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BLOCK AND BUILDING TYPES



BLOCK TYPES

AMSTERDAM

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology

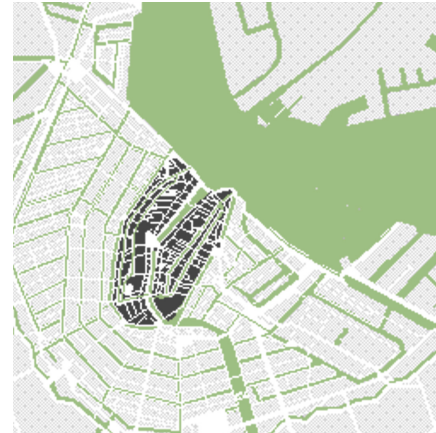
Plots of land in Amsterdam vary in size, and often are cut at irregular angles, due to the city's fanned plan structure. Amsterdam's progressive development over time also has affected plot and block size. The density of the city center has given way to increasingly open peripheral spaces, with fewer streets per block mass. The radial development of this city tends to reduce the street to block ratio on the outskirts of town. However, the canal and street relationship that is critical for block character has been preserved in some form throughout all stages of city growth.

Early land plots were typically 30 feet wide. In the land development of 1663, (around the new Leidsestraat and Utrechtsestraat streets) however, plots were divided into 26-foot parcels. Many buyers purchased two adjacent plots, giving rise to the popular double houses on wider 52-foot land plots. This ring of development, incidentally, features much larger estates than those in the inner core.



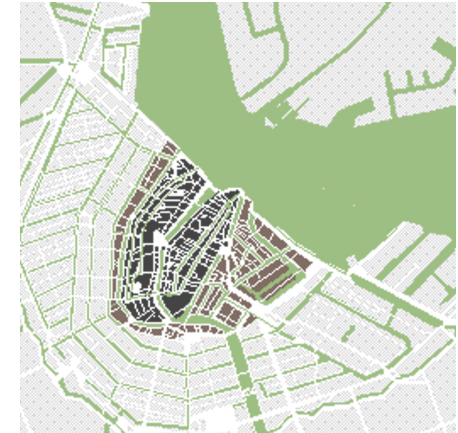
EARLY AMSTERDAM: 1300-1450

Later stages of block development also featured more green space. Because land became less valuable in the third expansion (due to successive recessions and a



THE FIRST EXPANSION: 1450-1585

stable population) the city created public open space with leftover land parcels. In the 19th century, this open public space in Amsterdam featured massive greenways, as well as parks,



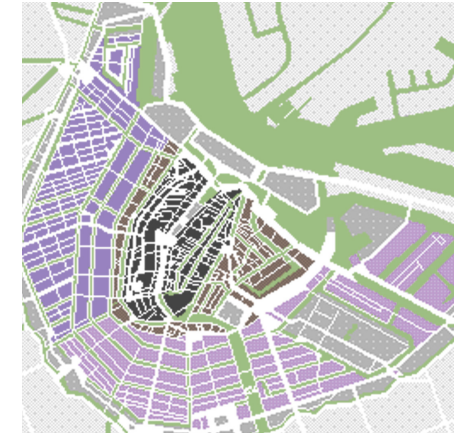
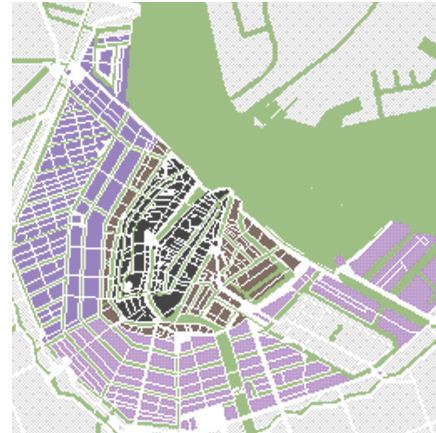
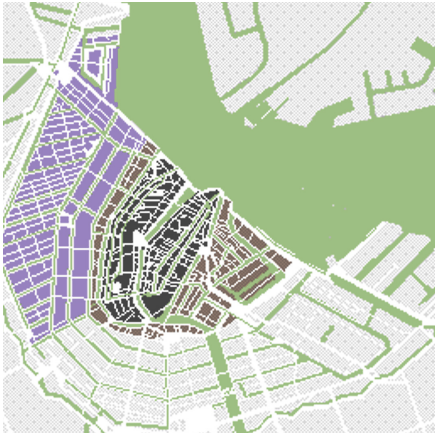
THE SECOND EXPANSION: 1585-1615

a zoo, and the ever present canals. In the 20th century, Amsterdam altered many blocks by widening roads and filling in canals for automo-

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THE THIRD EXPANSION: 1615-1663

These changes affected the facades of buildings along the blocks, and in many cases divided entire blocks. Relationships between buildings and spaces that

THE FOURTH EXPANSION: 1663-1880

had developed out of proximity lost meaning.

Since this car-centered development, most changes to the built civic

A RETURN TO GROWTH: 1880-1928

space have reinforced these values. Streets are wider, blocks feature parking areas, and individual buildings must take car use into account. Yet, a resurgence to reclaim the

MODERN AMSTERDAM: 1945-2000

pedestrian and bike friendly city core also exists. Several key retail streets in the city center have been designated for pedestrian access only, retaining the block structure of this dense city core.

