Limburg Centraal

The Urban Development Strategy

Limburg Centraal
at a glance



Rijksoverheid
Provincie Limburg
Enexis
Waterschap Limburg
Weert
Heerlen
Sittard-Geleen
Maastricht
Roermond
Venlo

Limburg Centraal is an urban development strategy describing how the network of the six cities with an intercity station aims to become stronger, more attractive and more future-proof by 2040.

Limburg is pursuing this by working together on the areas around the six intercity stations in *Venlo*, *Weert*, *Roermond*, *Sittard*, *Heerlen* and *Maastricht*. Station areas are excellent places to connect housing, work, amenities and accessibility in smart ways. With the network between the urban areas and cities beyond the provincial borders as a starting point for strong living environments.



Would you like to know more?
Read the full urban development strategy via QR code on page 11 (Dutch only).



Why Limburg Centraal

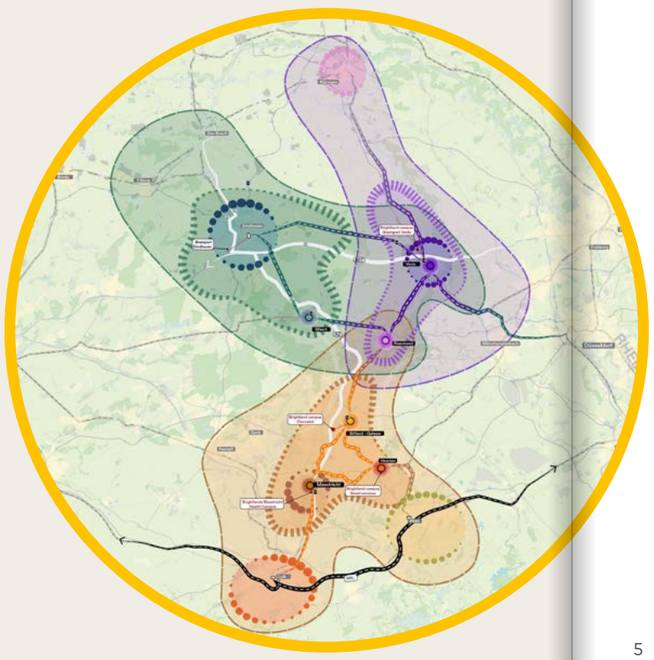
There are two reasons for developing this strategy. On the one hand, Limburg has many strengths. The province is centrally located in north-western Europe and has attractive historic city centres, valuable landscapes, knowledge institutions, campuses and economic clusters in sectors including logistics, chemicals, manufacturing and healthcare. In addition, there is still space in Limburg around stations, on the rail network and in urban areas. This means Limburg can contribute well to national challenges where that space can be put to good use. On the other hand, Limburg faces serious challenges. The working-age population is shrinking, the population is ageing, young people often move to other regions, and Limburg's cities score below the national average on several aspects of broad prosperity. Without targeted action, these trends risk becoming more pronounced.

The strategy is a joint initiative by the National government, the Province of Limburg, six municipalities (Venlo, Weert, Roermond, Sittard-Geleen, Heerlen and Maastricht), Waterschap Limburg and grid operator Enexis. It is intended as a guiding document for developing an implementation agenda.

The urban development strategy

With the Limburg Central urban development strategy, we aim to address the challenges both in each city and through cooperation among the six cities. By improving connections between the cities and concentrating development around the stations, Limburg aims to function as one integrated urban network. This will enable Limburg, as a network, to connect with cities in the southern Netherlands and the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion.

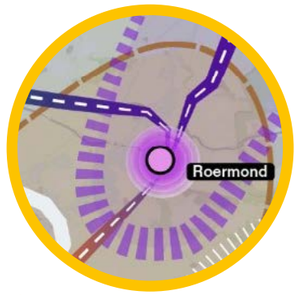
The strategy aims to contribute to a strong economy and provide good opportunities for Limburg residents. To achieve this, it focuses on the targeted development of cities. Around their railway stations, cities want to create attractive, vibrant areas where housing, amenities, education, culture and workplaces come together, complemented by inviting public spaces such as squares and streets. This should make these areas more attractive to young people, knowledge workers, families, students and other groups. The aim is for them to want to live, study and work there—and to stay.



