

VER
BETER
BREDĀ

THE BREDA PACT

PART 1



1. BACKGROUND

Two recent studies reveal a growing dichotomy in Breda. Its affluent residents are doing even better and the residents who are less well-off are facing ever growing problems. Having noted that, the municipality of Breda asked Justin Goetzee to set the discussion about the growing dichotomy in the city in motion. Under the name 'Initiatiefgroep Verbeter Breda' (**Initiative Group Improve Breda**) more than 300 residents and over 90 organisations in the city were interviewed in the spring. A few key questions were: Do you recognise the growing dichotomy from the studies? Is it a problem and does it bother you? Are you prepared to come into action with the rest of the city? This **Breda Pact Part 1** describes the outcome of all these interviews and is a major first step towards Breda's approach to push back the growing dichotomy in the next 15 to 20 years. An approach that unites us around a major challenge: Samen op weg naar een Verbeterd Breda! (**Together towards an improved Breda!**) Where people are connected with each other, have a good life and live together. Where everyone feels safe. And where the neighbourhood you live in does not determine the opportunities that come your way.

2. THERE IS A GROWING DICHOTOMY IN BREDA

The difference between Breda's residents with good opportunities and possibilities and those who do not have these or have them to a much lesser extent, is increasing constantly. And these latter residents also increasingly live in the same neighbourhoods. Because of that, their conditions are deteriorating constantly and that also applies to their neighbourhoods. The neighbourhood you grow up and live in unfortunately also proves to determine the opportunities you get in life. This inequality of opportunity increases the dichotomy. Since dichotomy is a somewhat dormant condition, it is sometimes tempting to look the other way. That cannot happen any longer, was the general conclusion drawn from the interviews. Everyone we talked to recognises the growing dichotomy and considers this to be an obvious problem. Dichotomy is seen as the symptom of unequal opportunities and a 'sick' system. Everyone stated that they would be willing to help do something about it.



3. VULNERABLE? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

The current vulnerable neighbourhoods can be pointed out on the street map of Breda (see www.verbeterbreda.nl). That is a good thing, for if we are afraid to identify that problem, nothing will change. But what we want to avoid is a negative stamp being put on people or neighbourhoods. For many residents are proud of their neighbourhoods and much is going well! At the same time we want to make clear what it is all about: that extra and focussed attention is given where it is needed. We are therefore replacing the term 'vulnerable neighbourhoods' by 'priority neighbourhoods'.

4. HOW THINGS WENT WRONG

The dichotomy is growing. And too often, the focus is on the system, not the resident. The cooperation between organisations is not good enough, and the problem is not dealt coherently and over a multi-year period. The bottom line is that the dichotomy is increasing because of the following factors:

- more often than not one does not really listen;
- the emphasis is too much on the system, on rules, laws, and so on, and not enough on people;
- the tailored approach towards people who need such an approach is insufficient;
- the approach by organisations is not effective enough;
- there is too little cooperation between organisations;
- sometimes more time is needed to support people;
- the distribution of houses and facilities across town is not good.

5. WHAT NEVER MUST HAPPEN

What we definitely do not want, is that the differences between neighbourhoods in Breda grow even larger. We do not want a divided city in which residents from priority neighbourhoods are increasingly left to their own devices. We do not want people to lose sight of each other because their worries are overwhelming, so they are unable to support others to a greater degree. We do not want neighbourhoods to become unlivable and unsafe, because people are afraid to approach each other any longer, and feel that they have to fight for their existence. They will then start looking for their own ways out, possibly contemplating a career in crime as a last resort. In that case, the safety of the neighbourhood safety is threatened and the quality of life declines. Nor do we want the government to approach residents particularly because of a feeling of mistrust. Vigilance is called for: these types of developments slumber for years, and have a devastating force. Finally, we do not want talents to be left unused. That must not happen, nor is it something that Breda can afford. For there is much work to be done and there are many opportunities ahead.



6. TOWARDS A CONNECTED CITY

When we dream of a 'Verbeterd Breda' we see a connected city, for all residents. Something beautiful will have taken place in the neighbourhoods that we still worry about right now. People want to live there because of its diverse and affordable housing supply. People want to work there because of its vibrant economic activity. People enjoy themselves because there is so much to do. And the neighbourhood feels safe. All neighbourhoods in Breda will have their own identity and a unique appearance to be proud of. All neighbourhoods together will shine in the wonderful mosaic that Breda is. In this future, it will also not matter in which neighbourhood you live when it comes to your chances of a healthy and happy life. Patterns in which worries were passed on from generation to generation will be gone. And if you ever need support, for example from the municipality, a housing association or another authority, you will feel heard. You will really be listened to. And we will meet each other. Differences in culture, language and income no longer matter.

7. THE PRINCIPLES OF VERBETER BREDA

Verbeter Breda has four always guiding principles.

- I. **Together with and for residents:** we make and implement plans together with residents.
- II. **Prevention:** we are there in time, when problems are still small, and we have an eye for the human dimension.
- III. **Focussed on neighbourhoods, districts and the city as a whole:** some neighbourhoods or districts deserve extra attention and sometimes solutions can be found elsewhere in the city.
- IV. **Multi-year approach:** we will have to persevere and stay the course. We can learn and improve things as we go along, but the ambition will always remain.



8. WHERE ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES?

There are a number of fields where we have to get going to counter the growing dichotomy:

- I. **It all begins with social and economic security:** Being able to develop yourself as a human being and to be there for others requires social and economic security.
- II. **Invest in young people:** there is an abundance of talent and plans among the youngsters in the priority neighbourhoods. And yet, they are often not able to develop their talents properly.
- III. **People should have something to do in neighbourhoods:** youngsters will then be able to be actively busy, adults can meet each other, and the perception of neighbourhoods will become much more positive.
- IV. **Steer towards mixed groups of residents:** at present the housing supply is often too one-sided. The current situation automatically leads to a concentration of residents with fewer opportunities.
- V. **Make it easier for people to meet:** then we can learn to understand and strengthen each other.
- VI. **Make plans for the longer term:** feed those plans by providing room for experiments.



9. WHAT WE PROMISE

The Breda Pact Part 1 definitively marks the recognition of the rising dichotomy in Breda and that the urgency to come into action is widely felt. Residents and organisations acknowledge and promise that:

- there is a growing dichotomy in Breda, caused by inequality of opportunity;
- this is not only bad for people with fewer opportunities, but bad for the city as a whole as well;
- everyone in Breda, residents and organisations, can contribute towards a solution;
- together we will conceive an approach to take on this challenge;
- it will be an approach that requires time and patience, which is why we agree to continue this approach over a long period, at least 15 to 20 years.

10. TOWARDS THE BREDA PACT PART 2

The detailing of the approach to counter the growing dichotomy, the choices for multiple years and the decisions on how to design the control of this approach will be finalised by the end of 2021. That is the content of the Breda Pact Part 2. From 2022 onwards we will work with implementation plans that constantly look a few years ahead.