

Winkelsteeg: Innovative Area Development



Impression of the new station square, view from the entrance at the Halfgeleiderweg

“IT’S MY JOB TO MERGE THE CREATIVE WORLD WITH THE WORLD OF REGULATIONS.”

“The best thing about my job is that it all starts with a vision, an ambition and - of course - policy”, says Frans Holleman. “Then, slowly, it turns from 2D into 3D. With regard to the Winkelsteeg development in Nijmegen, the structural requirements, like roads and infrastructure, already start to become visible.”

Holleman is a seasoned professional in urban and area development, with over twenty years of experience at Bouwfonds, including ten years as director for the North East and Central regions of the Netherlands. His extensive career had him contribute to a wide range of large-scale projects. Three years ago he took the leap to becoming an independent developer. His passion for urban planning soon found him in Nijmegen, where he became deeply involved in the redevelopment of the Winkelsteeg area. What was initially planned as a six-month project has now turned into a 2.5 year-long commitment.

The development of Winkelsteeg: a unique combination of urban living and working

The Winkelsteeg area in Nijmegen is undergoing a remarkable transformation. “The project is ambitious, aiming to create 6,000 new homes and a significant amount of new employment opportunities. Winkelsteeg will be an area to work, live and meet in”, Frans tells us. “The first 500 homes have already been completed, with additional zoning plans underway for areas near the canal and the Goffert train station. This former industrial area will be redeveloped to include both residential and workspaces, all within an urban, car-free environment that has optimal mobility options.”

One of the most unique aspects of this project is the integration of functions for both living and working. “In most cases, either living or working becomes the more dominant use for such a district, but in Winkelsteeg, a deliberate effort has been made to balance the two. We aim to create 3,000 new jobs and attract new businesses. This is a place for startups and established companies, where innovation and craft entrepreneurship will flourish. Also, new and affordable types of residential units will be added, that will form a distinctive urban environment where living and working go hand in hand. Winkelsteeg will be a green environment with plenty of space for both social and sporting encounters.”

Challenges in area development

The development of Winkelsteeg is not without its challenges. One of the biggest hurdles faced is keeping the project on schedule, says Frans. “The development of an area always involves unforeseen circumstances causing delays. For instance, we were asked to adjust our plans so as to accommodate a sportscenter, including a swimming pool, after the start of the development process. This required a certain amount of flexibility, but that is inherent to my line of work.”

The challenge lies in balancing speed and care. While the pace is brisk, it’s important not to



Goffert - Novitech Campus train station area

“I hope to develop Winkelsteeg into an area that enhances the quality of life and happiness of those who live and work there.”



Winkelsteeg, Maas-Waal Canal

compromise the quality of the development. “It’s important to stay in tune with your stakeholders and keep the conversation going – you have to be a team player. But there’s always a risk of talking too much and doing too little. At some point, one has to take a decision. However, I remain optimistic about the feasibility of the Winkelsteeg plans, thanks to the extensive experience and expertise within the Nijmegen municipality.”

“My job requires a certain amount of flexibility.”

Bringing visions to life

What is driving Frans? “It’s my job to merge the creative world with the world of regulations, all the while increasing the project’s feasibility, being guided by a clear philosophy, which in this case is a clear vision for Winkelsteeg. An urban planner may craft a compelling narrative, but bringing that vision to life is where the real challenge lies. That doesn’t happen overnight; it requires a deep understanding of how to align all the moving parts. The key is to identify the critical connections that make the plan both achievable and sustainable. I enjoy being part of that solution.”

Area development is a long-term endeavor. Frans compares it to a marathon with intermittent sprints: zoning plans need to be made, tenders to be placed in the market, and decisions constantly refined. Despite the complexity and challenges, Frans remains optimistic.

“I draw my motivation from the opportunity to make a real contribution to the city. By listening to the needs of residents and businesses, and by working closely together with all stakeholders, I hope to develop Winkelsteeg into an area that is not only economically successful but also enhances the quality of life and happiness of those who live and work there.”

Looking Ahead: a vision for the next 5–10 years

Over the next five to ten years, Frans Holleman expects Winkelsteeg to become a leading example of modern urban development where working and living are combined successfully. “What makes this project special is its holistic approach to urban development. Everything is interconnected: it’s not only about numbers and planning, it’s also about creating an environment where people want to live and work. Winkelsteeg is designed not just to be functional, but also to foster a sense of community and well-being. We want a safe living environment where you get around on foot, bicycle or public transport.”

“Winkelsteeg is designed to foster a sense of community and well-being.”

Other municipalities and policymakers are already noticing this project, attracted to the short turnaround time and the impressive results achieved so far. “People want to know what is the secret to our success. I always say it’s our compact and focused project organisation, with a team of experts working closely together to realise the ambitions for Winkelsteeg.”



Frans Holleman
Area Developer Winkelsteeg



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