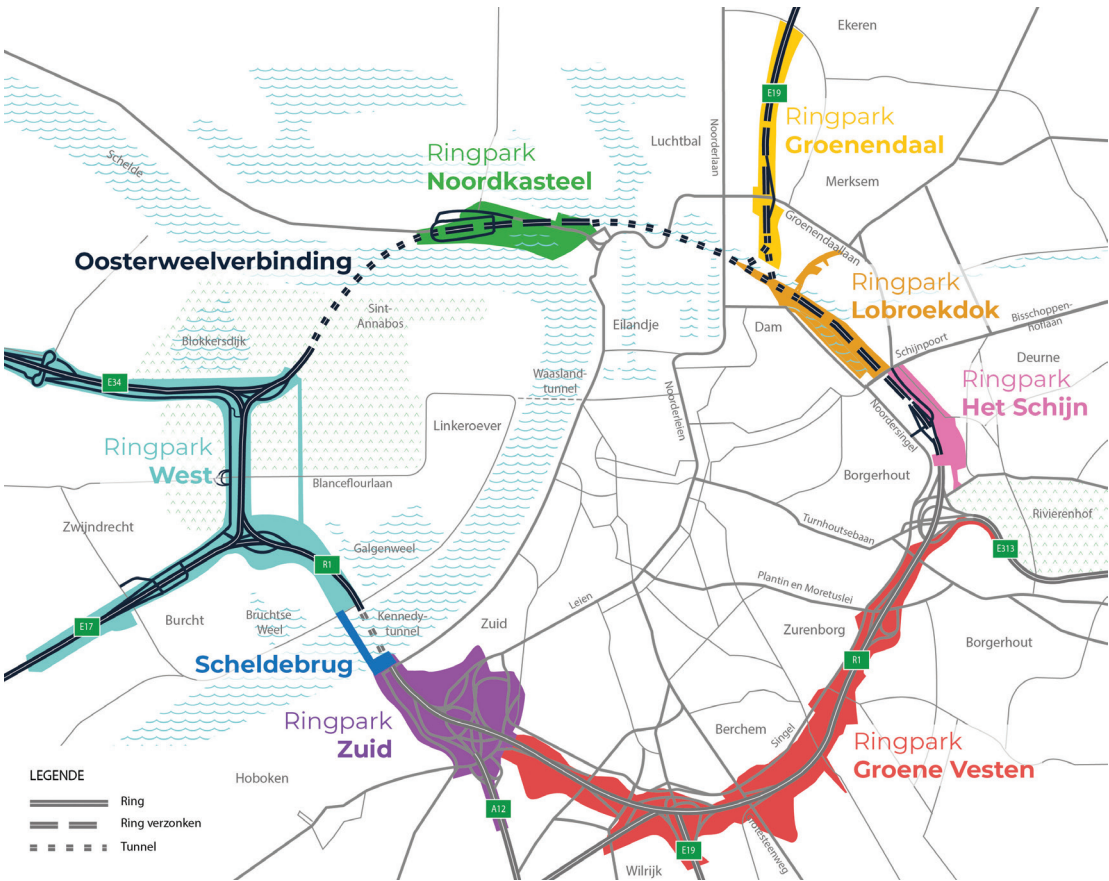
The transformation of Antwerp's ring zone into a new metropolitan public space starts today under the name De Grote Verbinding (The Big Link). This transformation has been comprehensively studied for some time. An important benchmark is the strategic Spatial Structure Plan Antwerp (2006)¹. This was followed by the urban vision 'Durven Dromen van een Groene Rivier' (Daring to Dream of a Green River) (2009)² and the accompanying 'Beeldkwaliteitsplan Groene Singel' (Visual Quality Plan Groene Singel) (2014)³. Ringland (2014)⁴ put forward the ambition of a full covering.

“Over the Ring will have the same impact on the future development of Antwerp as City on the Stream had in the 1990s”

Inspiration Note Strategic Spatial Plan Antwerp

The intendant for the liveability and mobility solutions of the Antwerp ring zone, Alexander D’Hooghe and his team were able to lay down for the first time a shared vision by Flanders, the city and citizen movements for the ring zone with the ambition note ‘Over de Ring’ (Over the Ring) (2016)⁵ From this collaboration emerged the ‘Toekomstverbond’ (Covenant for the Future) between Flanders, the city, the port and citizen movements (2017).

This Covenant for the Future has set the ambitious goal to finishing the Ring around the city, to covering the entire Ring and to creating a new connection for through traffic and port traffic around the city. The alliance stands for an ambitious modal shift and a new, participatory way of working together between all parties: the administrations, the design teams and the many interested residents of Antwerp. Today, as a result, a first phase of liveability projects is taking shape in 7 major Ring Parks and an iconic Scheldt Bridge.



Map of the 7 Ring Parks and the Scheldt Bridge

Are the neighbourhoods around the Ring Parks ready?

The new public space - on an unprecedented scale - created by coverings and the required huge investments entail great responsibility.

The historical covering on Jan de Voslei and the roof of the Craeybeckx Tunnel show that building coverings is not necessarily a formula for instant success. Although these coverings created new open space, one can hardly find them of great added value. These extremely expensive structures may have solved an open wound, but if the result is nothing more than some blank spots between neighbourhoods, one might ask where the benefit is. It remains as scar tissue of the underlying infrastructure which is equally visible in the urban fabric. The success of the Ring Parks is therefore not simply guaranteed with quality design and good execution of the new, green public space alone.

Since the construction of the Ring, the city has largely turned its back on the ring zone. What in the future will be on the border of the Ring Parks is now a collection of fragmented 'rear sides' of buildings with some patches of greenery. Think of large-scale logistics sites, car parks or warehouses with blind walls. An engine room of the city, so to speak. There is currently no connection between the future Ring Parks and the surrounding neighbourhoods. In order for these new Ring Parks to truly become a part of the city, the surrounding urban fabric will need to adapt. New 'fronts' to the Ring Park will need to be created with buildings facing the ring zone. The windows, front doors and public buildings facing the park will form the lively facades of the Ring Park.

The challenge is to create a lot of new vibrant parts of the city over the next 10 years. These new districts, together with the Ring Parks, will create a true 'Ringstad'. Since urban development is always a long-term endeavour, ten years is not such a long time. On the contrary.



Existing situation
at the covering of the Craeybeckx Tunnel



'Frayed edges' in the ring zone

Ring Parks + Ringstad

Urban development is an inseparable part of urban renewal. The phasing of the Ring Parks and the development of the Ringstad go hand in hand. The Ring Parks will provide the necessary leverage needed for redevelopment projects in the Ringstad. In turn, the transformation of the edges of the Ring Parks is essential to the Ring Parks' prospects for success.

To actively guide urban development in the ring zone, the city of Antwerp has set out a vision and an instrument to implement the vision.



The ring zone in 1968

2

A new urban boulevard

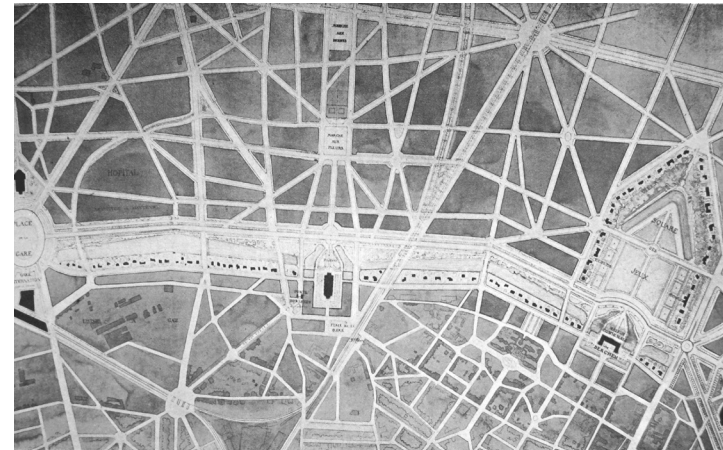
In his policy paper '2016-2020 Atypische stadsbouwmeester' (2016-2020 Atypical City Architect), city architect Christian Rapp sets out his vision for Antwerp.⁶ Besides a focus on the city centre, the Left Bank and the 20th century city belt, this policy paper has a specific focus on the ring zone. As a new piece of the city, this area could add substantial value to the entire city in terms of both programme and scale. Christian Rapp puts forward the image of a 21st-century 'Ringstraße' as an ambition for the ring zone.

As the term suggests, this Ringstraße has its roots in German-speaking regions, where it made its appearance in the 19th century. For the most well-known example, we have to go to Vienna. The old city walls were demolished in the Austrian capital in the mid-19th century to make way for a Ringstraße, a new urban boulevard connecting the 'Innere Stadt' with the suburbs. Along the stately wide boulevard appeared monumental public buildings, such as the State Opera, the Burgtheater and the Old Parliament.

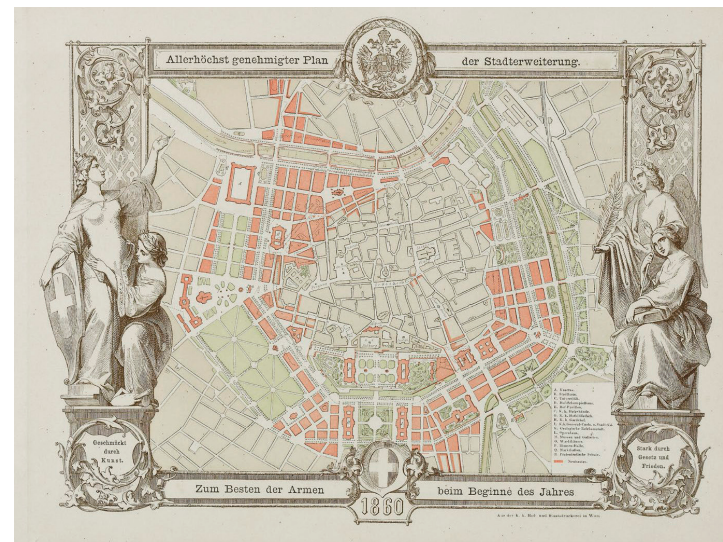
In Antwerp, the Leien can be considered an example of such a 19th-century Ringstraße. As an urban boulevard, the Leien form a connecting element between the city centre and the 19th-century city belt. Whereas previously the Spanish ramparts had formed a spatial and social boundary between the city and the villages on the outskirts, the construction of the Leien marked a clear turn away from the city. The focus was no longer just on the Scheldt and the historic city centre. As a result, the new Central Station and the Opera were now in the heart of the city. New streets, monuments and parks flanked the Leien and ensured economic and cultural development.

When, in the early 20th century, the demolition of the still recent, but quickly obsolete, Brialmont rampart was proposed, the concept of such an urban Ringstraße was once again seized upon to give form to the freed-up land. In 1910, the government organised an international design competition to produce a coherent plan for the vast area of urban expansion. In the process, German urban planner Joseph Stübgen, as chairman of the jury, made his own interpretation of the winning design by French designer, Henri Prost.

The plan drawn up in the first decade of the last century was one with a wide urban and green boulevard that lay like a ring around the city. This boulevard would then be the stage on which monumental buildings, public parks, and wealthy estates would be given a place. This second Ringstraße for Antwerp would thread the surrounding neighbourhoods together, giving the latter the opportunity to further develop. 'Would', because World War I prevented the plans from being implemented.



Plan of Henri Prost, competition 1910



Vienna Ringstrasse, 1860

It was not until after World War II that a concrete plan for the repurposing of the former rampart was once again put on the table. The construction of the E3 motorway, which would later become R1, a new railway and a local Singel road in the former foundations marked the final transformation of the famous Brialmont rampart.⁷ The result? The current Ring acts primarily as a barrier between the 19th-and 20th-century city belts.

