

# VRIJBURCHT

Collective and Private Patronage – also for public space

Project: Complex of living and work units  
Location: Amsterdam, IJburg, Steigereiland  
Client: Vrijburcht Foundation (future residents)  
Plan period: 2001-2008  
Construction: 2005-2008

## Intro

Vrijburcht is a multipurpose complex of living and working units with many shared and social amenities for the residents and neighbourhood, completed through a process of Collective and Private Patronage (CPO). The project was completed within reasonable financial risks through the involvement of future residents, the city of Amsterdam, De Key housing association, and the Rabobank.

## Process

The background to the project was the invitation from the city of Amsterdam in 2000 to submit plans for 'collective self-build' projects on Steigereiland in the new district of IJburg. Vrijburcht was selected largely on the basis of the programme and was definitively allocated a site in 2002: a wonderful building site next to the water at the bicycle bridge to Diemerpark.

After an initial sketch phase, as the design started to acquire a definite shape, the Vrijburcht Foundation was established. The board of the foundation, made up of project participants, acted as client for architects, advisors and contractors during the construction process. It oversaw the planning process and the financing, and supervised the sale of homes. During the process it succeeded in securing financial support from De Key housing association for half of the homes. De Key contributed to the pre-financing and underwrote the homes not yet sold. De Key housing association is owner of particular parts of the complex, among them the care homes, the crèche and the café. The tenants / managers of these amenities were selected by the participants of Vrijburcht.

## Programme

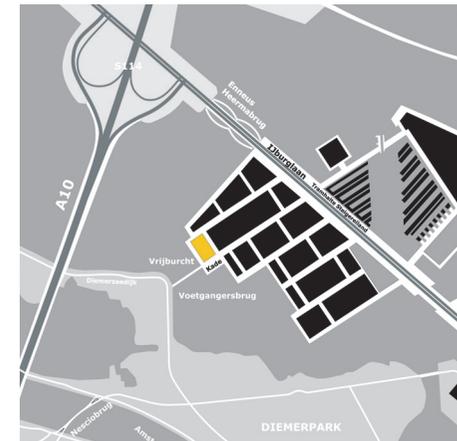
Vrijburcht involved the construction of 52 homes of an average of 100 m<sup>2</sup> in size for reasonable purchase prices. There are three types of homes: apartments, maisonnettes

and studio homes (10 of which are less expensive so-called AMH homes for households with a modest income). In addition to homes, Vrijburcht contains three commercial spaces, two guest rooms, a shared-living unit for six mentally handicapped youths including a care home, a communal hobby space, a bike shed, and a basement car park. The heart of the complex is formed by a garden courtyard with a greenhouse. Further, a number of the amenities built are of significance for the whole neighbourhood, among them a crèche for 42 children, a café with a terrace overlooking the water, a theatre, a jetty for canoes, and a landing stage for a boat club. In a few years an extensive drama programme will develop with weekly or monthly recurring events: film, theatre, dance, music and plenty of children's performances. The high-standard technical facilities are valued by professional artists, and visitors now come from as far away as Diemen and the centre of Amsterdam to enjoy the programme. Vrijburcht harmonises wonderfully well with the urban mixture that the city authorities are seeking to achieve and that are rarely found in new-build neighbourhoods.

## Urban impact

A lot of attention was devoted to the indoor-outdoor relationship. All workspaces, for example, are located on the ground floor and orientated to the public space. The fact that three sides of the building are free of cars encourages people to enjoy the outdoor spaces. They make ample use of this opportunity. The artworks on the façades of the complex and on the adjoining quay enhance the identity of the location and the neighbourhood.

As a CPO project, Vrijburcht made it possible to realise particular living wishes that clearly enhance the whole surroundings.



The Vrijburcht site on IJburg



View from the bicycle bridge

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Model



Impression during sales phase



Neighbourhood life on the quay

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*Communal meal in the greenhouse for plants and parties*



*Landing stage for boat club*



*Entrance to Vrijburcht theatre*



*Shared courtyard garden*



*Jetty for canoes*



*Comedian Peter Faber in Vrijburcht theatre*



*Quayside festival*



*Artwork on the quayside, erected by Vrijburcht Foundation*



*Terrace of Vrijburcht café*

## Chronology of Vrijburcht planning process by Vrijburcht Foundation

Spring 2000

Formation of the 'IJ-Burcht' initiative group from the Nieuwmarkt area for the joint project on Steigereiland. The initiative group is made up of Sabri Saad El-Hamus & Lisa de Rooy, Annelie Seegers & Bert Muller, and Olga & Hein de Haan.

