

## City-to-City Exchange: Learning from peers

### Introduction

The municipality of Emmen is situated in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands, within the Province of Drenthe. Home to nearly 110,000 residents, Emmen consists of a vibrant city center surrounded by a mix of smaller towns and rural communities. Emmen is known for its strong industrial sector, green landscapes, and the renowned Wildlands Zoo. Emmen has undergone significant transformations over the years. One of the city's most unique new redevelopment projects is the Rensenpark, located in the heart of city center Emmen on the site of the former zoo.

[Rensenpark](#) offers a unique opportunity to create something unparalleled in the region; a vibrant and innovative city park that blends nature, culture, creativity, and history. To fully realize its potential, we seek international inspiration and collaboration with peer cities that have successfully tackled similar challenges.

### What is the Rensenpark all about?

[Rensenpark](#) is not only a green oasis in the heart of Emmen but also a place rich in history. Until 2016, it was home to the city's zoo, with giraffes, rhinos, butterflies, tropical birds, elephants, and many other animals from around the world.

When the animals moved to Wildlands, the municipality chose to repurpose the former zoo into a dynamic city park where nature, creativity, and community come together.

#### Key challenges & questions for the City-to-City exchange

- How do we establish a dynamic and diverse cultural hub?
- How can we connect local education and businesses to support Rensenpark's creative ambitions?
- What best practices from other cities can help us position Rensenpark as a top destination?
- How can we design the park to invite movement and connection?
- How do we balance historical preservation with sustainable innovation?
- How can Rensenpark's historic buildings such as the underground elephant stable be creatively repurposed for cultural or community use?
- How can we implement eco-friendly, innovative solutions in public space redevelopment?



### What are we looking for?

We are actively looking for (two) peer cities that can support us in achieving the strategic goals of Rensenpark and help address the related challenges we face.

Rensenpark is undergoing a unique transformation, and through a City-to-City Exchange, we seek to learn from cities that have experience in similar urban regeneration efforts. Our goal is to connect with partners who:

- Have proven experience in urban transformation, cultural development, and sustainability.

- Are open to knowledge exchange and long-term collaboration.
- Can share practical, real-life solutions that address challenges similar to those we face in Emmen.

We are focused on the following strategic goals for Rensenpark:

1. Transform Rensenpark into a vibrant city park: A dynamic destination that offers diverse activities for a wide audience.
2. Promote a healthy living environment: Designing spaces that encourage physical activity, social connection, and relaxation.
3. Boost creativity and innovation: Providing room and resources for residents, artists, and entrepreneurs to thrive.
4. Enhance sustainability and climate adaptation: Developing resilient, green, and future-proof public spaces and buildings.

We are interested in partnering with cities that have successfully repurposed spaces into inclusive, creative, and climate-resilient urban environments.

**Find more information about this matchmaking opportunity on the following [link](#).**

 [www.Rensenpark.nl](http://www.Rensenpark.nl)

## Vision and ambitions for Rensenpark

Rensenpark is evolving into a **creative hub in the heart of Emmen**; a place for playing, exercising, learning, discovering, enjoying, and socializing.

### Key ambitions

#### **Green, public park for everyone: A place to relax, meet others, and enjoy nature.**

- A green oasis with a diverse range of plants and (monumental) trees.
- Freely accessible to the public, except for select ticketed events.
- Designed for all residents, tourists, and visitors of all ages.

#### **Hub for art, culture, education, and innovation: A space where creativity thrives through artistic and cultural initiatives.**

- Supports experimentation and flexible ways of working.
- Needs well-maintained indoor and outdoor spaces for activities.

#### **Place for play, movement, sports, and recreation: Encouraging active lifestyles through diverse facilities.**

- Expanding play areas, exercise spaces, and seating areas.
- Offering a mix of indoor and outdoor activities

#### **Park with high-quality events: A cultural hotspot for music, theater, markets, and exhibitions.**

- Improving event infrastructure to support diverse activities.
- Events should enhance the park's overall identity.
- The park requires green recovery time after major events

#### **Place with history and memories: Preserving and celebrating its past as a zoo.**

- Many visitors seek traces of the past within the park.
- Retaining historical elements while allowing room for innovation.

#### **Center for meaningful entrepreneurship: Supporting social initiatives that benefit the park and the community.**

- A perfect location for impact-driven businesses and learning opportunities.

#### **Park with dining and hospitality options: Food and beverage services enhance the park's attractiveness.**

- Follows Emmen Center's hospitality policy.
- Accommodation is not allowed, except for *artist-in-residence* programs

#### **Green zone for climate resilience: Supporting a sustainable urban environment.**

- Reducing flood risks, heat stress, and drought through green infrastructure.
- Contributing to the overall greening of Emmen's city center.

#### **Park managed by the municipality for all: The municipal board sets the park's vision and standards.**

- Decisions are made internally, without external advisory bodies.

#### **Park that deserves investment: Long-term success requires financial support.**

- Investments in public space, art, culture, education & innovation, events, maintenance, safety, sustainability, tourism, and real estate.

## Strategic Goals for Rensenpark

1. **Transform Rensenpark into a vibrant city park:** A destination where there is always something to do for a diverse audience.
2. **Promote a healthy living environment:** Encouraging physical activity, relaxation, and social interaction.
3. **Boost creativity and innovation:** Providing space and opportunities for residents, artists, and entrepreneurs.
4. **Enhance sustainability and climate adaptation:** Improving public spaces and buildings to be more resilient and future-proof.



Overview of the Rensenpark location

## Key challenges & questions for the City-to-City exchange

To accelerate the development of Rensenpark, we seek inspiration from peer cities that have faced and overcome similar challenges. Our key questions include:

### Creating a creative hub

- How do we establish a dynamic and diverse cultural hub?
- What successful examples exist in other cities? (*Strategic Goal 1*)

### Boosting creativity & innovation

- How can we connect local education and businesses to support Rensenpark's creative ambitions?
- How have other cities successfully fostered creativity, education, and businesses in a single location? (*Strategic Goal 3*)

### Developing Rensenpark into a tourist attraction

- What best practices from other cities can help us position Rensenpark as a top destination? (*Strategic Goal 1*)

### Encouraging a healthy lifestyle & social interaction

- How can we design the park to invite movement and connection? (*Strategic Goal 2*)

### Preserving heritage while innovating

- How do we balance historical preservation with sustainable innovation?
- How have other cities repurposed old buildings effectively? (*Strategic Goal 4*)

### Maximizing the potential of unique buildings

- Rensenpark features historic buildings like the large greenhouse, the underground elephant stable, and the Biochron.
- How can these buildings be repurposed for new cultural, creative, or community-driven initiatives? (*Strategic Goals 1 & 4*)

### Sustainable and climate-resilient urban design

- How can we implement eco-friendly, innovative solutions in public space redevelopment?
- What are the best international examples of green urban design? (*Strategic Goal 4*)

## Call for collaboration.

We are actively looking for two peer cities that:

- ✓ Have experience in urban transformation, cultural development, and sustainability.
- ✓ Are open to knowledge exchange and collaboration.
- ✓ Can share real-life solutions for Rensenpark's challenges.

Would your city be interested in joining this City-to-City Exchange? **Let's work together** to shape the future of Rensenpark!

📧 Contact us at:

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**Gemeente  
Emmen**