Antwerp is ready for this important new stage in urban development

The covering plans entail dreamed-of opportunities. A covering creates opportunities to reverse the physical and mental barrier effect of this area. **Together we can create a new piece of city, with public space as the connecting element and buildings as the glue between the inner and outer city.**

It is crucial that infrastructure and urban development happen at the same time. Even back in the 1960s, the motorway infrastructure and nearby developments were realised in one joint and integrated operation. High-rise residential areas, offices and cultural institutions were given a place along the new Ring. The ring zone was the ideal place to try out experiments in architecture and urban planning. For example, Leon Stynen's master plan for the Wezenberg site or architect Jules de Roover's Silvertop high-rise apartments. These building programmes were not a delayed response to the infrastructure works, but were seen as the necessary urban programme of this new Ring⁸.

Today, we are taking the first steps toward defining the contours and potential building programme of the new Ringstad. In the next chapter, we will look for which 'Leitfiguren' or urbanistic principles can underpin the development of the Ringstad.

"I want to monitor the quality of new developments in the ring zone, with a focus on new functions, typologies and affordable housing. The idea is to complete the rough edges along the Singel and Ring road and to improve their relationship with the inner city. They should continue its unique atmosphere or at least form a prelude to the harmony of the inner city. Smart, creative and high-quality fill-in projects should become the welding seams for a smooth transition and transformation from edge to centre."

Christian Rapp, policy note city architect

Previously

A lot of consideration has already gone to the urban development in the ring zone. In the strategic Spatial Structure Plan Antwerp (s-RSA 2006) and the subsequent vision 'Durven Dromen van een Groene Rivier' (Daring to Dream of a Green River) (2009), this was still rather conceptual. The ambition was expressed to transform the ring zone into a new 'centrality' for the city. In this context, there was lively debate about a selection of compact top and office locations at the public transport hubs, new mixed residential areas like Nieuw Zurenborg at the edges, and public amenities as roadside buildings in the green landscape between inner and outer city. The study into a partial covering of the Ring was included in the s-RSA, at the indication of 'BorgerhouDt van Mensen' with their ideas for Ring Park De Knoop (2004)⁹.

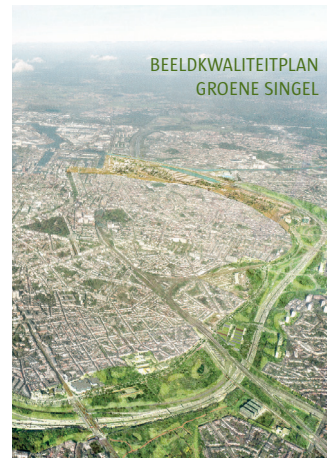
Things became more concrete with the idea of a tenth district by Ringland in 2014: a complete covering of the Ring with a building programme of 1 million m² of real estate, consisting of 16,100 housing units and 410,000 m² of offices and businesses¹⁰. In the ambition note of intendant Alexander D'Hooghe the concept map 'Stad maken over de Ring' (Making a City over the Ring) indicated the important development locations in the ring zone. It appears as 1 of the 4 basic concepts for the ring zone, alongside the concepts 'Breathing Space', 'Free and Connected' and 'Metropolitan Ring culture'.

In 2018, six design teams led by the intendant worked on a vision for liveability projects in the ring zone. As part of this, the real estate programme in the ring zone was further explored and extended to 2 million m². The expert panel on spatial quality, which alongside other experts is responsible for evaluating the results of this design phase under the direction of the intendant, expressed not only great appreciation for the proposals but also a number of reservations about the location, typology and density of some of the proposed developments.

"The current designs systematically lack a clear urban front. The expert panel recommended a comprehensive typological study in the construction of fronts, thereby further refining the intersection between the city and ring zone and clarifying the demarcation between the two."

Evaluation report of the expert panel on spatial quality¹¹

The administration, together with the city architect's team, took up the gauntlet to clarify things in both the demarcation of the preferred development areas and the targeted density with the vision of 'Stad maken over de Ring' (Making a City over the Ring), renamed Ringstad.



2006

2009

2014

2014

2016

2018

2022

“Leitfiguren”

The Ringstad vision builds on the insights and ideas created during the participatory design process. Although the design proposals of the ‘Over de Ring’ teams for the right bank were highly diverse, a number of overarching urban figures can be gleaned that, in different terms, are common to pretty much all the teams. These ‘Leitfiguren’ form the basis of the Ringstad vision:

THE ‘LEITFIGUREN’ ARE:

1. Large-scale Covering
2. Singel
3. Connecting Valley
4. Railpark
5. Nerves
6. Multimodal hubs

Which development areas are taken into account or not; where can we provide room for connections; how can we define the boundary between landscape and city... are all questions that give direction.

The Ringstad vision does not cover the Left Bank, where the landscape has a special relationship with the city. This involves a different design approach than the vision we describe here, and is covered in a separate research study.



1. Large-scale Covering

The Covenant for the Future from 2017 made a clear choice to cover the entire Ring. The spatial conditions in the ring zone change as a result. The covering creates both the condition and the need to address and activate the urban fabric around it.

The path to the Large-scale Covering is phased, with the first phase of liveability projects already including a number of covering segments, especially in the northern part of the ring zone.

In order to realise the covering also in the central part of the ring zone, a separation of the traffic system between the nodes E313 and E19 south is envisaged. However, separating the traffic also carries the risk of taking up additional space. This in turn could create a conflict with the existing city and development possibilities on top.

Finishing the rough city edges by adding new urban development along the ‘Leitfigur’ of the Large-scale Covering will create a vibrant and safe public space.



2. Singel

The second 'Leitfigur' in the ring zone is the Singel. Today, the continuous wall of buildings along the edge of the Singel forms a clear boundary between the inner city and the ring zone. It is the clearest urban figure that partly gives form to the space of the Ring Parks. The Singel is largely asymmetrically built with strong edge development on the city centre side and an open view of the green landscape on the outer city side.

The Ringstad vision has opted to further reinforce this asymmetrical figure by adding buildings on the inner side where there are none, and maximising the expansive views of the future Ring Parks on the outer side.

Adding new buildings on the edge will also help transform the Singel into an urban boulevard. New (public) functions along the Singel will attract new audiences and bring more people to the Ring Parks.

Buildings along the Singel on the outer city side will only be added to the multimodal hubs and occasionally in the Ring Park itself in the form of roadside buildings, subordinate to the landscape and with a public programme to support the Ring Parks.



3. Connecting Valley

The Connecting Valley is the contiguous green ring area that connects the existing large park clusters and the green remnants of the Brialmont ramparts extra muros. This green valley can be enhanced by creating generous connections over and under the radial bridges. At the same time, the 'vestenparks' can also regain a prominent place in the public space, following the example of Park Brialmont or Mastvest where remnants of the Brialmont ramparts have been made visible again.

The built area on the outer city side of the Ring, much more than on the Singel, is characterised by various frayed edges. If the aim is to create vibrant Ring Parks, these so-called frayed edges need to transform into clear building fronts. Unlike the buildings along the Singel, here there is an almost direct relationship between the buildings and the Ring Park. Through roads between the built area and the Ring Park are not desirable along the Connecting Valley. As with the Singel, buildings in the Ring Park itself will only be permitted occasionally, only when it is for roadside buildings that conform in form and programme to the landscape and the public function of the Ring Park.

Along with the built area on the city centre side of the Singel, it is the buildings along the outside of the Connecting Valley that demarcate and formally shape the ring space. These are the fronts between which the Ring Parks extend as high quality public spaces. The development of both edges can already start and will eventually encircle the Large-scale Covering.



4. Railpark

The Railpark refers to an elongated public space that borders the 19th-century city belt. This Railpark can make a valuable contribution to remedying the lack of greenery in these densely populated neighbourhoods. Given the scale of the greenery shortages and the location of this park within the urban 'intra muros' fabric, the Railpark will retain its useful function even after the Large-scale Covering is completed.

In the future, this park will run from Het Eilandje via Park Spoor Noord, Railpark Oost (on the inner side of the Ring railway) and the 'Centres' to the Draakplaats in Zurenborg. In the short term, the 'Centres', the spaces in the arches of the railway embankment in Borgerhout, will be further filled in and the final piece of the Railpark between the Draakplaats and the Luitenant Naeyaertplein will be completed.

In the slightly longer term, work will start on a neighbourhood park on Nieuw Zurenborg and the Railpark Oost as part of the urban project Nieuw Oost. When all the links are realised, the Railpark will serve an important function as a green park space for the inner city.

By analogy with the Connecting Valley extra muros, new development is seen as a new urban front that will create a vibrant Railpark. So as not to create any barriers between the built areas and the greenery, there will be no through roads between the buildings and the Railpark.



5. Nerves

The covering provides opportunities to reverse the barrier effect, whereby the ring space will become a connecting urban space. The 'Leitfigur' of the Nerves is a key element of the participatory process and essential in realising this ambition.

Nerves are the connections to the Ring Parks from the surrounding neighbourhoods. Not only do they remove barriers in the ring zone, but also penetrate deeply into neighbourhoods behind. This means they are connected to the Ring Parks in a soft way, and they also help remedy the lack of greenery. They also open up public amenities to neighbourhoods on the other side of the Ring. In this sense, not all Nerves need to cross all infrastructures (Ring, Singel, rail) in the first phase, but can also anticipate the realisation of the Large-scale Covering.

The Nerves provide a finer network for pedestrians and cyclists to complement the existing radial bridges where limited space also needs to be shared with vehicle traffic.

Since the Nerves are largely positioned on existing public spaces, a quick start can be made here. A seemingly simple task, were it not for the fact that at the most crucial points today, these Nerves hit a dead end at the large-scale under- or undeveloped sites along the Ring.

Developing these sites is therefore crucial in making new connections between the surrounding neighbourhoods and the future Ring Parks. Safeguarding sufficient space within these development areas to create a network of Nerves, squares and public spaces is also an important component in the Ringstad vision.



6. Multimodal hubs

As agreed in the Covenant for the Future, the goal is a 50/50 modal shift and a covering of the entire Ring. To achieve this, four multimodal hubs will be developed in the ring zone. In addition to the three existing station areas in the ring zone: Luchtbal, Berchem and Zuid, one will be added at Schijnpoortweg.

The Ringstad vision advocates densification primarily near easily accessible multimodal hubs. For example, offices, supra-local public amenities or other metropolitan functions would be best located near these multimodal hubs. In the zones between the hubs, there is room for mixed residential areas with local public amenities for the surrounding neighbourhoods and districts.

The proposed programming of the development sites stems from previous policy documents, such as the strategic Spatial Structure Plan Antwerp and the administrative agreement, and insights from the participatory design process. This has not been changed in the Ringstad vision. The definitive programme will be determined in the project definition of each individual urban project within the Ringstad.

SUMMARY MAP

The aim of the summary map is to capture the vision of the Ringstad as a complement to the ‘Ring Park’ in one picture. The map shows the existing and new urban boundary of the ring space, the demarcation of development areas, and the space envisaged for connections, squares, and local public spaces.

The ‘Leitfiguren’, documented in this publication, provide the reasoning for the choices made. These design principles guided the substantiated demarcation, but also elimination, of development locations from the vision papers ‘Over de Ring’ of the design teams in 2018. In this regard, they create a clear urban planning framework for the development of the Ringstad, in dialogue with the grand narrative of the Ring Parks.