Would you like to know more about the urban development principles?
Read the full urban development strategy via QR code on page 11 (Dutch only)

Six ambitions

The urban development strategy is based on six interconnected ambitions. The aim is to make Limburg a stronger and more attractive region, with cities where people enjoy living, working and spending time. The six station locations are central to this development, with the rail network and public transport as its backbone. At the same time, each city has room to retain its own character and role, so that the differences between the cities can be put to good use..



1
We strengthen Limburg's profile as an attractive and vibrant region for the future.



2
We leverage the Intercity locations as catalysts for a major step change, supported by strong public transport connectivity.



3
We develop urban living environments within Limburg Centraal, in conjunction with an urban economy.



4
We create scope for each of the six cities to express its own identity and diversity.



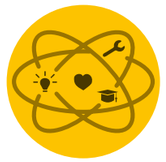
5
We recognise that the northern and southern subregions face different challenges and dynamics.



6
We leverage the strength and potential of the cross-border urban network.

Six urban development principles

The six ambitions have been translated into urban development principles. These principles guide how the six cities can develop in the coming years.



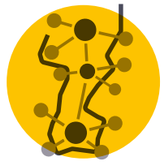
1
More dynamic and interactive economy
Limburg Central aims to develop the urban economy in conjunction with the existing economy. This includes strengthening the business climate for current and future residents, entrepreneurs and companies. The emphasis is on jobs that attract money and economic activity from both within and outside the region.

The strategy highlights that each of the six cities has its own economic profile and that they can complement one another, making their combined impact greater than the sum of their parts. Venlo is developing its profile as a logistics and agri-food hub; Weert as a complete, green regional city with strong links to Brainport Eindhoven; Roermond focuses on manufacturing and retail; Sittard-Geleen is a centre for chemicals, circularity and the energy transition; Heerlen is the city for AI, data and Medtech-Logistics; and Maastricht is positioning itself as an international knowledge and healthcare city. Station areas should therefore not become residential locations alone, but mixed urban areas that provide space for education, culture, entrepreneurship, start-ups and scale-ups. They should complement and reinforce one another by creating better physical and functional connections.



2
Limburg Centraal as multi-centred metropolis
Mobility and accessibility are the backbone of the development. The choice to focus on the intercity stations is closely linked to the aim of enabling Limburg to function more effectively as an urban network, closely connected to the rest of the southern Netherlands and the Meuse- Rhine Euroregion. The strategy introduces the idea of Limburg as a multi-centred metropolis. The rail network connects the six cities with one another and links Limburg to economic regions such as Brainport Eindhoven, Arnhem-Nijmegen, Aachen, Liège, Düsseldorf and the Ruhr area

The strategy points out that the rail network has capacity for more travelers and that services can be improved through faster, more frequent and more direct connections. At the same time, urban development requires a shift in mobility accessibility within the cities themselves. More walking, cycling, shared mobility and high-quality public transport should create space for growth around the stations. This space can then be designed differently: with less emphasis on through-traffic and more on quality of place, safety, health and active mobility.



3
Connecting across borders
The Brainport region is playing an increasingly important role. Growth in Eindhoven and the surrounding area is putting pressure on the region's housing and labour markets, while also creating opportunities for cities in Limburg. Weert, for example, is already part of Brainport's daily urban system, and Venlo, Roermond and the other Limburg Centraal cities also have opportunities to strengthen their links with the Brainport region. Limburg Centraal aims to make use of this relationship in a way that builds on Limburg's own strengths. This means Limburg does not want to serve only as an area where people from elsewhere can find housing; it also wants to strengthen employment, knowledge development and amenities within the province.

International connections also play an important role, including Limburg's position within the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion. Maastricht, Heerlen and Sittard-Geleen therefore aim to develop stronger links with Aachen, Liège and Hasselt, as well as with cross-border knowledge and labour markets.