Spring 2001

Compilation of the report 'IJ-Burcht' containing a vision and plan proposal for the building site beside the water (building parcel 104) on Steigereiland commissioned by the initiative group from CASA Architects.

The first Newsletter appears in June 2001.

The first contribution for financing the initial phase of 350 guilders (159 euros) is paid in July 2001

July 2001

'IJ-Burcht' CPO project report and vision presented to the participants and submitted to the city of Amsterdam for participation in the selection procedure set up for the allocation of the building site beside the water (Southern Neighbourhood, building parcel 104) in the Southern Neighbourhood on Steigereiland. The city of Amsterdam made a total of 7 locations on Steigereiland available for CPO projects. Some 27 projects were submitted for the Southern Neighbourhood (50 homes planned).

December 2001

In two rounds 'IJ-Burcht' is selected by the city of Amsterdam as a big project, together with three small projects, for the building site beside the water (South Neighbourhood, building parcel 104) on Steigereiland. Administrative approval by the municipality must, however, be granted.

Spring 2002

In the letter dated 21 March 2002 the development of the site beside the water (South Neighbourhood, building parcel 104) is definitively allocated to Vrijburcht, together with three other small groups. 'IJ-Burcht' and 'Living Together/ Apart (LTA)' each start to draw up a Preliminary Design for the site.

12 June 2002

The official jury report from the city of Amsterdam appears

with an overview of the 27 submitted projects and an assessment of these projects by the selection committee. 'IJ-Burcht' is described as an ambitious, big plan that introduces diversity into the programme and enhances the neighbourhood with activities through amenities and a café.

September 2002

In September 2002 CASA Architecten draws up an amended design for 'Vrijburg' with dimensioning and a planning schedule for construction and presents it to the municipality.

November 2002

The name 'IJ-Burcht' changes to 'Vrijburg'. On 2 November 2002 the sketch book and planning schedule are presented to the participants, including the types, surface areas and cost price of the homes (free of transfer costs) on the basis of the cost-related analysis by MBM group. A questionnaire is also handed out to participants with questions about living wishes, available budgets, expertise for working groups, and wishes for shared amenities. Many people think the cost price of the homes is rather expensive and drop out. New board members are elected for the Vrijburg Foundation that is being set up.

December 2002

A financial plan and administration system is drawn up by the new board of the Vrijburg Foundation. Participants pay an extra contribution of 2,400 euros to finance the cost of the first design (preliminary design phase). A big problem with liquidity becomes clear because just a few participants have signed up for the planned number of homes.

Winter 2003

The name 'Vrijburg' changes to 'Vrijburcht', because the name Vrijburg is already registered for internet use. The Vrijburcht Foundation launches a website, creates an email address, and opens a bank account. The Vrijburcht Foundation applies to a notary for its official establishment. The board of Vrijburcht conducts regular consultation with various parties involved and the municipality of Amsterdam (Southern Neighbourhood Team), releases newsletters, and regularly organises meetings and excursions. Information sessions are organised with the architect to offer participants individual advice and discuss the choice of home designs and interior layouts.

Consultation with Peter Kuenzli, acting director of De Principaal housing association, about possible support for the Vrijburcht project. On the basis of the preliminary design, MBM group (Han Moerkerken) draws up an index-linked cost estimate for the year 2006. The cost price of the homes and business spaces are based on that. Participants must pay the contribution of 2,400 euros to finance the preliminary design phase. More participants drop out.

Spring 2003

Vrijburcht preliminary design drawn up by CASA Architects (project architect Hein de Haan). Integration of Vrijburcht project in the Urban Design for Neighbourhood, Strip 1 (SDP). The first (12) contracts with options to buy homes are signed with Vrijburcht participants on 21 June 2003. Eight percent of the cost price must be paid to finance the cost of the plans. This is the so-called pre-financing sum. Jaap Draaisma is appointed advisor to examine the possibility of receiving subsidies and to arrange the procedures for the AMH buyers.

The Vrijburcht Foundation reaches agreement with the property division of Rabobank Amsterdam to provide a personal loan, at a favourable interest rate, to the participants on the basis of the option to purchase agreement. Various participants drop out because they cannot pay the pre-financing sum. The pre-financing sum is a fully risk-bearing sum: if the project does not go ahead, participants lose their initial sum invested.

Of the original participants from the year 2000, some eight individuals remain.