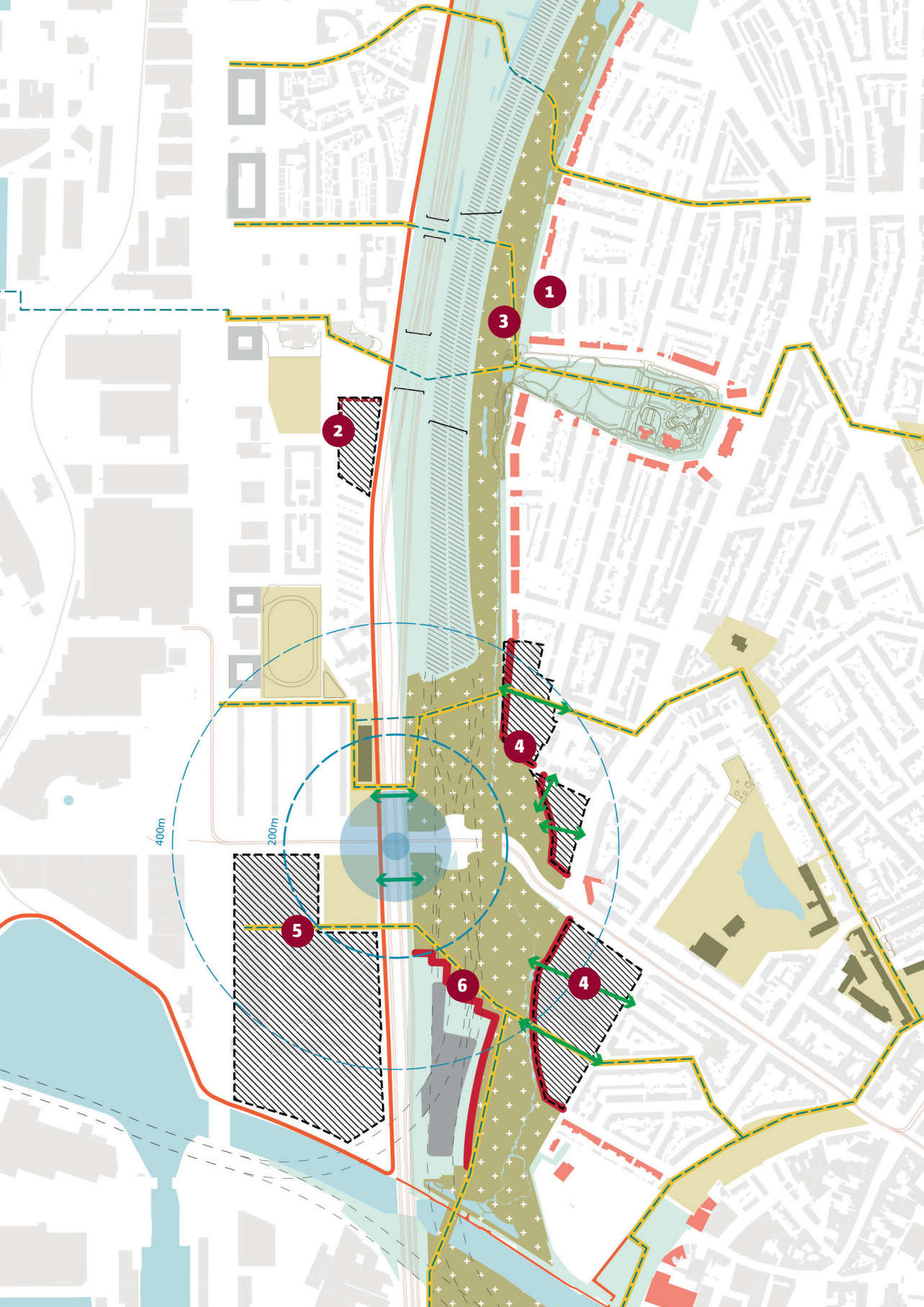
The conditions for new development along the Ring Parks can be studied in detail by zooming in on a specific spot on the summary map. The various segments of the Ringstad are examined more closely in this context.

The development areas on the Left Bank are currently the subject of a separate process also led by the city architect.

- SIX LEITFIGUREN
- Large-scale Covering
 - Singel
 - Railpark
 - Connecting Valley
 - Nerve
 - Multimodal hubs

- BUILDING PRINCIPLE
- Existing edges
 - New vibrant urban front
 - Project area
 - Crossing

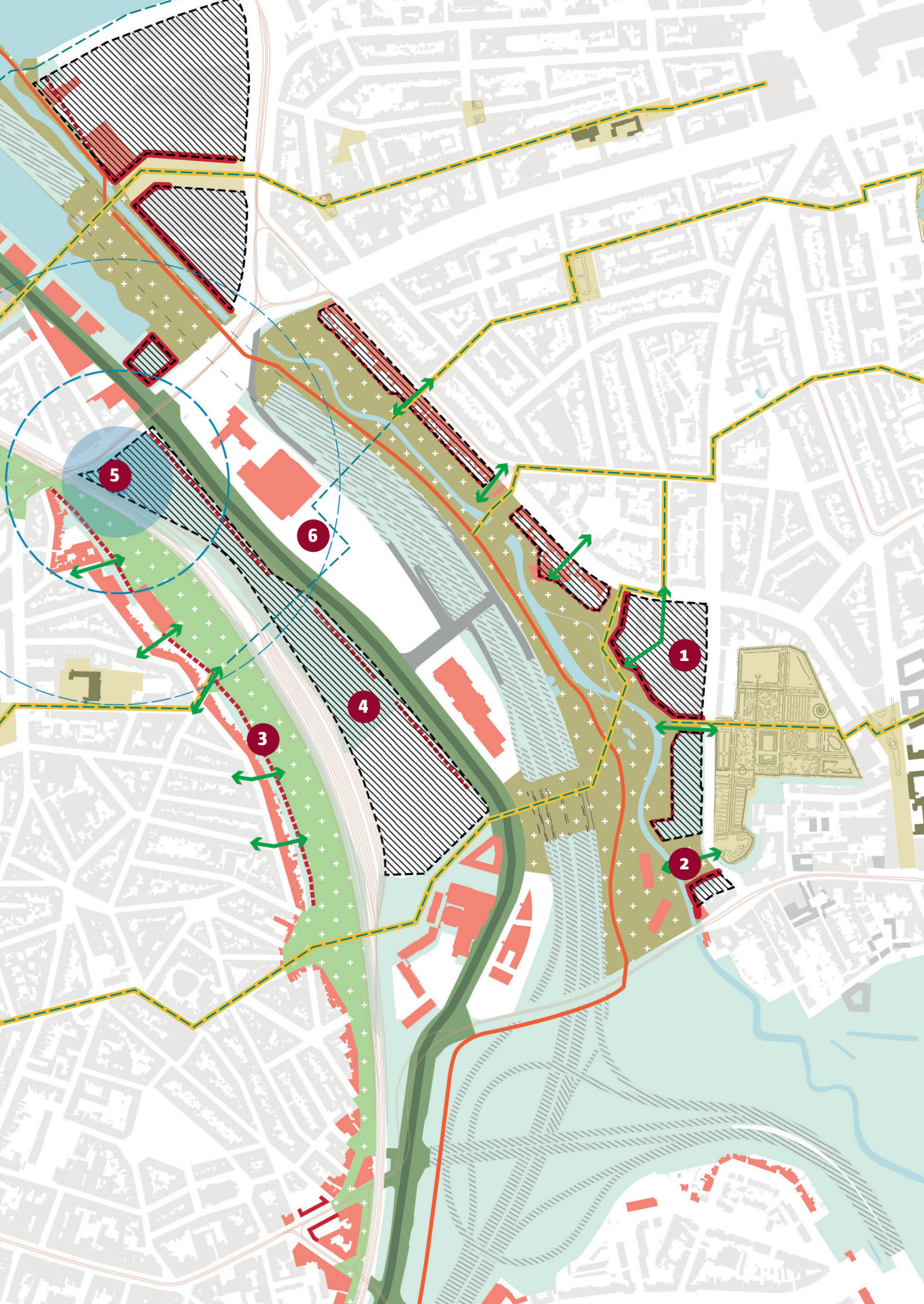




- 1 Along the northern part of the future Ringpark Groenendaal, the 'Merksemse Tuinen', you can already find high quality 'fronts' or buildings facing the ring space, and a finely meshed network of side streets as a connection to the residential area. The edge of the Connecting Valley will be further developed, taking into account what is possible with the known water problems in the area.
- 2 When the Ring is also covered at Distelhoek, a connection will be created to Luchtbal. In this context, this densification site from the Luchtbal master plan is designed more compactly in the Ringstad vision.
- 3 The Ringstad vision does not envision any construction in the Connecting Valley, so no residential towers if there is a covering at Distelhoek, unlike the vision paper for the 'Noord' segment (2018).
- 4 The Connecting Valley will have new borders at the urban project Kap Groenendaal with clear building fronts, buildings with front doors to and views on the Ring Park. These will replace the current rear sides of buildings, car parks of offices, roadside restaurant, supermarket, enterprise and sports ground. At the future City Greenhouse, the urban development boundary recedes to ensure a sufficiently wide and continuous Ring Park. A redevelopment of the existing urban fabric will allow Nerves to create direct connections between the residential areas and the Ring Park. A wider northern passageway under the railway will connect the Ring Park to Luchtbal via this Nerve more effectively.
- 5 To the west of the elevated railway structure, there is still significant development potential. Like the new developments to the east, this area also lies within the zone of influence of the Luchtbal multimodal hub and can contribute to the desired densification around the hub. An additional, southern passage under the railway could connect this development to the Ring Park, the City Greenhouse and Merksem via a Nerve.
- 6 An adequate programme of the City Greenhouse, should make a strong urban front that creates vibrancy and safety in the Ring Park, also on the side of the elevated railway.

