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NEIGHBORHOODS



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As Amsterdam experienced a number of distinct building phases over time, the structure and character of neighborhoods has also evolved. These developments now form the framework for the neighborhoods that exist today. Eight major neighborhoods exist in the central part of the city, and another four districts make up the more loosely defined outlying areas. While Amsterdam is actually made up of dozens of distinct neighborhoods, this broad characterization offers a clear and streamlined approach for understanding the city.

Canals have parceled the blocks of Amsterdam into neatly defined independent neighborhoods. The geometric street layout, bounded by regular canal intervals, creates a clear delineation of spaces and thus a strong sense of neighborhood identity.

The De Pijp neighborhood, just south of the historic center, is a good example of this sense of place. This neighborhood is self-sufficient, with a regular self-supported market, a highly functioning

public realm, a variety of types of street-level shops. At the same time, this neighborhood is known for its recent emigrants, regular nightlife, activist culture and thriving streetscapes. Connectivity to other neighborhoods is high, both

radially and along parallel bands.

Neighborhoods in Amsterdam are defined by their organizational structure and historical roots, but also by the demographics that constitute them, their infrastructure,

and the shops, trades, and housing types therein. In addition, individual residents and their collective community involvement characterizes the distinct identity of Amsterdam neighborhoods.

CITY OUTSKIRTS

DAM SQUARE

LEIDSEPLEIN

REMBRANDTPLEIN

JORDAAN

DE WALLEN

THE CANAL BELT

DE PIJP

DE MUSEUM KWARTIER

At the heart of Amsterdam, Dam Square is a bustling and tourist-oriented center. This streetscape is the oldest in Amsterdam, with narrow and winding pedestrian streets and the city's oldest surviving buildings. In addition to retail shops, street performers and restaurants help to make this a lively and engaging public space. Two primary shopping streets, the Kalverstraat and the Nieuwendijk, emerge from Dam Square. Bordering the square itself are a collection of important civic and historical structures, including the Royal Palace, the Nieuwe Kerk (the new church) and the freestanding War Memorial Sculpture.



LEIDSEPLEIN

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Leidseplein is a bustling area where nightlife and tourism meet. Here the street level is constituted of restaurants and bars, and outdoor terraces are typical. This area is vibrant simply from the crowds of people who collect there, and the music and street performers who pander to these crowds. Theatres, clubs, bars, cinemas, hotels and restaurants define this streetscape. Because of these offerings, the streets remain lively until as late as 5 a.m. This area is small enough to be considered a part of the canal belt, but because of its unique and well-known independent character, must be addressed as a separate entity.



REMBRANDTPLEIN

Like Leidseplein, the Rembrandtplein caters to tourists and people enjoying a night out. Here a collection of cafes, bars, restaurants and hotels create a nightlife scene. It is slightly less crowded as the area around Leiden Square, but in general, shares much of the flavor of this sister neighborhood.



JORDAAN

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Built in 1612, during the fourth expansion of Amsterdam, the Jordaan neighborhood is a distinct area bordered by canals. This particular neighborhood is known throughout the Netherlands for its street life, corny songs, sarcastic humor and working-class mentality. Despite this identity, most of the native Jordaaners have long since been replaced by students and young professionals. The Jordaan features bars, restaurants, upscale boutiques, and housing within a network of tightly packed streets and canals. It is located between Brouwersgracht, Prinsengracht, Raamstraat and Marnixstraat.





De Wallen (The Walls) is better known as the Red-Light District in Amsterdam. Located just west of the Damrak, this region is bounded by the streets and canals between Warmoesstraat and Nieuwmarkt square. The end of the two canals, Oudezijds Voorburgwal and Oudezijds Achterburgwal, marks the area's borders. While medieval Amsterdam existed in De Wallen, it has since become famous for window prostitution, sex shops and live shows. This state-sanctioned activity is concentrated in the alleys and along the canals around the Oude Kerk (the old church). De Wallen becomes absorbed by the city center, as it borders Dam Square and Centraal station.



THE CANAL BELT

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features many gabled mansions. Today many of the hotels and restaurants in this area pander to tourists, but a significant population of local residents also reside here.



In February, 1999, the Canal Belt was designated by the Dutch Government as a protected monument of the inner city. This area ranges from Singel Canal to Prinsengracht Canal, and encompasses the classic Amsterdam streetscape. Many of the houses built in this swath border canals, and a third of these structures were built before 1850. This area was developed during the seventeenth century Golden Age, when the city extended its boundaries and canals were formed in a girdle around the oldest part of Amsterdam to accommodate wealthy tradesmen and burghers. The neighborhood architecture blends Classicism with more contemporary forms of design, and





De Pijp (The Pipe) was the first modern city development in Amsterdam at the end of the 19th century. Many of the houses here were built quickly using cheap materials to accommodate the influx of laborers to Amsterdam. Today De Pijp maintains many of these multicultural roots, with a diverse population of residents. In addition to its large emigrant population, a variety of young and old students, working class people, and artists collect here. Housing tends to form the upper floors of attached buildings in De Pijp, while the streetscape is bordered by restaurants, shops and bars.



DE MUSEUM KWARTIER

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De Museum Kwartier (The Museum Quarter) is the area around Museumplein, and home to a variety of museums in Amsterdam. The Stedelijk Museum (Museum of the State,) the Van Gogh Museum, The Rijksmuseum (Municipal Museum,) and the Concert Building are all located here. In addition to these important cultural amenities, the Museum Quarter also has upscale retail along the Pieter Cornelisz Hooftstraat and Van Baerlestraat, and a significant public park. Because events here primarily take place during daytime hours, the Museum Quarter is busy by day but deserted at night.



The newest city developments have taken place on the southern banks of the River IJ, to the West and East of Centraal Station. While this was once a desolate area initially used for warehouses and eventually vacated, it has recently undergone considerable redevelopment. With a view of the River Amstel and close proximity to the city center, Oostelijke Handelskade has become a new district for Amsterdam nightlife. Theatres are appearing in this neighborhood, as well as the newly completed Passenger Terminal of Amsterdam.

Beyond the city center, four primary regions exist. Amsterdam East, a residential zone on the far bank of the Amstel River, is home to the Maritime and Tropical museums, Artis, the city's zoo, and a rich collection of ethnic minority groups. Amsterdam South is a more prestigious and modern residential area, particularly along Apollolaan, called the Gold Coast by locals for its rows of expensive houses. The district west of the Singelgracht canal covers Amsterdam West, and remains a middle-income residen-

tial neighborhood. Located on the north bank of the IJ channel, Amsterdam North has essentially acted as a suburb until recently, but efforts to redevelop this area as an extension of the city center are gaining popularity.



NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEES

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Neighborhood committees are formed by groups of citizens collecting to address the problems in their neighborhood. "Insprakk," or the involvement of the public in public decisions, is required by law in the Netherlands. This is one important outlet that ordinary citizens have for voicing their opinion, asking questions, and helping to design policy changes that affect their own neighborhood. Deliberation and interactive decision making is common in these groups. While citizens don't have the final say in the outcome of these decisions, their input is taken into consideration by government representatives. These committees are supported by city district officials, and topics discussed at these meetings range from garbage on the street to improving social cohesion in the neighborhood.

