

Rotterdam

## Arhitectura contemporana prezentare generala

portul orasului

Port City Waalhaven Rotterdam

In the decades ahead, Rotterdam's Waalhaven will become the scene of a large-scale transformation process. With the creation of the Maasvlakte 2, the trend started by the Maasvlakte 1 – a shift westwards/seawards of port operations - is continued. As a result, land will be freed up in the coming years for new economic activity.

The Port of Rotterdam Authority is therefore gearing its efforts towards boosting interest in the area by allowing new developments, so that more potential future businesses will realise the opportunities offered by the Waalhaven. These developments could make a start by enhancing the quality of the accommodation in the area without forming an obstacle to the future transformation process.

As commissioned by the Port of Rotterdam Authority and in collaboration with 'Rotterdam Municipal Works', Ector Hoogstad Architects investigated the possibility of creating office space in the Waalhaven. The most suitable location turned out to be the Waalhaven Zuidzijde, where there would be minimum obstacles and no disruption to other commercial activity. Furthermore, this location, with its spectacular views over the water, provides an excellent location for top-grade, port-related office activities.

**The Port City program** consists of four office buildings, each with a floor area of around 8000 m<sup>2</sup> (gross) and one parking space for every 40m<sup>2</sup> of office area – a generous ratio, which makes the location even more attractive. The parking solution was a decisive decision here. Following research, the chosen solution was an area of reclaimed land, with a half-submerged multi-storey car park on top (i.e. lower than the adjoining ground level, but still higher than the probable highest water level), which will have natural ventilation. A massive wooden 'ship's deck' will cover all this, topped by a public area from where it will be possible to enjoy one of Rotterdam's most beautiful and spectacular port views. To supplement the office activity, there will also be space here for cafés, sports facilities and art. On a larger planning scale, this intervention could be seen as the first and most easterly in a series of "moored decks" along the Waalhaven Zuidzijde.

The orientation and situation of the buildings on the deck take account of the view from the buildings and transparency – from the water and street as well as the important approach from the junction to the southeast of the area. In addition, the structure of the buildings will be inspired by optimum and rational coordination with the parking level.

It will be up to various architects to work out the architectural details (like many port areas, this area is not subject to the usual building regulations). They will be guided in this by a number of basic rules, a clear idea of what the project is expected to look like and a small supervisory team, including a representative of Ector Hoogstad Architects, which will monitor the architectural quality of the plans. The joint design challenge consists of finding the right relationship between varied contrast and harmonious cohesion. On the deck, a maritime atmosphere will dominate, created by the proximity to the water and the design and materialisation of the public space. In the architecture too, there will be an attempt to use maritime references, such as ship's architecture (light, clear and industrial), emphasising the image of a vessel in moorings.

In the meantime, it turns out that there is plenty of interest among potential tenants and/or buyers for this "grandstand" in the port of Rotterdam. Further elaboration of the plans is well under way, as is the initial design phase of a number of the office buildings.