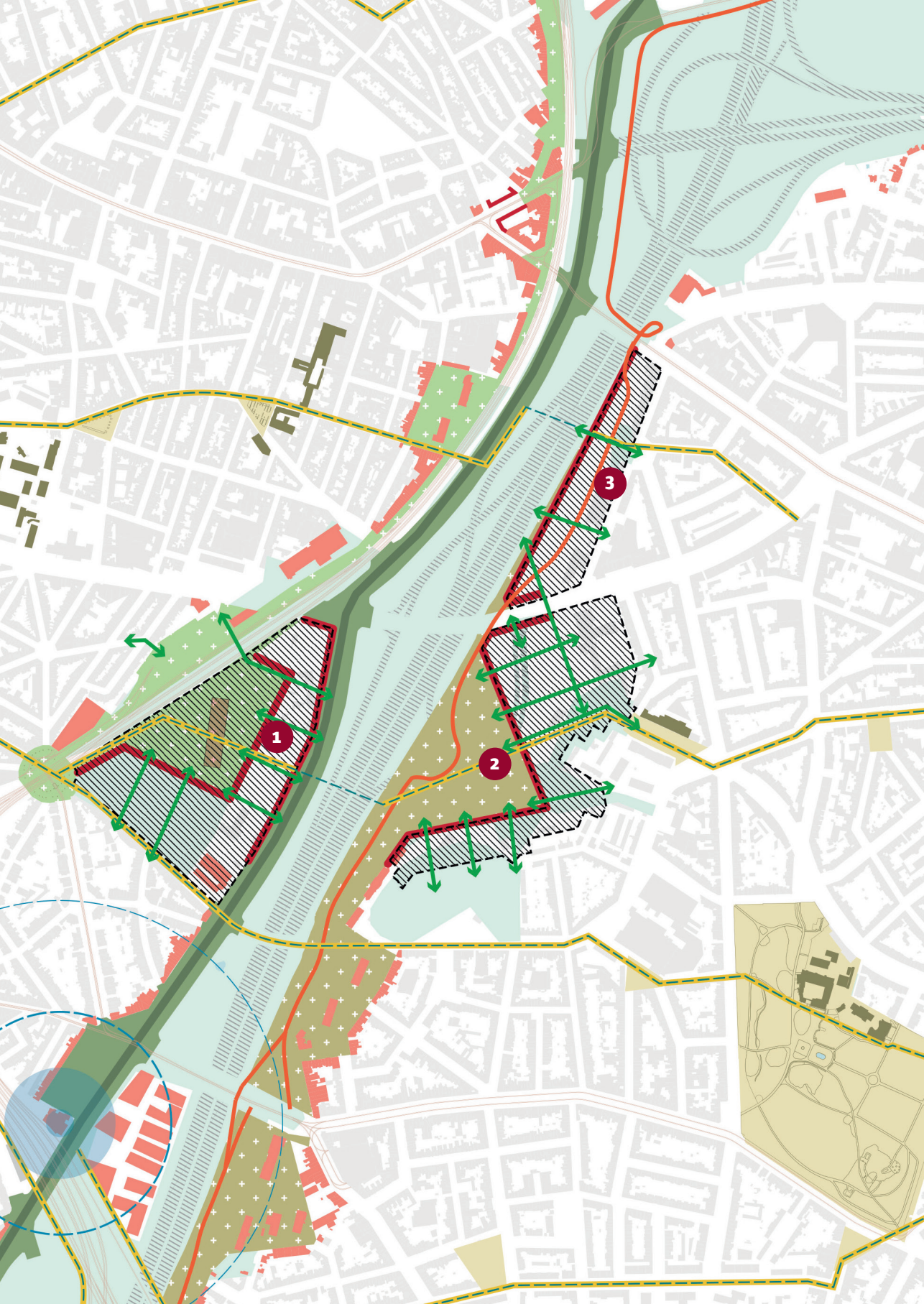


- 1 The new mixed residential area at the 'Slachthuisite' creates a strong and vibrant facade along the Singel and a clear demarcation of the Ring Park Lobroekdok.
- 2 The Nerves at Samberstraat and the Hallentuin, combined with existing and new passages under the railway and a Singel which is easier to cross, provide a strong connection between the Railpark at Park Spoor Noord and the Ring Park.
- 3 The urban project Kap Dam is adjacent to the Connecting Valley and the Large-scale Covering. As such, a through road between the new development and the Ring Park is not the preferred choice.
- 4 By giving the Sportpaleis and the Lotto Arena an entrance at the covering, a front to the Ring Park is also created at this location.
- 5 The development at the top of the Lobroekdok lies within the zone of influence of the Schijnpoot multimodal hub and can contribute to the desired densification around a hub. Sufficient space for slow traffic in the design of the public space is crucial in this regard.
- 6 The development of the triangle between the Albert Canal and Sportpaleis is in no small measure related to the Large-scale Covering. An extension of the covering to the north will create better conditions in terms of air quality and noise that allow for more mixed-use development, as well as a better connection between the Kronenburg neighbourhood which is situated further away, and the Ring Park.



Today, the future Ring Park Het Schijn is bordered by the rear sides of housing and businesses. The number of accesses to the Ring Park is limited. Here, maximum effort will go into creating new vibrant frontages along the Connecting Valley and new entrances to the Ring Park as important connection points of the Nerves. Tackling the rough edges is important along the entire Ring Park Het Schijn.

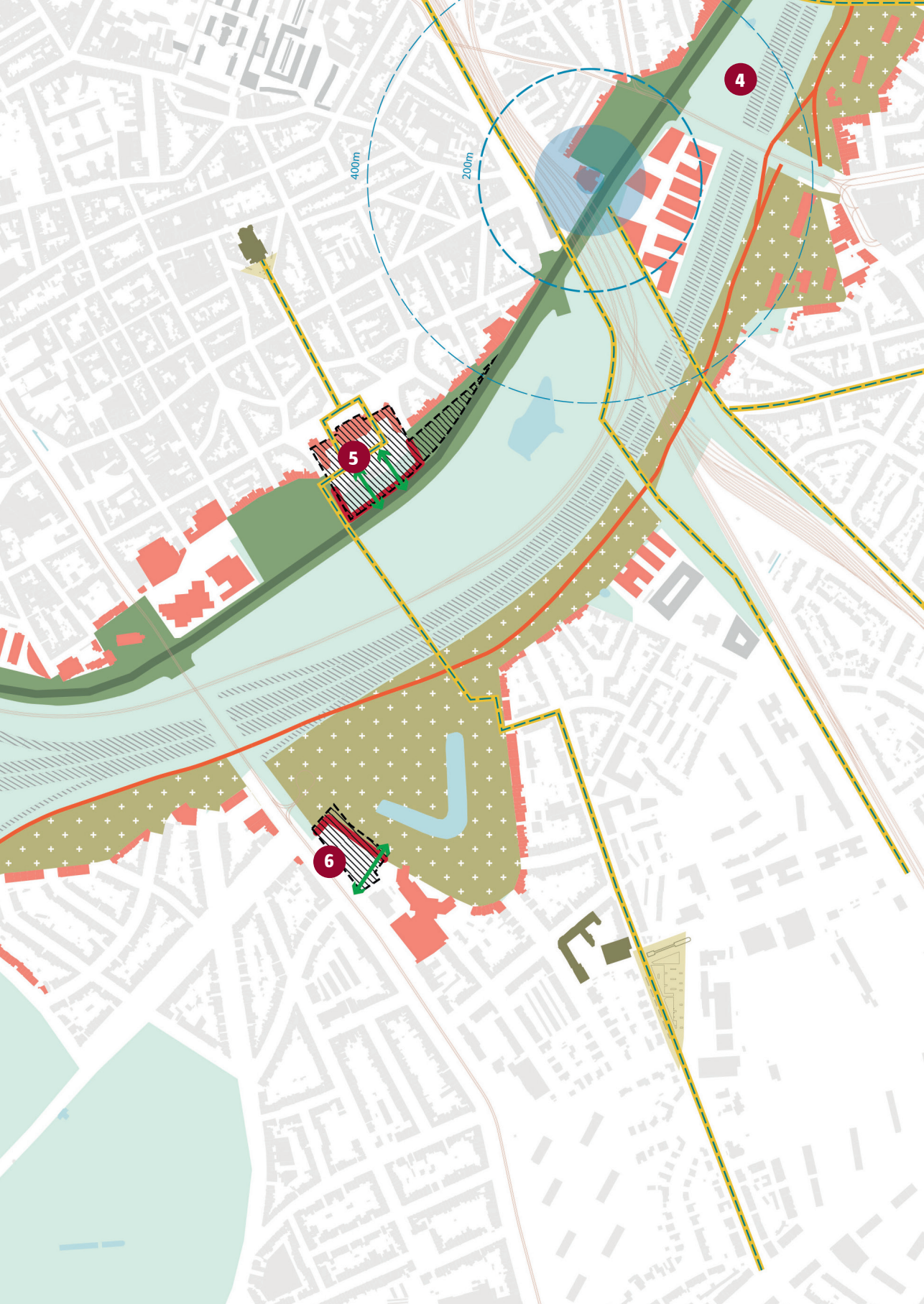
- 1 In the armpit of the Ten Eekhovlei-Lakborslei, the half-open building block will be transformed into a closed building block with a new lively facade and a mixed programme along the Ring Park. This building block is situated at an important link point between inner and outer city through the planned Kap Hof ter Lo.
- 2 At the Rode Kruisplein, the half-finished building block is completed, marking an important access from Deurne Dorp to the Ring Park.
- 3 On the inner side of the Ring railway is the Railpark Oost, with good connections to the surrounding neighbourhoods.
- 4 On the Singel, a new development is possible to strengthen this 'Leitfigur'.
- 5 The northern top of the site sits in the zone of influence of the Schijnpoot multimodal hub and can contribute in its morphology and programme to the desired densification around these hubs.
- 6 As the Large-scale Covering is expanded, more connections can be made between Ring Park and Railpark, and the Nerves between the inner and outer city can be extended.



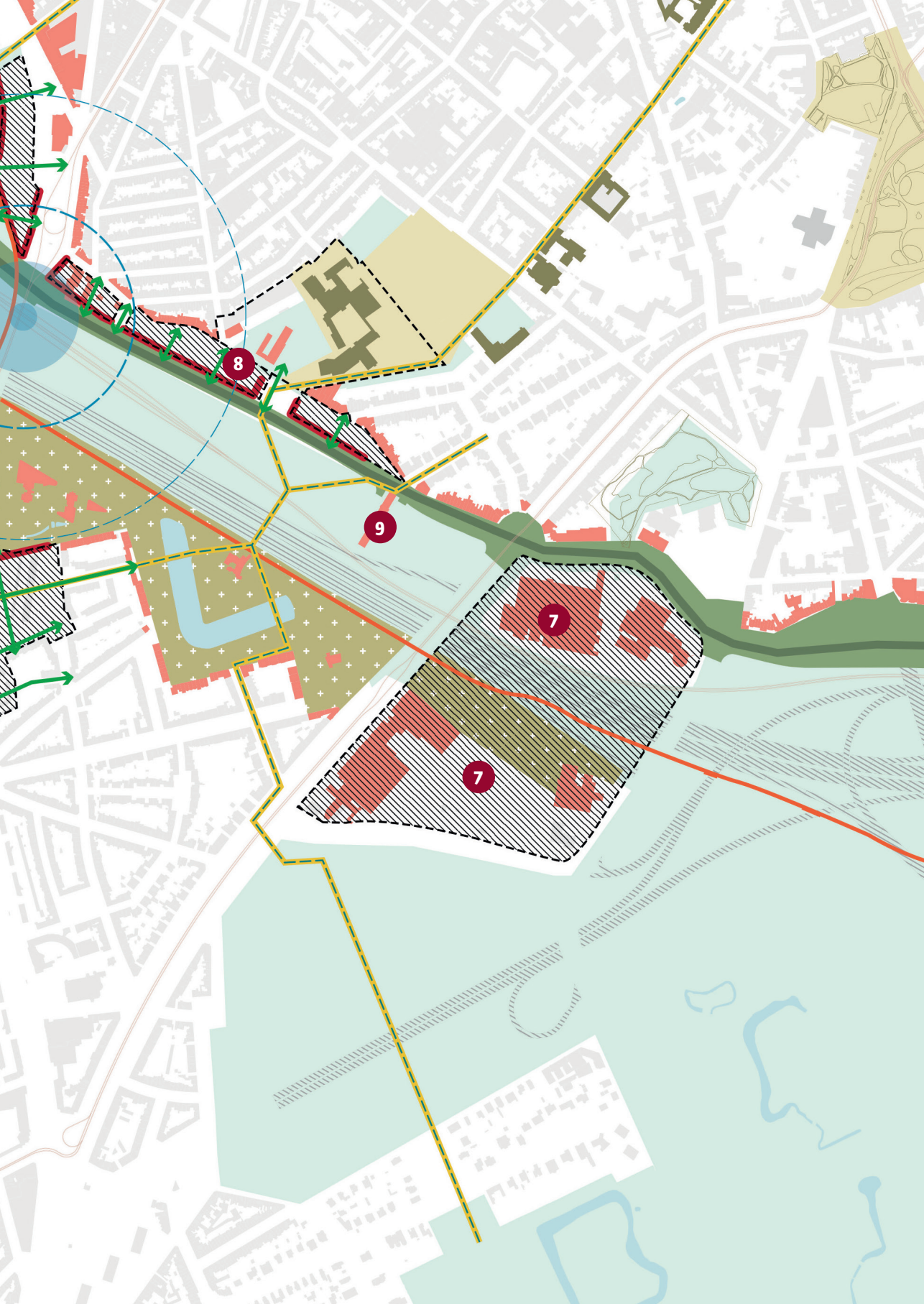
The Large-scale Covering is still being examined within the Ring Park Groene Vesten as part of the Ring study R1 Zuid. It is currently still unclear how wide the underground infrastructure will be and where any openings will be, according to tunnel safety. As such the Ringstad vision is based on urban projects that would be possible today after the planned first stage of liveability projects has been realised. As soon as there is more insight into the final shape of the Large-scale Covering, this vision can be supplemented with additional possibilities.