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Amsterdam's architecture reflects a critical connection between site and function. Buildings were shaped as much by the canals and narrow lots as by the need to satisfy some utilitarian purpose. Many of Amsterdam's remaining historic structures are protected; 1,550 of the 2,200 canal buildings in this city are designated historic buildings. A total of 6,936 historic buildings in Amsterdam fall under the jurisdiction of the national government. The majority of these monuments are dwellings, although mansions, bridges, warehouses, churches, and other civic buildings also contribute. Several entire neighborhoods within Amsterdam are considered "protected cityscapes" by the government. (city files)

Individual houses became typical dwelling types for Amsterdam, including a separate roof, door and façade. Two primary dwelling types emerged; the single house, with 3 bays and a width of 25 to 30 feet, and the double house, with five bays and a width of 50 to 60 feet. Merchants' houses would have a top floor or cellar dedi-

cated for storage, and often abutted a canal for the shipment and delivery of goods.

Characteristics shared by many of the buildings in the center of Amsterdam are long and narrow plots, red brick or sandstone facades, slightly leaning and cantilevering facades, stoops, side steps, cellar shops, hoist beams, and an overall unity in terms of aesthetics. This regularity was a response to city fire regulations, as well as the site, climate, building materials, and building practices. Gable tops were likely a response to the weather and plot dimensions, as well as the styles made popular by the city. Today, many of these houses have been parceled into smaller units for multiple residents.

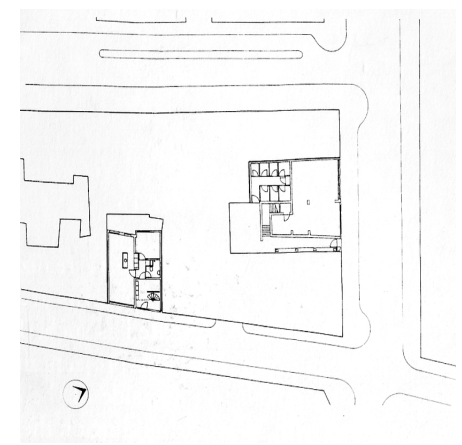
Amsterdam's rich trade history led to the development of many warehouses. Before the 17th century, merchants often stored their goods in their own homes, however, storage needs increased dramatically in the 17th century, and independent warehouses were built. These ware-

houses mirrored their predecessors; the structures were narrow, deep, tall, and near canal waters.

Like the house, most warehouse plots were 90 feet deep. However, while houses typically featured an interior courtyard for light and private open space, these storage structures put



MASSIVE ATTACHED BUILDING



ATTACHED SOLID SLIVER

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all of the available land to use. Most warehouses from the 17th and 18th centuries have funnel shaped gables and vertical shuttered attic windows. Like the residences, warehouses were built as singles (twenty-five to thirty feet wide) and doubles (fifty to sixty feet wide.)

MASSIVE FREE-STANDING BUILDING

ments in all merchant houses, allowing for the goods to be moved from the canal into the upper reaches of the building with a block and tackle system.

Public buildings were sponsored by the state or city, and provided the city with governmental offices, meeting houses, and defense systems. While the Weigh House is the oldest remaining secular public building in Amsterdam (created as a city gate in 1488), the Royal Palace in Dam Square is probably the most prestigious. It was a large scale administrative building built in the mid 17th century. The accompanying square remains an important outdoor public meeting space today.

The large trading companies also operated enormous warehouses, with many bays and a single structure. The Dutch East India Company, for instance, along with the government, required these massive buildings. Hoist beams were necessary ele-

Amsterdam's open tolerance for religious practice encouraged a variety of different emigrants to collect in this city. Catholic and protestant churches comprised the majority of religious buildings in this city, although mosques, temples, and many other sacred buildings are found there today. Churches connected into the

ATTACHED COURTYARD SLIVER

MASSIVE ATTACHED BUILDING

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built fabric of the downtown, and featured unique roof structures and facades as a way of differentiating from the rest of the buildings. Of the important churches that make up the historic city center today, chapels, medieval gothic churches, 17th and 18th century Renaissance and Classicist churches and the 19th century Revival churches are represented. Synagogues were built, although generally without towers.

Because of Amsterdam's intimate relationship with water, bridges were necessary for travel throughout the city. Today the city boasts over 400 bridges, linking land across the many canals. In 1544, Amsterdam had 52 bridges, in 1600, it had 110, and by 1732, 297 bridges had been built.

Several important types of bridges exist today, including wooden girder bridges, brick arched bridges, sandstone bridges, moveable bridges, iron and steel leaf bridges. In addition to bridges, transportation hubs such as the Schipol international airport, and the main train station comprise infrastructure elements.

As Amsterdam is home to a broad variety of cultural amenities, this building type dominates the civic sphere. Museums, opera houses, music halls, artist studios, and entertainment spaces pepper the city. Many of the older buildings in Amsterdam have been retrofitted through adaptive reuse to provide for these new functions. However, most of the cultural buildings are housed in new free-standing structures, with an architectural language that departs from historic examples. These buildings typically are large scale, and function specific.



CUSTOM SHAPE-TO-FIT



MODERN STANDOUT



SPANNING STRUCTURE

