

DO SOMETHING NEW

Gouda 2040



Volt goes for Gouda

We believe that local choices can make a world of difference. In a time of major global challenges, Volt opts for cooperation, innovation and decisiveness in our community. We increase the resilience of Gouda society by working together: get to know each other, do things together, care for each other.

Gouda is more than a city: it is a community with potential. A city where differences come together and where we build connections and progress together. By learning from successful examples in Europe, we bring a fresh perspective on what is possible here. We are moving towards a city where everyone counts and participates. From young to old, from entrepreneur to volunteer, regardless of background or education.

We invest in people. Young people are given space, opportunities and prospects through good education, culture and alternative forms of housing. Culture is the driving force of society as a whole. Healthcare has to be made more accessible with a focus on prevention. We provide affordable housing, smart solutions for vacant properties and reuse existing buildings.

We are preparing Gouda for the future. With a car-free city centre, cleaner air and more space for people to meet. With safe, green neighbourhoods where children can play and where everyone feels at home. Mobility is becoming smarter and more sustainable so that everyone can get around quickly, comfortably and safely.

Gouda is becoming a smarter city. With a helpful government that is understandable, accessible and digitally savvy. A city where circular businesses and innovative entrepreneurs are given the space to grow. Our industries and shops are supported in their transition to a sustainable economy.

Volt, as the only European party, believes in joining forces: locally, regionally and Europeanly. We believe in solidarity and look beyond borders. By working together with our neighbouring municipalities, other cities within and outside the Netherlands, we can tackle the major challenges. Climate change, energy transition, land subsidence, affordable healthcare and sustainable food systems.

Our ambition is clear: by 2040, Gouda will be fossil-free, socially strong, economically resilient and internationally and regionally connected.

Are you willing to try something new for Gouda?

Table of contents

Volt goes for Gouda	2
Our political compass	4
1. Volt looks beyond the city walls	5
International is also local	5
Europe as a solution	7
Strengthening cooperation in Midden-Holland	8
The New Gouda economy: circular and local	10
2. Together, we build the city	13
Citizen participation	13
Culture and sport	15
Housing: there is a house in Gouda	16
Safety for everyone in all neighbourhoods	19
3. Volt makes room for your future	22
Green, healthy and liveable Gouda	22
Education that allows every talent to grow.	24
Gouda, city of vocational education: creators of the future	24
Your city, your future	25
Healthcare: simple, accessible, close by and humane	26
4. A smart city that connects us	27
Smart and accessible government	27
The new mobility	30
Sustainable and affordable energy for the future	34
Closing remarks	36

Our political compass

We want a new way of doing politics. Not stuck in plans that quickly become outdated, but ready for the challenges of tomorrow. In a world full of uncertainty, we choose agility and decisiveness. Time and again, we act based on our core values: future-oriented, innovative, sustainable and supportive.

Politics is about making choices, and Volt Gouda makes those choices by first listening, understanding and then weighing up interests. In doing so, Volt Gouda applies the following eight principles:

FUTURE-ORIENTED - Volt is there for future generations.

Solutions that offer robust long-term benefits are preferred over quick fixes with only short-term benefits.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES - Volt is committed to greater equality.

Solutions with positive effects for the less privileged residents of Gouda are preferred over solutions that exclusively serve the upper class.

INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS - Volt strives for real solutions.

Tackling problems in a coherent manner is more important than one-dimensional solutions. In this way, we prevent solutions elsewhere from leading to new problems.

PEOPLE AND NATURE IN BALANCE - Volt is there for people and nature.

We do not see any contradiction between nature and the economy. However, for us, the economy must always remain within the limits of nature; this is non-negotiable.

GRASSROOTS - Volt believes in the power of citizens.

Initiatives conceived and set up by society are certainly not inferior to initiatives conceived purely by the local authority.

INCLUSIVE - Volt connects people.

We believe it is important to build bridges between different groups.

PREVENTION - Volt focuses on prevention

Preventing crises saves suffering and money. Volt prefers prevention over cure.

That is what you can count on when you vote for Volt.

1. Volt looks beyond the city walls

Europe Central Holland Migration Tourism Energy

Our answer to the urgent issues facing Gouda is cooperation. At every level: between citizens, at neighbourhood level and in the city, regionally, nationally and Europeanly. We are stronger together. As a municipality, we don't have to reinvent the wheel. It is essential that we draw inspiration from the best practices of other Dutch and European cities.

- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** Send a welcome pack to every new resident, with a focus on immigrants.
- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** Use Europe as a solution to the major challenges that Gouda cannot solve on its own.
- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** A circular and emission-free industry by 2040.

International is also local

All residents belong to our community

More than a quarter of Gouda's residents have a migrant background, and 5% are from the EU¹. This reflects the international character of our city, which we see as a great added value and an opportunity for our city. Volt wants to give these Gouda residents more space in local politics and social activities, to celebrate cultural diversity and use it effectively. We can learn a lot from each other when we meet. Our residents can make a valuable contribution if they look at our common challenges from a different perspective. After all, all residents belong to the Gouda community!

We want to improve this in concrete terms by:

1. Sending a welcome pack to every new resident. This pack will also pay special attention to immigrants. It will contain basic information about language lessons, the administrative system, integration programmes, rights and obligations, and a list of all kinds of social organisations in Gouda.
2. Establishing a consultative advisory council of international residents living in Gouda. This council will meet twice a year and provide solicited and unsolicited advice to the municipal council on integration, but also by taking an original look at the challenges facing our city.
3. Make crucial information available in English. At the same time, we will give the Taalhuis the financial stability it needs to continue its good work.

Migration and integration

Volt recognises the importance of migrants and expats for Gouda and the need to take in asylum seekers. Gouda wants to be a leader in the Netherlands when it comes to integration programmes and cooperation with refugee and integration organisations. Integration will

¹ CBS 2024

proceed more quickly if migrants receive language lessons and start working as soon as possible. This gives them more control over their own lives, strengthens their self-esteem and contributes to the Dutch economy. Volt believes that this is the right basis for smooth integration.

We are extending the long-term funding of the Gouda Plus programme: an integration process focused on language and (voluntary) work.

In the long term, Gouda must provide sufficient places to house all asylum seekers in a humane manner. We also want to use temporary housing solutions where status holders, temporary migrant workers and expats can live together on a temporary basis. Here we are building on previous creative Gouda initiatives such as Winterdijk or Hotelboot.

We encourage events that stimulate and support the diversity of our city, in line with the World Food & Film festival, at city and neighbourhood level.

(Inter)national tourism: quality over quantity

Tourism contributes to our beautiful, hospitable and lively city. We see tourism as an opportunity, but we are also aware of its negative aspects. One million visitors come to Gouda every year², which has a major impact on a city with a population of just 75,000. Gouda is now investing in tourism, but is still not showing enough what it brings to the people of Gouda.

It is important that residents consciously experience and appreciate the added value of tourism. Volt therefore wants to investigate the consequences of tourism for the residents of Gouda. These can consist of three dimensions: economic, socio-cultural, living environment (improvement of local facilities, cultural heritage).

In addition, efforts can be made to promote activities that are closer to the hearts of the people of Gouda, such as festival tourism or gastronomic tourism. Our market is ideal for this and gives the local population an excellent opportunity to participate.

To improve tourism while maintaining quality of life, we are focusing on quality tourism: tourism must contribute to the liveliness of the city and provide support for high-quality restaurants, museums and theatres.

These are our proposals:

- Sustainable and conscious tourism:
 - Strict enforcement of nuisance (e.g. noise, illegal holiday rentals)
 - Booking with time slots at busy attractions
 - Central Holland packages that allow tourists to combine Gouda with the region, thereby reducing pressure on the city centre. This ties in with the 'Region of Surprises' concept developed by Leiden and the surrounding region.
- It's about more than cheese. The cheese market needs renewal; we are going to start trading on the market again. We will put local and regional producers in the

² <https://www.gouda.nl/actueel/gouds-toerisme-groeit-op-alle-fronten/>

spotlight. This will strengthen the local economy and promote pride and involvement within the community.