Both on the inner and outer sides of the ring zone, there are already largely high-quality frontages on the Singel and Connecting Valley and a fine network of side streets connecting the surrounding residential areas to the future Ring Park.

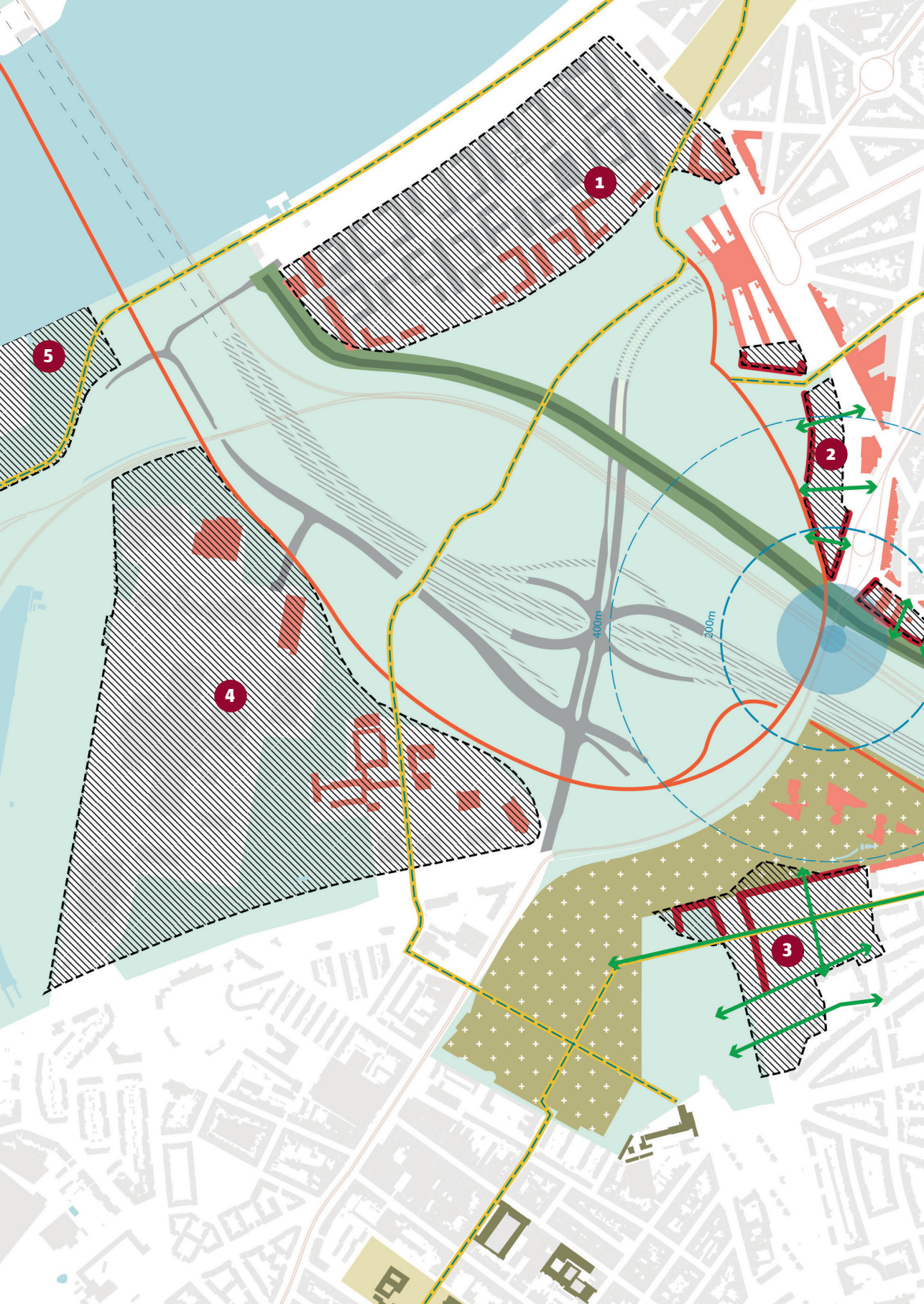
- 1** Nieuw Zurenburg will be developed into a new mixed residential area with a significant proportion of green space for the neighbourhood. The 'Leitfiguren' Singel and Railpark call for a clear urban front on the Singel and a green space on the side of the railway structure. In this way, the Railpark will be reinforced and expanded with additional greenery. If the environmental conditions are sufficient, the Nieuw Zurenburg urban project could already be developed in this way. When the Large-scale Covering is also realised, the focus of the green public space will be on the covering. Nieuw Zurenburg could in that case be further densified while still maintaining a significant proportion of green space in the neighbourhood, at short distance from residents, as part of the Railpark. At that point, the urban projects Luisbekelaar and Joe English could also be realised.
- 2** This is where the urban project Luisbekelaar is located. In contrast to Mastvest-Pomppark Zuid and Park Brialmont, the former Brialmont rampart is no longer visible here but is taken up by part of the Borgerhout slip road complex. Underneath, there is still potential for a 'vestenpark'. A new 'vestenpark' could enhance the Connecting Valley at this spot. In addition, a vibrant urban edge development and an intricate network of Nerves create a connection to the neighbourhoods.
- 3** The Joe Englishstraat is characterised by a highly frayed edge. Whether new frontages can be built here depends to a large extent on further developments of the traffic infrastructure.



- 4 The 'Leitfigur' of the Singel calls for asymmetrical construction along the Singel on the inner city side. As such, unlike the vision of the Zuidoost segment (2018), no additional construction is envisaged at this location at Berchem station. Additional densification within the sphere of influence of the multimodal hub Berchem station can be considered within the planning process of this multimodal hub, but will remain rather limited.
- 5 The Belgacom and Post site will be redeveloped in relation to the Maria Gasthuis and will have a vibrant edge along the Singel. Moreover, the existing Nerve can be improved here.
- 6 The development of the site between Grote Steenweg and Park Brialmont can bring a new dynamic to the area.



- 7** Within the urban project Culture Park, which includes the arts campus deSingel and Wezenberg sports complex to the north of the Ring and Antwerp Expo and the Crown Plaza hotel to the south, further densification of the prime location is possible.
- 8** Possible construction on the Desguinlei car park will be examined according to the new front development of the Singel. Unlike the vision of the Zuid segment (2018), construction along the Singel will only be possible on the inner city side. By looking at a redevelopment together with the adjacent PIVA-Pidpa site, the Nerve can connect the Hof van Leysen with the Ring Park Groene Vesten.
- 9** On the outer city side, space is left for the development of Pomppark Zuid. In Pomppark Zuid there is room for a roadside building with a public function at Desguinlei 33.



1 The new Nieuw Zuid mixed-use residential area will create strong and vibrant facades to Ring Park Zuid. Thanks to the many soft connections throughout the neighbourhood, you can easily get from the Scheldt quays to the Ring Park and vice versa.

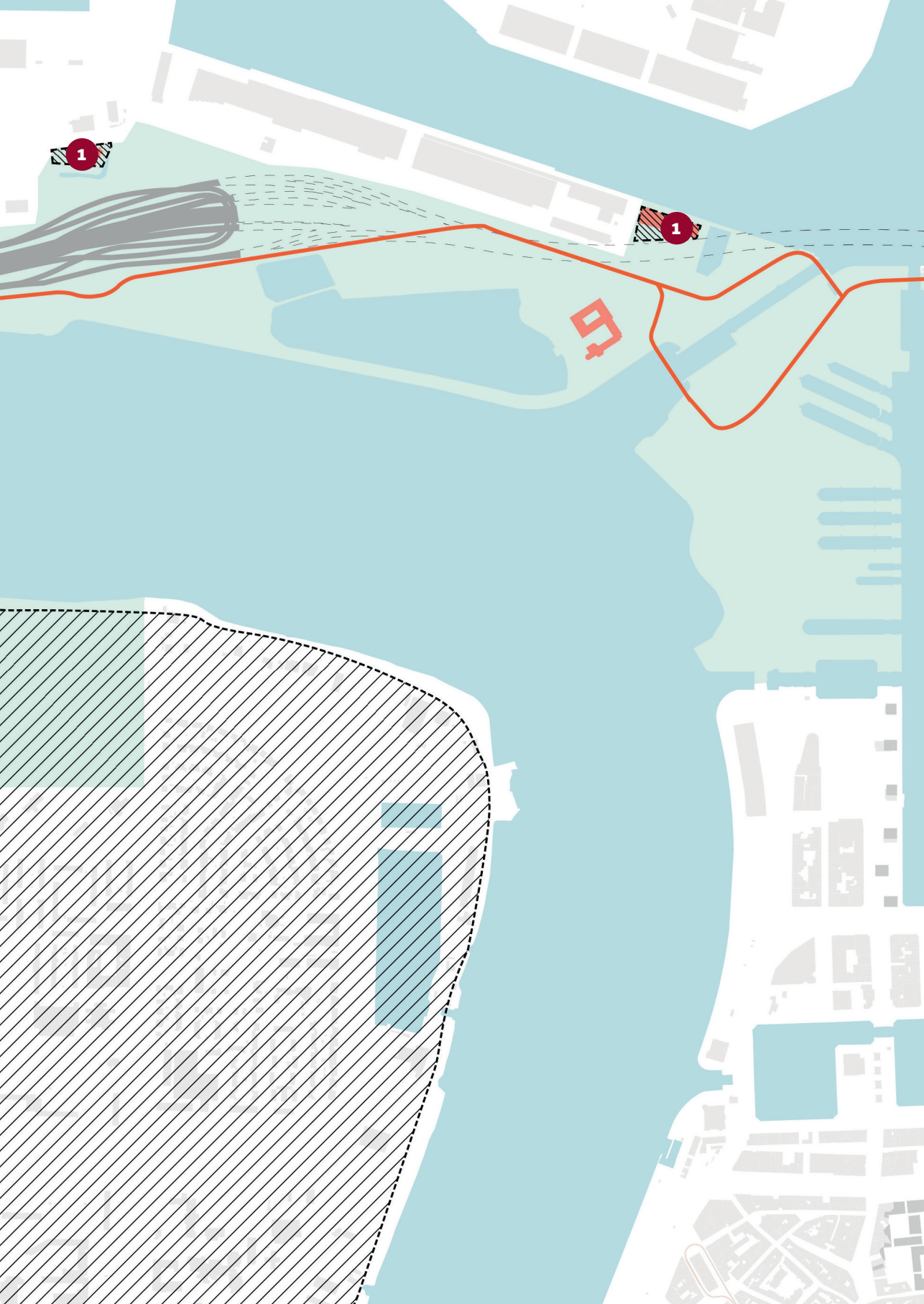
2 Additional development is planned along the route of the old Singel along the new Leien Park, with green Nerves running from the surrounding residential areas to the Ring Park. This Oude Singel urban project lies within the zone of influence of the multimodal hub Zuidstation and, like the zone around the Kielsevest, can contribute in its morphology and programme to the desired densification around these hubs.

3 The Jan De Voslei urban project will be defined both on the urban boulevard itself and on the Connecting Valley by strong edges. The new development is veined with Nerves that connect the building block city of the Tentoonstellingswijk with the detached buildings at Kielpark.