4
Housing as a catalyst
An important principle of the strategy is that housing should act as a catalyst for other developments when it is planned in conjunction with employment, amenities and accessibility. There is capacity for 30,000–40,000 homes within the 1.5-kilometre zones around the railway stations. Housing is being used as a catalyst for broader urban renewal. New homes will help create a larger customer base for shops, restaurants and cafés, cultural facilities, healthcare and public transport.
At the same time, the homes should meet the needs of the groups Limburg needs to attract and retain: young people, first-time buyers, families, knowledge workers and international employees. This requires a varied housing supply, including different types of homes such as apartments in urban settings, step-free homes and mixed live-work concepts.



5
A welcoming urban environment
The strategy also takes a broad approach to social and community issues. Limburg Centraal is aimed both at Limburg's current residents, as well as people moving to the province from elsewhere. The aim is for both existing and new residents to benefit from better amenities, more attractive living environments, greater employment opportunities and a higher quality of life. At the same time, the strategy recognises that growth and change can be challenging. It therefore emphasises the importance of a welcoming urban environment: an open and inclusive attitude towards (new) residents, students, international employees and other target groups, combined with a focus on social cohesion, participation and integration into the local community. Retaining young people and graduates is a priority especially, as they are crucial to Limburg's future economic and demographic vitality.



6
Robust development, step by step
An important insight from the strategy is that Limburg Centraal takes an adaptive approach. Growth is seen as a necessary condition for a future-proof province, but its outcome cannot be predicted with full certainty. Factors such as migration, economic development, growth in the Brainport region and the housing market may affect demand. The strategy therefore opts for robust development, step

by step. It plans for potential developments and interventions, while recognising that not everything can or needs to happen at once. This means developments should be designed so that each step adds value in its own right, even if further growth happens later or takes a different course than expected. At the same time, it must be possible to accelerate when opportunities arise. This adaptive approach requires flexibility in planning, collaboration and design, as well as firm preconditions relating to energy, water, soil, accessibility and nitrogen emissions.

Preconditions for the principles

In addition to the development principles, a number of preconditions must be in place for the proposed developments to be implemented successfully. To address the growing risks of drought, heat and flooding, water and soil are key considerations in spatial planning decisions. Green-blue infrastructure—such as parks, stream corridors, water-retention areas and green links to the surrounding landscape—is essential to creating attractive, liveable and climate-resilient cities. Additionally, public spaces should encourage people to meet, be active and spend time outdoors, and climate adaptation must be incorporated from the beginning when designing new areas. Energy infrastructure is another precondition. The desired area developments will only be feasible if the energy system is strengthened in time. Municipalities, the province and grid operators must therefore work together at an early stage on grid capacity, district heating networks, charging infrastructure and other energy facilities. This also includes the principle of grid-aware development: energy use, peak demand, local generation and storage should all be taken into account during the design and planning stages. This will help prevent housing construction and economic development from being held back by a lack of energy infrastructure.

Development paths and interventions

The strategy is a vision and provides a framework for implementation. It therefore sets out potential interventions for Limburg Centraal as a whole and for each city individually.

The development pathways identify the interventions needed to achieve the ambitions. These involve a range of measures and adjustments.

For Limburg Centraal as a whole, the strategy identifies seven interventions:

1 Regional coordination of housing development
2 Joint planning of economic activities and amenities
3 A mobility transition in the cities
4 Improved accessibility to Brainport from Northern Limburg
5 Adressing grid congestion
6 Public spaces that connect
7 Climate-adaptive urban development

This creates a framework within which each of the six cities can pursue its own course while remaining connected to the others. The strategy emphasises that many of these interventions are not entirely new; Limburg Centraal brings them together, links them and gives them added urgency.

Urban ambitions

The strategy positions **Venlo** as the regional centre of North Limburg. In Venlo, the focus is on connecting the Middengebied (Fontys and VieCuri), Venlo station, the city centre, Blerick station and Brightlands Campus Greenport to form a single urban axis. It also aims to strengthen the city's economic profile, creating opportunities for innovation in logistics, agrifood and manufacturing, and fostering links with Brainport.

For **Weert**, the focus is on developing the city as a complete regional centre, with a good balance between housing, employment, amenities, accessibility and green space. The Spoorzone offers opportunities to develop these functions in an integrated way and to strengthen its role as a public transport hub.