Europe as a solution

European solutions for Gouda

Strong European cooperation is essential for a sustainable future for Gouda. We see the European Union (EU) as a practical solution to the major local challenges that Gouda cannot solve on its own: land subsidence, sustainable agriculture on peat soil, climate adaptation and innovative housing construction. **We want to attract more European projects, funding and knowledge and draw inspiration from best practices in other countries.**

It is characteristic that European cooperation is not mentioned in Gouda's framework memorandum. **With Volt, Europe will be given a place in the local debate and in the budget. We will invest more in European cooperation and get more capacity and more money in return.**

Volt wants to bring the EU closer to its citizens and promote cooperation between municipalities in Europe. By working together with other European municipalities, we can benefit from a broad network and learn from each other's experiences. This makes our municipality smarter in tackling major problems.

Gouda can make even more and better use of existing European partnerships, for example through Interreg Europe, a European subsidy scheme for projects that help municipalities develop better policies and apply better solutions. Think of projects such as Carbon Connects (agriculture), LIFE-IP NAS (climate adaptation) and Water-Resilient Cities.

- **Gouda must actively utilise European funds and collaborative projects to develop innovative solutions for soft soil, water management and climate adaptation.**
- **We are doing this together with the Midden-Holland region and the new advisory council of international residents.**

This works both ways: innovation and policy from the European institutions to us, but also feedback from us to the European institutions about excessive regulation. As the only European party, we are uniquely positioned to tackle this: all locally elected *Volters* are in regular contact with our European parliamentary group. This connection between local authorities and the EU strengthens democracy and increases the influence of municipalities in European decision-making. In this way, Gouda has a direct influence at the highest level! **The Volt Gouda group will meet with the provincial group at least once a month and with the EU group at least once a quarter. Not only will we draw inspiration from other parts of our continent, but we will also be able to make local critical voices heard at a European level.**

Strengthening European ties

Gouda can make better use of its existing friendship ties with the European cities of Kongsberg (Norway) and Solingen (Germany) by organising more and more visible events, cultural exchanges and projects. Specifically, we propose:

- We are looking for a new sister city in Morocco, with which a large proportion of our residents with a migrant background have ties.
- We will set up trips and study exchanges with the sister cities for secondary schools and vocational colleges.
- Sports competitions between the sister cities.
- A cycle tour to the sister cities.

Strengthening cooperation in Midden-Holland

Midden-Holland comprises the municipalities of Gouda, Bodegraven-Reeuwijk, Krimpenerwaard, Waddinxveen and Zuidplas. There is a strategic agenda for the Midden-Holland region, which involves cooperation in the areas of energy neutrality, accessibility, economy and housing. With 250,000 residents, Midden-Holland is the right level to successfully address these issues.

Volt believes that cooperation is essential to solving problems for social progress, both locally and regionally. Volt wants the region to act as a region and to seek cooperation outside its own region, together with residents and the business community.



Currently, approximately 0.1% is structurally spent on the Midden-Holland region. Based on a long-term vision and joint projects, we propose a long-term increase in the budget.

We are allocating more resources and capacity to regional cooperation. The principle is simple: every extra euro spent on regional cooperation means at least one euro less in the 'local' budget. This ensures that regional cooperation will lead to greater efficiency.

More efficient policy, more efficient use of public money

We see regional cooperation as adding value in several areas, for example:

- Coordination of housing construction, not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of housing types. This will result in a complementary housing supply.
- Preventing duplicate facilities and tenders, which saves costs.
- Upfront agreements mean less time is lost on individually acquiring resources and projects.
- Joint action enables a stronger stance to be taken towards the province, the national government and the EU.

On the economic front, Volt wants us to strengthen each other rather than compete, as is the case with Brainport Eindhoven, for example:

- We provide regional innovation budgets for sustainability initiatives in business parks.
- We invest regionally in accessibility for the entire region.
- We promote business parks regionally by offering a joint package for establishing a business in Midden-Holland.
- We seek national and European funds for our innovative companies in a regional context.
- We reserve space for circular and sustainable companies, in line with provincial plans for business parks. This leaves less space for new companies that focus on the fossil fuel industry.

Regional cooperation must be more visible and transparent

We are making the Midden-Holland region more visible and democratic.

Regional cooperation requires greater political integration: **councillors are directly represented in joint arrangements and partnerships. They have budgetary responsibility and must be able to justify expenditure to residents.**

Regional cooperation requires regional citizen participation: **we will inform the residents of all municipalities involved at the same time and organise joint participation in major regional projects.**

An example of the democratisation of regional cooperation is the Métropole de Lyon. There, regional elections are organised for the entire region on the same day as the municipal elections.