The Connecting Valley is extended along Kolonel Silvertoplaan as an abundant green connection between Kielpark and the Ring Park Groene Vesten.

4 The site around the Groothandelsmarkt can be redeveloped thanks to the relocation of the Emiel Vloorsstraat. Redevelopment and densification can provide a better link between Kiel and Ring Park and even to the city centre.

5 Along the waterfront, at the foot of the future Scheldt Bridge and at the intersection of the Scheldt quays and the Ring Park, there is an area for metropolitan activities. It is an exceptional location waiting for an exceptional programme.



RINGSTAD NOORDKASTEEL AND WEST

The Ring Parks Noordkasteel and West are rather atypical within the Ringstad vision. As such, they are situated in a very different context and urban fabric. Here, the Ringstad does not manifest itself as a continuation of the building block city with a strong vibrant facade as in the other segments.

- 1 Ringpark Noordkasteel is located at the pivotal point of city and port. The port infrastructure dominates here and the rather informal landscape has significant ecological value. The landscape features a number of iconic buildings, including the Antwerp Maritime Academy, the Oosterweel Church and the brick SAMGA silo. The latter two can be repurposed, thereby enhancing the Ring Park.

Development potential

The aim of the Ringstad vision is not only to clarify the demarcation of the development locations, but also to provide insight into the gross floor areas that can be developed.

Through a research by design study and a calculation method, we gain insight into the development potential of the project areas along the Ring. The calculation tool assumes the continuation of the typical Antwerp building block structure, with an additional focus on public space. As the policy paper by the city architect makes clear, in urban development we prefer to build on the existing DNA and morphology of the city. This principle is especially true for the edge developments of the Ring.

Different models of the building block city were tested for each of the development areas. In this way, an indicative range of minimum and maximum gross floor areas is calculated for each project area.

In addition, the extensive research by design study also provides insight into the overall development potential in the ring zone. This shows that the developable surface area of 2 million m² in the vision papers of the design teams from the first design phase Over de Ring (2018) is reduced to 1 million m². This again corresponds in order of magnitude to the development potential that Ringland had envisioned within its concept of the 10th District.

The research by design study provides a starting point for the further elaboration of each sub-project, but this is not set in stone. The urban designs will be drawn up in a separate design process under the quality control of the city architect on a project by project basis, as the development of the sites is started.

In sketching out the development potential, relevant urban policy papers such as the 'Beleidsnota Ruimtelijke economie' (Policy note on spatial economy) are taken into account. Where possible, additional space for the economy is created (at the city level, the space envisaged for business will remain at least the status quo), which is equally true for additional space for community amenities such as sports, youth facilities, schools, meeting amenities, allotments, and so on. For example, this could be woven into the new development areas.

A living plan

The spatial vision for the Ringstad is a living document. It is the subject of an iterative process that is refined, fine-tuned and modified over time. The first iteration of the vision was implemented based on the preliminary designs of the Ring Parks (2021). As a result, the Ringstad vision under the direction of the city architect now truly complements the vision for the overarching Ring Park under the direction of the intendant.

Subsequent iterations and refinements will take place as sub-projects within the vision are rolled out. Through research by design and the design of external teams for the urban projects, the sub-projects will take more concrete shape and will be assessed against the Ringstad vision. As such, the vision does not constitute a planning blueprint, but is the basis for parallel design processes, such as a supplementary study of the Nerves, as well as for urban projects along the Ring itself. The vision will be integrated in the strategic Spatial Plan for Antwerp, which is currently being drawn up, and finally also in the spatial implementation plans for the sub-zones.

The city council is making the clear choice to build and work towards the most liveable city in the country, by working closely with the intendant and the city architect. On account of the complexity and scale over time, the city architect sees the Ringstad as a 'city architect project' where quality control is an important task for current and future city architects. The intendant as quality controller of the overarching Ring Park and the city architect as quality controller of the Ringstad are therefore complementary to each other.

Guardian Entity

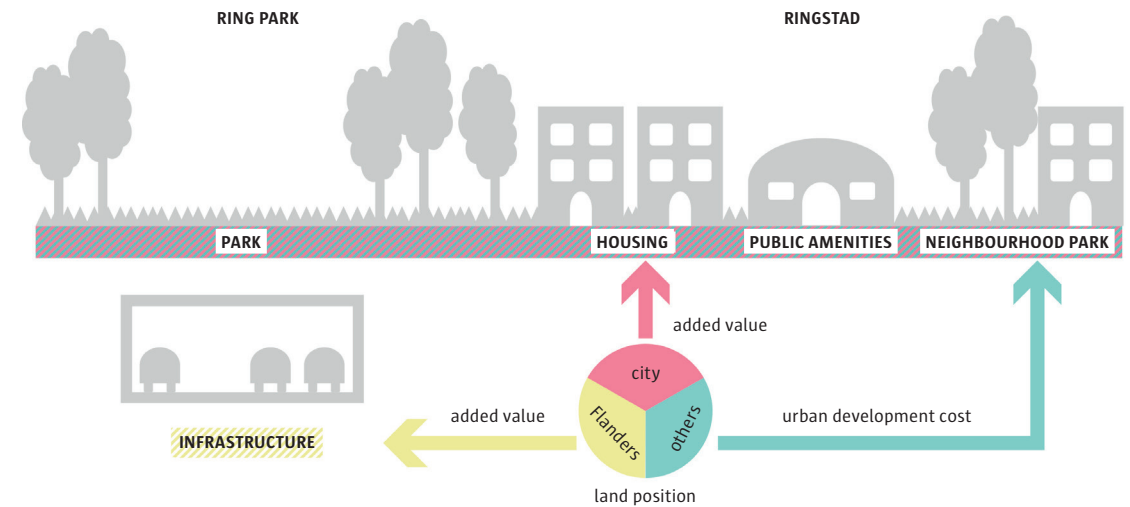
In parallel with the development of the Ringstad vision, AG Vespa, the autonomous municipal company for real estate and city projects of the city of Antwerp, has developed the 'Hoederentiteit' ('Guardian Entity') instrument for the realisation of the Ringstad. In 2014, with the concept of the 10th District, Ringland first made a link between the revenues expected from this development and the realisation of the covering of the ring zone. This idea was adopted in the ambition note of the intendant in 2016. In this note, the concept of a 'Guardian Entity' was introduced as a development vehicle to realise the Ringstad vision and from there find additional funding for a next phase of liveability projects.

The dominant strategic land position of the city and Flanders turned out to be the biggest asset for a far-reaching public management of the Ringstad. This allows for the active management and development of the government's own land and consequently, in cooperation with other parties, the possibility to steer urban development in the ring zone.

In mutual consultation between the city and Flanders, the objectives for the Guardian Entity were thereby formulated as follows:

1. Contribute to the realisation of the desired urban development in the ring zone.
2. Allow the proceeds (after deducting costs)/added value from the real estate development to flow back into the investments to improve the liveability in the ring zone.
3. Manage and activate the public land in the ring zone for the above-mentioned objectives.

With a grant from the Flemish Department of Environment, the Guardian Entity was actually launched within AG Vespa in October 2018. The objectives were translated into a 'financial bell jar' over each Ringstad project individually. This bell jar is also placed over all of an initial series of nine selected urban projects in the ring zone. The added value realised on Flemish lands will flow back into the core tasks of the Flemish government, such as realising infrastructure. The added value on the city's land will flow back into the social components of urban projects such as district and neighbourhood greenery, innovative housing concepts, etc. and/or into the realisation of Ring Parks in a subsequent phase of liveability projects.



Principle of the financial bell jar

Since the Guardian Entity will initially only incur costs as urban projects are started up (staff and planning costs, strategic purchases, preparing the land for construction, etc.), a financial contribution is necessary as a start-up. This contribution is repaid once the Guardian Entity generates profits from urban development. **The principle of the financial bell jar will ultimately enable the Guardian Entity to realise an ambitious programme of urban projects without weighing on the city budget, and will preferably generate additional financial resources for the city and Flanders in a second phase of liveability projects.**

From vision to implementation

To realise the Ringstad, the Ringstad vision is being refined by AG Vespa in relation to ownership structure, stakeholders involved, planning and legal aspects, availability and accessibility, etc. Based on this analysis, the urban projects are divided into four groups, each with its own approach.

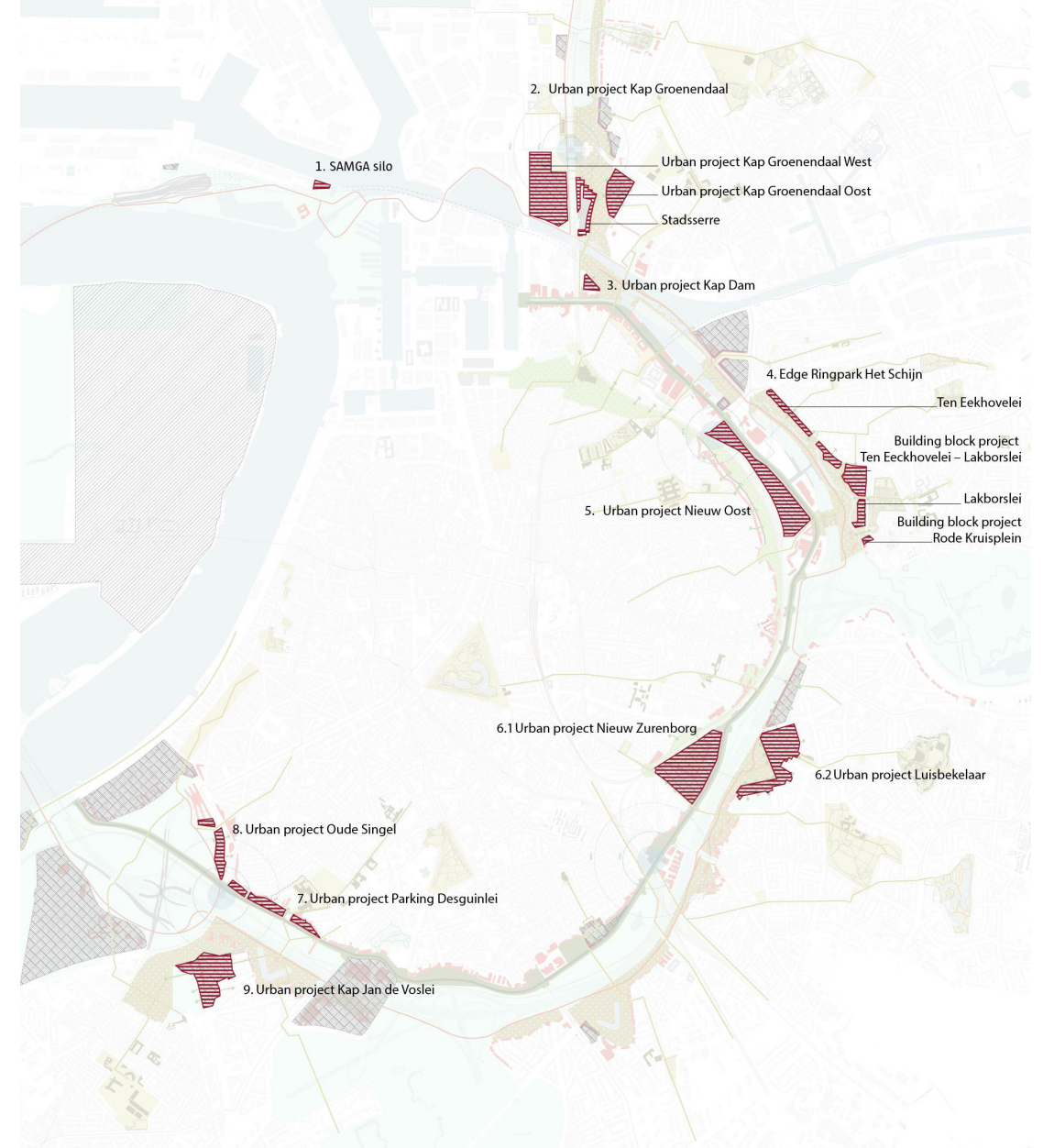
The urban projects that were already ongoing before the start-up of the Guardian Entity form a separate, first group in the Ringstad. Examples include Nieuw Zuid and Slachthuissite-Noordschippersdok-Lobroekdok. The city of Antwerp and AG Vespa continue to monitor these projects according to the agreements made, ongoing design processes and planning procedures.