In **Roermond**, the initial focus is on the Spoorzone Zuid area development, followed by other area developments. Roermond also aims to reduce the barrier effect of railway lines and roads and to improve connections between the city, the station and economic functions. The city wants to make the most of its central position in Limburg while also strengthening its links with the Maasplassen lake district, its retail sector and manufacturing.

In **Sittard-Geleen**, the ambitions centre on renewing the station area as a link between the historic city centre and the economic strength of Chemelot and VDL Born. Key measures include transforming vacant properties, adding more green spaces, improving east–west connections and creating a low-traffic station area.

Heerlen is focused on strengthening its city centre as the vibrant heart of Parkstad, with a greater role for education, culture, start-ups, scale-ups and knowledge-intensive sectors such as data, AI and medtech. The city is aiming for a population of 100,000, with the goal of improving the quality and appeal of the existing urban area, while making the most of its position in the cross-border region around Aachen.

Finally, **Maastricht** is building on its strong position as an international knowledge and healthcare city. Development of the Spoorzone will focus on campus development, new employment areas, better connections between the station, city centre, campuses and the banks of the Meuse, and retaining talent that too often leaves after completing its studies.

Not a blueprint, but a shared direction
The strategy provides a policy and spatial framework. The next step is to develop an urbanisation agenda. In it, the parties involved will translate the strategy into concrete agreements, a timetable and measures for implementation. The urban economy will also be explored further: what economic opportunities and challenges do the cities face, and what is needed to address them? Both strands of work will consider whether proposed measures are feasible and desirable, and at what level they would best be taken forward. The Urbanisation Strategy is therefore not an end point, but an intermediate step towards more concrete cooperation between central government, the Province, municipalities, the Water Authority, Enexis and other partners.

From strategy to agenda

The strategy provides a policy and spatial framework. The next step is to develop an urbanisation agenda. In it, the parties involved will translate the strategy into concrete agreements, a timetable and measures for implementation. The urban economy will also be explored further: what economic opportunities and challenges do the cities face, and what is needed to address them? Both strands of work will consider whether proposed measures are feasible and desirable, and at what level they would best be taken forward. The Urbanisation Strategy is therefore not an end point, but an intermediate step towards more concrete cooperation between central government, the Province, municipalities, the Water Authority, Enexis and other partners.