The New Gouda Economy: circular and local

A fair Gouda economy

Volt stands for prosperity for all residents. Everyone should have the opportunity to work, do business and build a life. **That is why we are making room for both small businesses and larger companies by transforming existing buildings where necessary and redesigning existing spaces.**

We want a vibrant city, with a mix of shops, restaurants, art and culture. Gouda entrepreneurs and small business owners play a key role; they give the city its colour. The municipality helps entrepreneurs find subsidies, partners and innovations. Together, we are building a circular, resilient and profitable economy at the local, national and European levels.

Volt strives for a fair distribution of available funds to help those who need the most support. **We are organising a one-stop shop for all social services, such as *the Sociale Huis in Mechelen (Belgium) and France Services in France.***

Industry in the city

For Volt, economics and ecology must go hand in hand. Entrepreneurs who successfully combine the environment and ecology are very welcome in Gouda. With technical, social and organisational innovation, our city is ready for a fossil-free future and Gouda is doing its bit to contribute to national and European climate targets.

Industry must make an active contribution to a healthy living environment. Gouda continues to offer space for wholesale and industry, but we set clear conditions:

- Gouda companies contribute to a sustainable future. Gouda will be an emission-free municipality by 2040 and the circular economy will be the norm.
- Residual heat from businesses must not be lost, but can be used to heat homes and buildings in the city, or reused in the business's own processes.
- We want as many roofs as possible to be fitted with solar panels, at least where grid congestion allows. We want overcapacity to benefit the environment as much as possible.
- Industries will only be granted an environmental permit if they comply with the strict rules of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The municipality will assist in this by contributing ideas on product design to prevent negative effects on the environment.

Environmentally harmful industry in a residential area is a situation that concerns Volt, as it does many local residents. Volt wants to transform nuisance industries within residential areas so that they fit in with a circular and emission-free economy:

- Together with industry, we would like to make plans so that they too can contribute to the goals of becoming an emission-free and circular economy by 2040 and meeting the WHO's air quality requirements.
- If this is not achieved by 2030, there will be no place for these industries in Gouda. We will then phase out these industries by adjusting the environmental plan and not renewing contracts. We will, of course, help them find another location within the region so that jobs are preserved.
- We are embedding soil quality in licensing procedures: new construction projects require soil testing; PFAS, heavy metals and other pollutants are being tackled in accordance with EU and WHO standards.

In Lille (France), old industrial areas are being cleared and relocated to make way for residential areas and other functions.³

A vibrant range of shops in our city centre

Many retail properties in our city are vacant. The rent is too high or the contract term is too long. Entrepreneurs can no longer cope and are moving to other locations.

Volt wants Gouda to remain a city with many small businesses and will work to retain these businesses.

³ [Turnaround Cities: Western Europe Case Studies Insights from Lille, France, and The Basque Country & Bilbao, Spain](#)

Here, we are inspired by the successful 'foncière de revitalisation' (municipal real estate companies) that has taken place in many medium-sized French city centres.

We are setting up a retail team with two specific goals:

1. Keep shop vacancy rates below 5%.
2. To offer a diverse and attractive range of shops for residents and visitors.

The retail team will take the lead, in close collaboration with Vastgoed Binnenstad Gouda, and will undertake the following concrete actions, among others:

- Developing and implementing a commercial vision for Gouda.
- Purchase, renovation, transformation and sale of long-term vacant units. This also includes the connected homes (often on the first floor).
- Flexibility in the environmental plan to combine retail and residential functions, for example.
- Offering advice and financial assistance to entrepreneurs who contribute to the commercial vision.
- Encouraging, where relevant and possible, the accommodation of 'multiple businesses in one location' to save costs.

Allow start-ups to flourish and grow

Start-ups are the engine of innovation. They drive technological progress, create new jobs, provide opportunities for young talent and boost the local economy. Volt wants Gouda to become an attractive breeding ground for young, innovative companies, with a focus on the manufacturing industry and skilled workers.

With our location right between all the major cities, Gouda is perfectly positioned to attract talent from across the Randstad. By investing in space, accessibility and support, start-ups can flourish here. That is why we are creating space for business in strategic locations, for example near stations or in places that are easily accessible from the motorway.

We are working with entrepreneurs to build a circular economy in which products are designed intelligently, are easy to repair and where reuse is the norm.

