

How a community focus helps to futureproof this landmark Amsterdam office building

27/02/2024 Kayla Dowling



Originally used as an office space, the Zandkasteel building in Amsterdam was redeveloped with a communal eye for mixed-use functions including work, living and hospitality.

Key features

Zandkasteel in Amsterdam's Zuidoost district was originally completed in 1986 as an office building and was designated as a heritage site in 2017. Completed by Alberts & Van Huut Architecture, the building was designed without the use of 90-degree angles introducing an organic, free-form style. D/Dock was tasked with redesigning the interior, transforming it from its sole use as a workspace into a mixed-use facility combining work, living and hospitality functions. The designer worked closely with the original architect in reimagining the space to adhere to the unique architecture which avoids any fixed items to the floors or walls.

The 4,000-sq-m space is designed as an 'internal city' made up of streets, squares and parks, helping to scale the space to more intimate, user-friendly interaction and connection. A large corridor on the first

floor is the 'heartbeat of the building' connecting offices, co-working spaces, meeting rooms and hospitality venues. A blend of private and public spaces is shared by residents from 263 apartments above, office-goers and external users. Inclusivity drives the design of Zandkasteel. For example, an auditorium where an office tenant gives a presentation during working hours can be used as a movie theatre, providing added value for users. Flexible in use, the spaces accommodate diverse activities for different user groups – both internal and external – from art exhibitions to sports and cultural gatherings.

FRAME's take

'I really struggle to see prime office space empty Mondays and Fridays when we've got schools and community groups that can't find space,' director of UK architecture practice TP Bennett Christopher Webb previously **said** to FRAME. 'We need to join the dots and use terraces for community allotments or boardrooms as teaching facilities.' The redevelopment of the Zandkasteel building is guided by this very ethos. A landmark in the city once used privately as a bank headquarters remained closed off for public access. Its renovation is premised on cultivating community whether internally for different user groups or externally with space designated for collective use. Combining different user groups maximizes the space's purpose, which generates additional value for them through the synergy of its different functions.