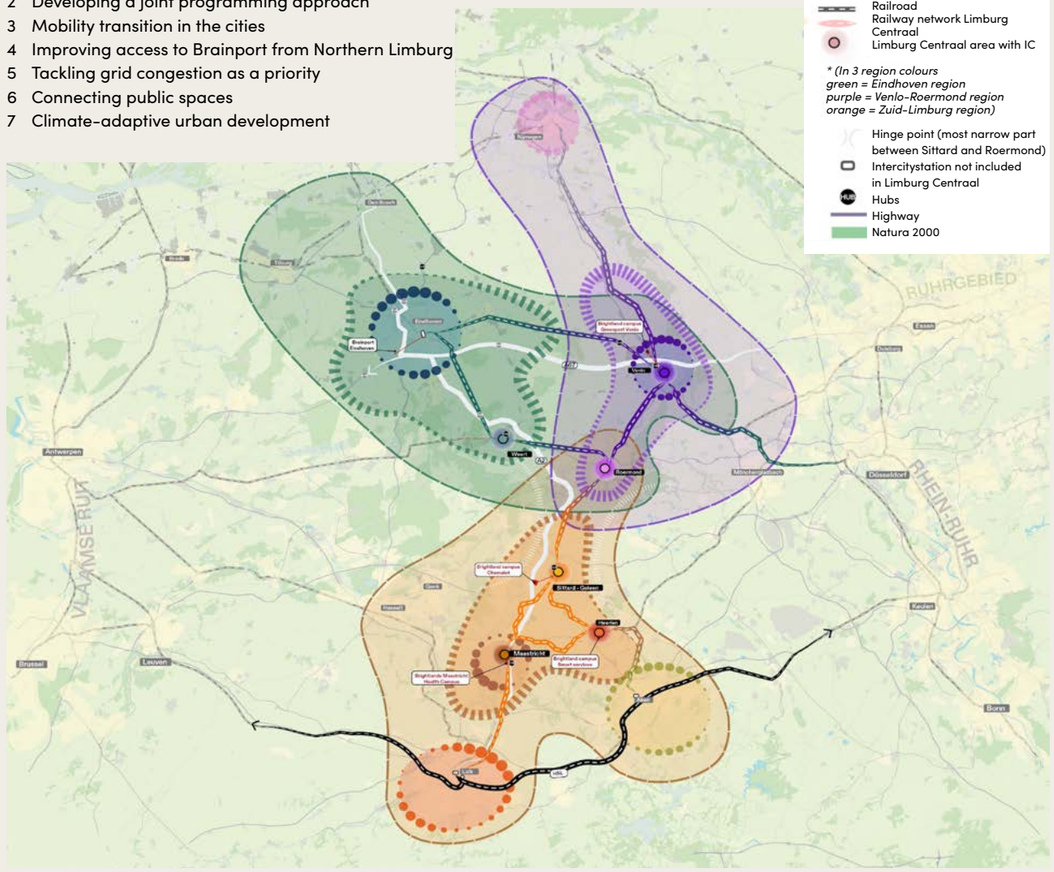
Actively shaping Limburg's future

With the Limburg Centraal Urbanisation Strategy, Limburg is showing that it does not intend to wait for the future, but wants to shape it actively. The Province aims to make the most of its favourable location, existing economic clusters, knowledge institutions and intercity stations to develop a cohesive urban network. The strategy does not focus on isolated housing projects, but takes a broad approach to urbanisation. This approach should contribute to greater economic dynamism, more attractive residential environments, improved accessibility, stronger amenities and broad prosperity in Limburg. The strategy's strength lies in combining cooperation, spatial concentration around stations and attention to each city's individual identity. The guiding principle is that growth is valuable only if it contributes to the social, economic and environmental resilience of Limburg as a whole.

Key interventions Urban Development Strategy

System-wide key interventions

1 Regional coordination of housing development
2 Developing a joint programming approach
3 Mobility transition in the cities
4 Improving access to Brainport from Northern Limburg
5 Tackling grid congestion as a priority
6 Connecting public spaces
7 Climate-adaptive urban development



Weert

1 Green space and quality of life as distinctive assets
2 Strengthening Weert's economy as a regional centre
3 Strengthening urban amenities and mixed-use development
4 Weert Station as a major regional public transport hub
5 Cooperation agenda between Weert and the Eindhoven Metropolitan Region (MRE)

Roermond

1 Redevelopment of the Spoorzone Zuid
2 Relocation of compatible functions
3 Mobility approach in conjunction with Limburg Centraal
4 Exploring options for modifying the railway yard
5 Improving the east–west connection

Maastricht

1 Investing in campus-area development and three innovation spaces
2 Space for working in the city
3 Optimisation of the railway yard
4 Walking and cycling routes connecting the railway zone with the city
5 Creating places to meet in public spaces

Venlo

1 Creating physical space for a high-density urban station area
2 Developing an economic programme for the urban area
3 Continuing to develop a vibrant city centre
4 a. Removing the east–west barrier
b. Removing the north–south barrier
5 System requirements: accessibility, energy and flood protection

Sittard-Geleen

1 Steenwegkwartier transformation area
2 Stationspark West: outposts and start-ups
3 Good east–west connection
4 Car-free and sustainable Sittard Central
5 Spoorpark as a response to heat stress and waterlogging

Heerlen

1 Implementation programme for the transformation of the city centre
2 Stadspark Oranje Nassau area development
3 Establishing Maastricht University and RWTH in the city centre
4 Supporting start-ups and scale-ups
5 North–south connections across and beneath the railway line

Partners

Rijksoverheid, Provincie Limburg, Enexis, Waterschap Limburg, Gemeente Weert, Gemeente Heerlen, Gemeente Sittard-Geleen, Gemeente Maastricht Gemeente Roermond , Gemeente Venlo

Would you like to know more about the background or the different cities?
Scan the QR-code:

Creating and drafting of strategy

STUDIO —— BEREIKBAAR


Limburg
Centraal


Rijksoverheid


ENEXIS
NETBEHEER


GEMEENTE
WEERT


Gemeente
Sittard-Geleen


gemeente Roermond


provincie
Limburg


waterschap
limburg


Gemeente Heerlen


Gemeente Maastricht


venlo