We are increasing the possibilities for reuse and repair with a large-scale Repair Café with generous opening hours. To this end, we are working on a circular hub with the business community and Ecopark Gouda. This way of working has been successful in many cities, from Amsterdam to Paris and from Delft to Stockholm. It is time to make it a success in Gouda too.

2. Together we make the city

Culture Participation Housing Safety

Our citizens often know best what needs to be improved. We are going to combine the power of the citizens and the power of the municipality. We are committed to everything that brings us together: joint decision-making, culture, sport, collective housing facilities and a safe city. For instance, we are realising this by setting up Community Centres, which bring together all the services a neighbourhood needs.

- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** Create a permanent citizens' council where residents are selected by lottery.
- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** Create more housing by converting existing buildings.
- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** Give more space to new forms of housing for collectives and multi-generational homes.

Citizen participation

A permanent citizens' council

Residents no longer feel heard and have the impression that the government is primarily pursuing its own agenda. Volt considers this to be a significant problem at the European and national levels, as well as within municipalities. That is why Volt is committed to democratic renewal, particularly at the local level. We have new ideas for a strong democracy in Gouda. We organise public consultation on issues where citizens can actually exert influence. This approach forms the basis for a strong democracy that meets the needs of residents and ensures that everyone can participate. Not just voting every four years, but actively contributing ideas and helping to decide on the policies that affect your life. That is why we are investing even more in citizen participation.

We are creating a permanent citizens' council with temporary thematic citizens' panels (e.g. on housing shortages and new forms of living), where participants are selected by lottery, informed, guided and compensated. They must always be a representative delegation of the Gouda population.

Volt aims to discuss the most important themes each year with the people of Gouda in such a citizens' assembly. The advice that emerges from this will be submitted to the municipal council. This will give the residents of Gouda much more direct influence on the administration of their own city.

Here, we are again inspired by successful European citizens' assemblies, such as those in the German-speaking community in Belgium⁴.

⁴ <https://www.buergerdialog.be/nl/burgerraad/wat-is-de-burgerraad>

If we want the municipal organisation to work more closely with residents, we need to manage that organisation differently. The local administration should no longer decide what is good for Gouda, but rather set the agenda and then work it out together with residents.

Bridging the gap between councillors and residents

We are reducing the distance between council members and residents. Volt believes that politics belongs to everyone. We are strengthening communication from the council across all channels. After each council meeting, an accessible and visual summary is produced and widely distributed throughout the city.

Volt Gouda wants a 'house for democracy': an accessible location where political parties and councillors can meet residents and organise activities related to democracy, such as debates, information evenings or drawing up a social agenda.

We actively publish the agendas of the mayor and councillors online.

We encourage local journalism so that factual news is accessible to all residents of the municipality.

From thinking along to participating: encouraging citizen initiatives

We want to give residents more opportunities to take the initiative themselves. So Volt Gouda would like to focus strongly on the next step: equal cooperation between the municipality and residents. The municipality and society can greatly strengthen each other. We make participatory (neighbourhood) citizen budgets available. These budgets are used for activities that improve the livability, safety and health of the neighbourhoods.

Here we look at the participatory budget of Lisbon⁵ or Antwerp⁶, where part of the municipal budget is distributed by the residents themselves.

Commercial advertising is highly visible in public spaces. As far as Volt is concerned, social engagement, citizens' initiatives and activist expressions also deserve a place. This will give more space to social (and political) communication, advertising for events and free expression in Gouda.

There will be places for free expression in central and visible locations (stations/market/libraries/community centres), as in the municipality of Landgraaf.⁷ Think of a number of large boards that can be freely covered with posters.

⁵ <https://lisboaparticipa.pt/pt/op>

⁶ <https://burgerbegroting.be/>

⁷ <https://www.landgraaf.nl/reclame-uitingen-in-de-openbare-ruimte>

Culture and sport

Gouda will only truly flourish if we are given the space to develop, participate and relax. Culture and sport are not luxuries, but essential for health, well-being and togetherness. Volt wants to invest in these pillars of a liveable city.

Focus on art and culture

Culture is not a side issue; it is essential for an innovative, connected and vibrant Gouda. Whether it's an art exhibition, showcasing the archaeological past or organising a dance party. Volt sees culture as a powerful tool for personal growth, social cohesion and economic prosperity. Art and culture bring people together, challenge them to think and create space for encounters, expression and creativity.