Autumn 2003 — Spring 2004

Preliminary design phase for Vrijburcht starts. It is decided to increase the size of the car park from 32 to 42 parking spaces. On 11 June 2003 the Vrijburcht Foundation is officially established before a notary. After a period of negotiation with the management of De Key housing association concerning back-up and support in the realisation of the programme for Vrijburcht, an agreement is signed on 27 June 2003. The support agreement consists of the following: support for 21 homes, subsidised rental and exploitation of care dwellings connected with the 'De Roef' shared-living complex (major promoter of this is Els Paalman), and the purchase and lease of crèche and café building. De Key formally granted a (passive) general board member in the

Vrijburcht Foundation. Vrijburcht Foundation commissions images of Vrijburcht, commissions design of Vrijburcht flags, compiles brochures and folders, makes posters, orders the construction of a detailed model, and devotes time and attention to informal promotion. Sale of homes takes place gradually. Vrijburcht Foundation appoints project manager Rob van Noord of De Principaal housing association to supervise the execution phase and to chair the construction meetings. The Courtyard Garden Committee becomes active in the spring of 2004 and in June 2004 it presents its design proposal to the Vrijburcht participants during a workshop.

June 2004

Vrijburcht preliminary design completed. New installation advisor appointed. It is decided to fit homes with underfloor heating and heat recovery equipment.

July 2004

Selection of contractors. It is decided to use the preliminary design with extensive description of work as the official tender documents.

August 2004

Last preliminary design documents are submitted in response to questions from the contractors.

End September 2004

Tender procedure for Vrijburcht: BKBouw is selected as building contractor for Vrijburcht. The land allocation is carried out by the municipality of Amsterdam.

Autumn 2004

Building permit is issued by the municipality in December 2004. The LTA group ceases to exist. In consultation with the municipality of Amsterdam, Vrijburcht assumes responsibility for the site and appoints CASA Architects to draw up a design for 10 homes on the site: 5 maisonettes and 5 studio dwellings. They are offered separately for tender to BKBouw.

Spring 2005

The land allocation takes place on 18 March 2005 with the definitive land lease offer from the municipality of Amsterdam. Construction then officially starts on 21 March 2005. The start is festively marked with the 'laying of the foundation stone' for Vrijburcht on 27 April 2005. The deed

of division into joint ownership is declared legitimate on 21 April 2005 by the Land Allocation Department of the municipality of Amsterdam.

In May the first sale contract agreements are signed with the notary, enabling the buyers to seek the definitive mortgages. The deeds of transfer of the land and the mortgage deeds follow about a month later so that the contractor can be paid in instalments from the building deposits.

June 2005

Building permit and water permit from the waterworks board for additional construction plan for Vrijburcht.

Autumn 2005

Tenders are invited for the additional construction plan for Vrijburcht in September 2005. It is decided to execute two artworks by artist Suzanne Willems: one on the façade of the theatre and one on the quay at Vrijburcht. FlexiMac is commissioned to design special flags for Vrijburcht. Hein de Haan takes the initiative for the landing stage for Vrijburcht.

November 2005

Election of board of Vrijburcht Homeowner Association. Repayment by Vrijburcht Foundation of pre-financing sums to participants and buyers. In the autumn of 2005 concerns about cleaning the windows provoke extensive discussions, which result in a visit in February 2006 to Boomar, the manufacturer of the window frames. Many frames are eventually adapted as a result.

March 2006

Conclusion of primary construction phase; start of secondary construction phase (finishing). It is announced that the first homes will not be completed before the summer holidays.

May 2006

Building permit application submitted for greenhouse, and granted in July 2006.

22 May 2006

'Pannembier': highest point reached. Connections to water mains and electricity network give rise to many problems, both in terms of application procedures and the actual construction.

June 2006

New crèche organisation selected after withdrawal of previous organisation. The new crèche is Kids Planet.

September 2006

First homes on Vrijburcht completed on 14 and 15 September.

October 2006

First residents move into homes in Vrijburcht. Completion of homes further delayed during the autumn of 2006.

December 2006

Crèche opens. Preliminary sale contract agreement for last home reached.

January 2007

Completion of last homes.

10 February 2007

Informal festive opening of Vrijburcht for residents. Opening of Café Vrijburcht; greenhouse, hobby space, theatre and Vrijburcht guest unit all open their doors. Unveiling of façade artwork 'Fishes' by alderman Dennis Straat.

Spring 2007

Completion of the shared amenities and outsides of the building require a lot of time and consultation between the Foundation, the Homeowner Association and the building contractor. The final deed is drawn up in March 2007, and occupants move into the last home in April 2007. Building permit for the artwork on the quay and approval by the waterworks board (DWR) are granted on March 2007 DWR.

21 April 2007

Final shared spaces are completed in April 2007. Official opening of Vrijburcht CPO project. Courtyard garden of Vrijburcht ready for use. Unveiling of 'Boat' artwork by alderman Maarten van Poelgeest. Neighbourhood party organised by Vrijburcht on the quay. The final construction meeting probably takes place on 25 April 2007.

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