A second group of urban projects is situated on private property. These projects are supervised by the permit department. The city architect and the integral quality chamber are responsible for quality control. The city has no influence on the planning. Nevertheless, a limited portion of the real estate revenues can be skimmed off by imposing urban development fees when the building permit is issued. An urban development fee follows from the additional tasks imposed on the government by the implementation of the permit and may be in kind or in the form of a purely financial charge, for, among other things, improving the environment of the project area.

A third group includes social projects. Although public amenities will also feature in Ringstad projects within one of the other three groups, a number of zones (with the planning designation of amenities and public utility) are explicitly reserved for public amenities such as the zone of the former youth hostel in Mastvest. These zones constitute a stock of usable land for social programmes.

When new specific programme demands or needs arise, these sites are screened for suitability. When there is a match between location and programme, a concrete project is started. The city, as the main landowner and provider of public amenities, plays an important steering role in this category of projects.

The fourth and final group of urban projects are the Guardian Entity projects. These projects are selected based on their strategic importance in the development of the Ringstad. Each of these are projects where active management on the part of the city is seen as crucial to achieve the desired spatial development. The strategic land position of the city or Flanders will be used for this goal and, where necessary, strengthened through strategic purchases. To date, 9 urban projects have been selected for further study and development by AG Vespa within the Guardian Entity.



The nine Guardian Entity projects

The above categorisation of urban projects within the Ringstad is a snapshot and may change over time. For example, Guardian Entity projects may be dropped, if, for example, it is decided to redefine a given project purely for social purposes. Or there may be additional Guardian Entity projects such as future urban development linked to the multimodal hubs.

Ringstad flanks Ring Park

The overarching ambition in the development strategy of the Guardian Entity is to realise urban projects at the same pace as the Ring Parks. In this way, we ensure vibrant and accessible Ring Parks from the outset. By selling at the right time, we optimise the revenues from the public lands, which we subsequently reinvest in the social components of the urban projects and/or a next phase of liveability projects. An important consideration within this ambitious and large-scale real estate project is the programmatic balance with the market and thus the balance between supply and demand at the broad scale of the city.

To oversee the overarching ambition for the Guardian Entity projects, a dashboard was devised by AG Vespa to follow and coordinate both processes. Within this dashboard, the interdependencies between Ring Park and Ringstad can be clearly observed. For example, there are future urban projects that are still covered by infrastructure or set aside as work zones for the works on the Ring. For these project areas, the realisation can only start after the infrastructure works are finished, such as for example the urban project Kap Dam at the future Ring Park Lobroekdok.

However, there are also project areas that do not fall within the planned infrastructure works and work zones, so that faster progress can be made in preparation for the arrival of the Ring Park. For example, the urban project Kap Groenendaal Oost as a strong front for the future Ring Park Groenendaal.

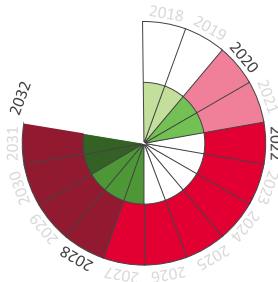
Temporary programmes also play an important role in the development strategy, pending definitive urban transformation, such as the Zomer van Antwerpen (Summer of Antwerp) on Nieuw Zurenborg. Indeed, it is neither necessary, feasible nor desirable to develop all of the city’s projects in the ring zone at the same time.

RING PARK

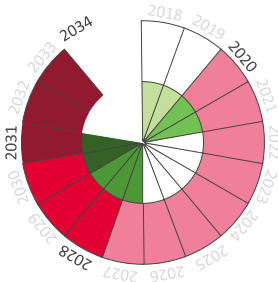
- Project definition
- Preliminary design
- Time gap implementation infrastructure
- Final design, permit, tender
- Implementation

RINGSTAD

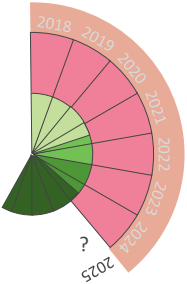
- Exploratory phase
- Planning and project formation phase
- Implementation and programming
- Temporary occupation



Stadsproject
Kap Groenendaal Oost



Stadsproject Kap Dam



Stadsproject
Nieuw Zurenborg

In principle, the design and planning process of the Ring Parks is more or less linear, going through project definition, preliminary design, final design, permit, tender and implementation in succession. These Ring Parks are hugely complex projects, which of course are also dependent on the planned infrastructure works. But they remain interventions in the public space, with public funding and from the viewpoint of social interests, for which the government can direct the process.

Urban projects have a different, own approach and planning than that of the Ring Parks. A typical urban project has a much less linear planning process, instead being more iterative. This process is determined by a complex structure of properties, large investments and diverse interests. Each urban project therefore requires customisation, rather than the completion of a number of predetermined steps in a process.

An urban project first goes through an exploratory phase in which a project is deemed feasible and the stakeholders to be involved are identified. This is followed by a planning and project formation phase in which the joint ambitions are worked out into project definitions, plans, designs, permits, agreements, etc. Finally, the implementation of the urban project takes place. It then often takes several years to gradually bring the new developments to the market.

Dashboard Ringpark/Ringstad

Thanks to the start-up capital made available by the city administration in the 2020-2025 multi-year budget, the Guardian Entity has powered out of the starting blocks. For example, exploratory feasibility studies were started for the repurposing of iconic buildings such as the SAMGA grain silo, which was saved from demolition within the participatory process, or the ambitious City Greenhouse which is intended to remedy the opening in the covering of Ring Park Groenendaal. Strategic purchases are being made such as the recent purchase of the De Lijn depot in Zurenborg or the large-scale voluntary purchase operation of private properties on Ten Eekhovlei along the future Ring Park Het Schijn.

From the strategic land position of the Guardian Entity, AG Vespa takes the initiative in discussions with private landowners for public-private partnership to start new projects. Supported by research by design from atelier stadsbouwmeester and external design teams, there is a search for a shared project definition as a stepping stone to the realisation of a joint project.

Consultations regarding the Guardian Entity projects take place directly with the private owners, residents and users involved. The neighbourhood-oriented communication and participation takes place through the same channels as of De Grote Verbinding (The Big Link): the workbenches, sounding board groups, workshops and open events such as the Ring Days. In this way, the story of Ring Park and Ringstad is always woven together and there is transparency in terms of the bigger picture.

4

CHRONICLE OF A LIVING PROCESS: URBAN PROJECT KAP GROENENDAAL

The Ringstad vision is not set in stone. It is a step within an iterative process, whereby urban projects evolve over time, becoming more refined and richer on the way to a concrete project. To illustrate this process, we can cite the urban project Kap Groenendaal as an example. The evolution of this project shows how the project boundary and the building programme have changed in interaction with the design of Ring Park Groenendaal, the studies of the underlying infrastructure and the dynamics with the owners and 'users' of this area. It is a story with an open ending. The plans will become more and more concrete in the coming years in consultation with all parties.

Strategic Spatial Structure
Plan Antwerp

2006

The **Spatial Structure Plan Antwerp (2006)** mentions the ‘Luchtbal Zuid’ station district as a location for new urban developments linked to a multimodal hub.



2006

Design phase 1 Over de Ring

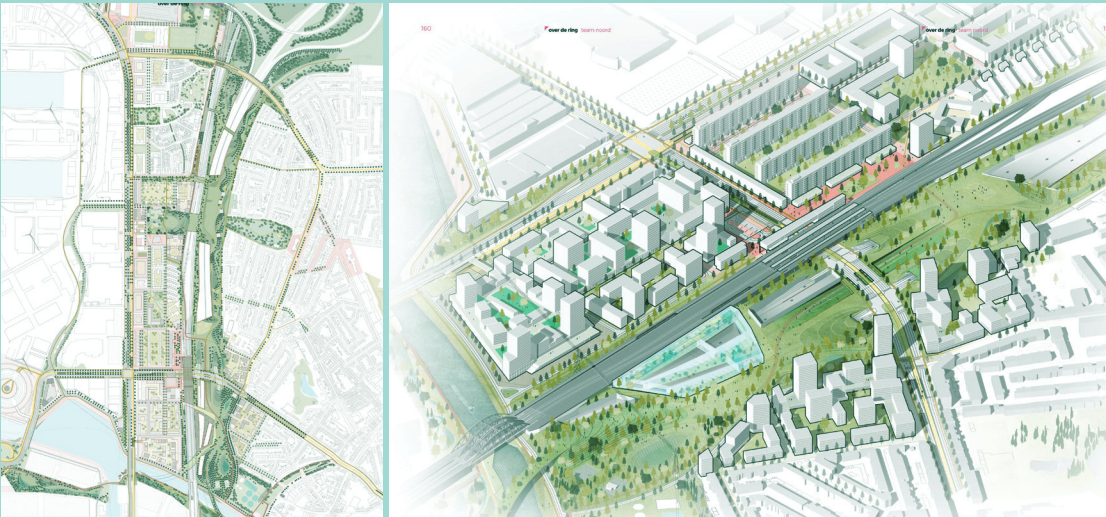
2016-2018

The intendant’s team also includes the potential new urban development around Groenendaallaan in the concept map ‘Stad maken over de Ring’ (Making a City over the Ring) from the **ambition note Over de Ring (2016)**.



2016

In the **vision paper Over de Ring segment Noord (2018)** the multimodal hub, combined with a covering and a City Greenhouse within the future Ring Park Groenendaal, offers opportunities to densify and create a new urban front for Merksem. For the west side, team Noord aims to interweave economic (production) activities with working, housing and amenities. For the east side, the team proposes a densification and interweaving of urban functions with a residential programme complemented by urban amenities and commercial functions on the ground floors. By relocating the existing social enterprise to the ground floor of the building along the canal west of Groenendaallaan, space will be freed up for new functions close to the station and on the east side.



