

Teaming-up helps propel innovative and sustainable living in urban areas

Marrit Laning, recently appointed to Redevco's Board as Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer, explains how the company is pushing ahead with its goal to create a new view on what sustainable mixed-use urban areas across Europe should look like, as it expands its presence in the residential sector.



Marrit Laning
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Redevco made huge strides to diversify its portfolio in the final months of 2021 through the acquisition of three residential projects that tick all the boxes when it comes to meeting our goals to help cities become more sustainable and liveable places. Just before Christmas we announced the purchase of Templars Square, a 1960s local shopping centre in Oxford in the UK, with a view to transforming it into a landmark residential-led mixed scheme over the next decade. That deal, which has pre-existing planning consent encompassing 226 residential units, followed hard on the heels of two other ground-breaking transactions for us in the Netherlands.

With these three transactions and the acquisition in 2020 of Dieterich Karree in Dusseldorf - a mixed-use property with 280 residential units - we are now nearly halfway towards creating a €500 million fund targeting the residential sector. We are keen to accelerate investments in the living sector with a focus, for now, on the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain, as we continue our search for assets and other properties that offer redevelopment opportunities to create vibrant mixed-use residential destinations.

For example, we selected Templars Square, an outdated but well-loved mall just outside Oxford's city centre, with a view to upgrading it and adding mid-market housing for a broad group of people wanting to live in this thriving economic hub around 100 kms to the northwest of London. By adding new elements such as residential, we aim to improve the shopping centre's overall green credentials while creating an attractive living area.

The addition of apartments benefits retailers through directly increasing footfall, while retail adds to the overall liveability of an area for residents with convenience stores in close proximity as well as other services. Our vision for the centre includes the provision of leisure opportunities with an attractive combination of retailers and catering establishments, and additional facilities like a gym, medical services and a community centre. We will consult and work with local residents and businesses throughout the process of defining our plans for this redevelopment that really epitomise how we can facilitate the transformation of cities through systemic change and create a healthy place for people and transform the environment.

The 'Hollandse Meesters', a residential development that we acquired from developer AM, is a perfect example of how to replace an existing, obsolete building with a new one that meets an urgent need for homes in this area. Our partner AM will build the residential complex at an old office location in Amstelveen, part of Greater Amsterdam, which will provide 270 high-quality homes.

The property will incorporate highly sustainable solutions, including heating and cooling storage technology, solar panels and water buffering on the roofs, to regulate the indoor climate. The design is aimed at maximising natural light and air quality to promote a healthy environment and lifestyle. Residents will also have access to a shared mobility hub offering e-bikes, scooters and electric cars and can make use of a coffee bar, co-working spaces and a concierge service. We aim to have the building WELL certified in line with our efforts to create places that are conducive to people's health and well-being. WELL certification is still quite uncommon in residential buildings.

I am also really enthusiastic about our investment in Nieuw Delft which is part of a 'newfield' project in the city of Delft near The Hague, where land is carved out of one of the most densely populated and built-up areas in the country. Nieuw

Delft is a sustainable neighbourhood being built on a site above a new tunnel constructed for an underground high-speed railway line. The 'Porseleinen Toren' residential project, acquired from developer Synchroon, will add a 40-metre-high energy-efficient complex as the centrepiece of this new district.

The Porseleinen Toren will use solar panels - like all the other homes being built in this new district - and an alternative energy source supplied by a highly innovative fresh-air heat-exchange installation. Maximum insulation will add to a high level of energy-efficiency and, all in all, this development will contribute to our ambition to create a carbon-neutral portfolio by 2040.

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We are keen to team up with developers who specialise in creating attractive and sustainable concepts as well as with other like-minded partners to explore new opportunities and learn from each other. Preferably, we'd like to team up from the start of the development process so we can work together on design, infrastructure and sustainable innovation and on incorporating new construction materials such as cross-laminated timber (CLT).

All the countries we are targeting are struggling with huge housing shortages in many of their cities and as an investment manager we want to form alliances with local governments to drive the transformation needed to provide high-quality accommodation in a liveable environment.

Another way in which we are broadening our knowledge is by working closely with the Laudes Foundation, part of the Brenninkmeijer family enterprise that also owns Redevco and which recently launched 'Built by Nature'.

This new network of industry and climate leaders and innovators aims to support the building sector's pioneering developers, designers, investors, asset owners and insurers, alongside policymakers and city leaders, in the journey to fully decarbonise the built environment and to work in unison with nature to sharply reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere.

Luckily, the pace of innovation is picking up and I am really excited to see how the residential product offering is changing in terms of quality and sustainability credentials.

Buildings easily last for many generations but the real challenge is to create places that are also able to stand the test of time and offer the comfort of use and quality that coming generations will be looking for. We aim to improve the quality of present and future lives by creating properties that have a positive impact on the surrounding area as well as the well-being of its occupiers. Dense urban areas often lack green spaces and by utilising roofs better and creating greener balconies and terraces for instance, the liveability of homes and neighbourhoods can be significantly improved. New construction methods and materials that reduce energy usage and generate it on-site will contribute to climate neutrality as well as the use of environmentally-friendly materials.

In addition, a lot can be done to stimulate biodiversity, combat climbing temperatures and preserve water resources. Adding mobility hubs and shared amenities like rooftop terraces and flexible workspaces can also make a big difference and help create real estate that can stand the test of time. I really feel that a new view is emerging on what sustainable and liveable cities should look like and in my new role as Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer at Redevco I feel privileged to be an instrumental part of that process.