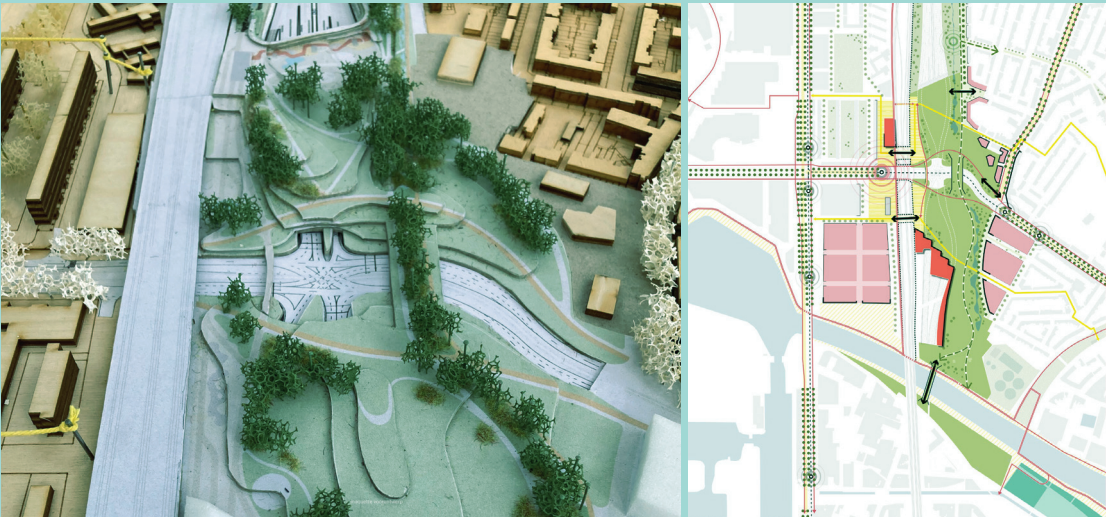
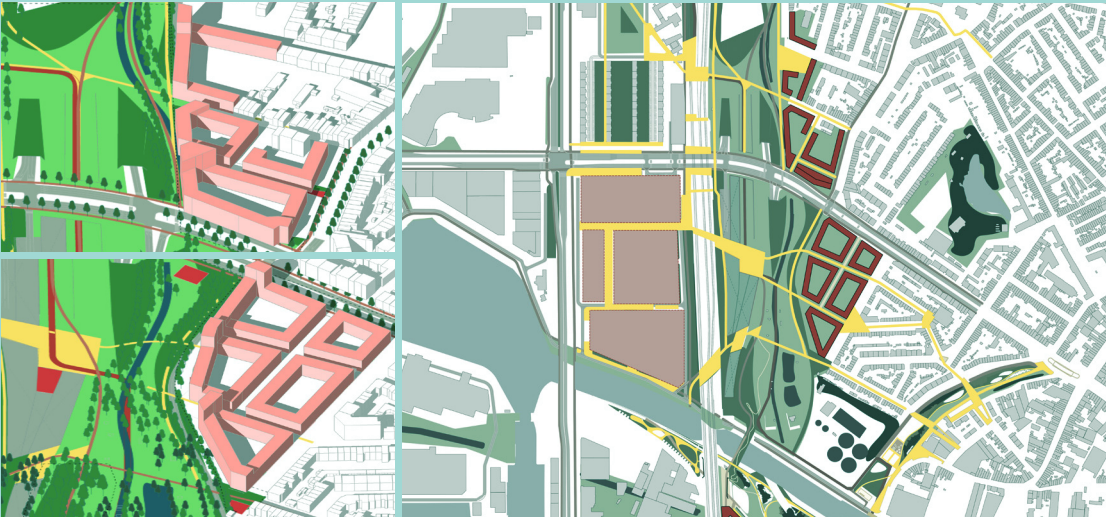
2018

Design phase 2 Over de Ring and vision Ringstad

2019-2022

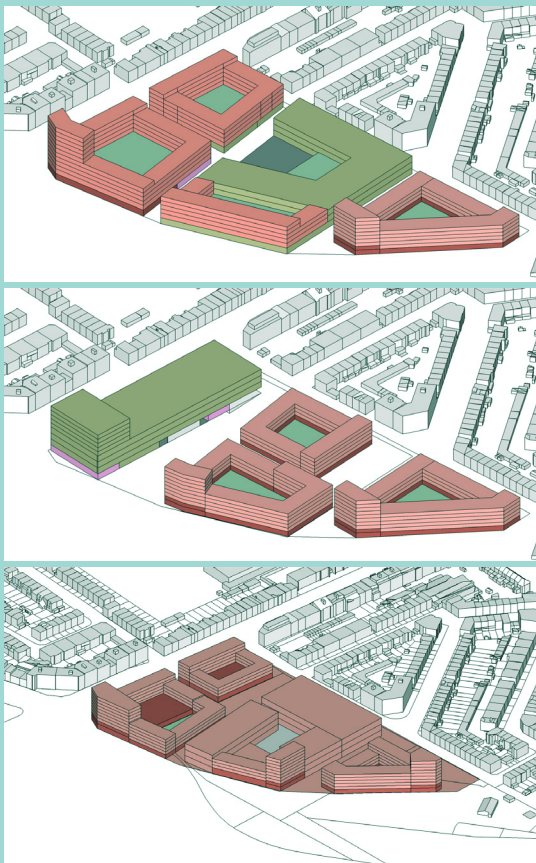
Building on the vision papers from the participatory design process, the evaluation and selection of coverings and liveability projects, atelier stadsbouwmeester has begun work on the Ringstad vision. For the east side of the urban project Kap Groenendaal, the **Ringstad vision (2022)** envisions a lower density than Team Noord’s vision paper.

From the **new infrastructure design (2019)** with a more compact slip road complex on the semi-underground Groenendaallaan follows a shift of the project boundary in relation to the Ring Park. While the northern zone of the current slip road will be free above ground, it is also the only place for various underground pipes and conduits, making construction here technically impossible. The **vision paper accompanying the preliminary design of Ring Park Groenendaal (2022)** also calls for a clear front development of the Ringstad; in a continuous line on either side of Groenendaallaan. As such, the Ring Park Groenendaal will be extended with the northern area of the current slip road and the urban project will be limited to the private parcels. As a result, the Guardian Entity lacks a land position which is a necessary lever and changes this part of the urban project from a Guardian Entity project to a private project in terms of approach.



Discussions with the relevant landowners indicate that the present social enterprise would like to combine and expand its two sites within the southeast quadrant of the urban project Kap Groenendaal. The **Ringstad vision (2022)** shows that this building programme is spatially possible in the final stage, taking into account the wider redevelopment to a mixed urban programme. Discussions are currently underway between the landowners involved. The aim is to initiate an agreement and to conduct further research into the feasibility of the urban project in terms of phasing, financing, ownership structure, spatial capacity of the environment, etc. This study will form the basis for a future urban design.

For the west side of the urban project Kap Groenendaal, the **Visie Ringstad (2022)** assumes a mixed urban programme with a supra-local programme that can be a catalyst for the city as a whole. In 2020, the city council decided to open a competitive dialogue in the search for interested market actors to develop the area. In preparation for this procedure, conversations with the owners in question are ongoing.



AFTERWORD

The Ring Park and the Ringstad need each other and are inextricably linked. This document has attempted to demonstrate this in a substantiated way. The development of the dynamic and high quality urban projects of the Ringstad is deployed to make the parks accessible, safe and vibrant. Additional development at these locations in the city also makes a significant contribution to the 'building shift' on a regional scale.

Finally, within the Guardian Entity, every euro is spent either on the social objectives within the urban project itself, such as neighbourhood and community greenery, affordable housing or public facilities for the neighbourhood, or reinvested in the next phase of liveability projects. In this way, we are exploiting the opportunities of the Ringstad, without losing sight of the possible threats.

As a city, we are taking on the challenge of making the transformation of the ring zone a success for Antwerp and all its residents. Infrastructure tasks, liveability and urban development projects, if well thought out, can be fully complementary to each other. Indeed, they need each other if we are to achieve liveable and resilient cities with high-quality public spaces. It is the ambition of the Ringstad to bring about such an intelligent symbiosis and generate the necessary support for it.

The Ringstad vision is the start of a process. It offers a footing in a discussion about the opportunities for urban development along the Ring. We look forward to working with residents and stakeholders in the area to further develop the vision and start concrete projects in the coming years.

Christian Rapp



ag vespa



De Grote
Verbinding



DEPARTEMENT
OMGEVING

Read more about Ringstad at:
www.ringstad.be
www.degroteverbinding.be

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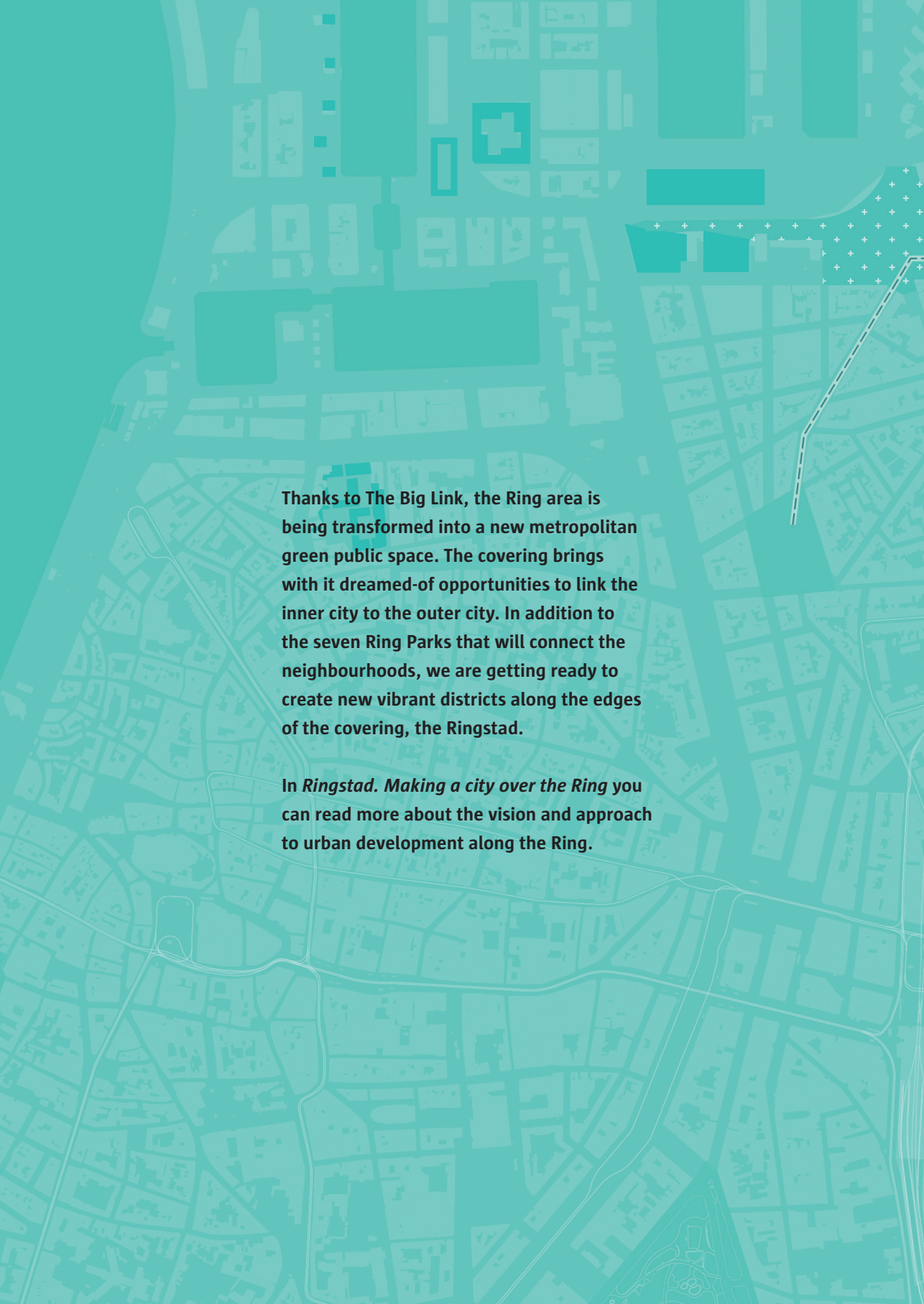
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Thanks to The Big Link, the Ring area is being transformed into a new metropolitan green public space. The covering brings with it dreamed-of opportunities to link the inner city to the outer city. In addition to the seven Ring Parks that will connect the neighbourhoods, we are getting ready to create new vibrant districts along the edges of the covering, the Ringstad.

In Ringstad. Making a city over the Ring you can read more about the vision and approach to urban development along the Ring.