With the Goudse Schouwburg theatre, Museum Gouda, the Cultuurhuis Garensponnerij cultural centre and the Chocoladefabriek (chocolate factory - collectively known as the C4), Gouda has a broad cultural foundation. Volt wants the municipality to continue investing in a strong, diverse and future-proof cultural offering. It is important that culture is accessible to everyone: young and old, rich and poor, born in Gouda or newcomers. That is why we support initiatives that promote inclusivity and involve people who are currently less likely to participate.

We use culture as a driver for innovation and as a gateway to the major transitions we are facing as a city and society: energy transition, new mobility, new forms of living, etc. This is not a separate policy, but a tool for residents, entrepreneurs and politicians to achieve our goals. Culture and events help to get residents on board with major changes.

Volt believes it is important to provide sustainable support to smaller cultural providers in addition to the C4. Volt wants to continue and strengthen the Innovation and Development in Art and Culture scheme (the innovation fund):

- We will focus more on new initiatives and organisations that do not receive structural funding.
- We are committed to a multidisciplinary approach and cooperation between entrepreneurs, citizens' initiatives, smaller cultural institutions, associations, etc.

Finally, we see opportunities in international cultural projects and exchange programmes with our sister cities Kongsberg (Norway) and Solingen (Germany).

We can also tap into EU funds (such as Creative Europe) for cross-border projects, and Gouda's designation as European Capital of Culture in 2033 is another wonderful opportunity.

Sport and exercise for health and connection

Sport promotes a healthy lifestyle and brings people together. It also provides opportunities for meeting people, having fun and connecting, while also helping to prevent loneliness, illness and youth problems.

Volt wants everyone in Gouda to be able to participate in sport, which is important for a healthy life. That is why we are investing in sufficient and accessible sports facilities⁸ :

- The municipality must take an innovative approach to sports and exercise facilities by making room for temporary (outdoor) gyms for primary schools in neighbourhoods where they are needed.
- Volt supports sport in the neighbourhood by deploying more exercise brokers, whom we link to the Community Centre. In doing so, we pay extra attention to neighbourhoods where participation in sport lags behind. We can assess this using the 2 +1+ 2 exercise concept⁹ from Arnhem.
- The municipality must promote the importance of health and exercise by striving for an exercise-friendly living environment in which walking, cycling and playing are the norm.

In our water-rich area, it is important that all residents of Gouda can swim. That is why Volt wants every Gouda resident who is keen to learn to swim to leave primary school with swimming certificates A and B.

Housing: a home in Gouda

Housing is a basic right, but the housing shortage is a major challenge everywhere. It is not only a problem in terms of numbers, but also in terms of the cost of rent, mortgages and energy bills. Both first-time buyers and so-called 'movers' are stuck due to a lack of (suitable) supply. Gouda is expected to grow significantly in the coming years. That is why Volt wants more homes that better suit today's needs: with a pleasant indoor climate, low energy costs and suitable for everyone's life stage.

As far as we are concerned, the motto 'Build, build, build' is simply inadequate. We are choosing a different route.

More homes for everyone

To meet the demand for housing, Volt wants to create at least 10% more living space in Gouda by 2035 through new construction and the transformation of existing buildings. That means 3,500 extra homes. Homes for all types of house hunters:

- for first-time buyers and students on a limited budget
- senior citizens
- for single adults
- single-parent families
- expats and other temporary residents of Gouda
- for residents with permanent care needs

⁸ <https://www.gouda.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Ruimte-voor-sport-in-Gouda-Een-goede-match.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.sportinarnhem.nl/media/tcjkum5/20201116-artikel-beweeqconcept-2-1-2-kvlo-digitaal.pdf>

In neighbourhoods, we want a mix of affordable and more expensive homes, and of rental and owner-occupied homes, so that people can move within their own neighbourhood. In principle, **at least two-thirds of new homes must be affordable and at least 30% must be social housing**. The exact distribution per type of new-build (social rental, mid-range rental or affordable owner-occupied) may vary per neighbourhood and depends on the existing housing mix in the neighbourhood. The municipality plays an active role in this and works together with the housing associations.

Primary focus on transformation

We do not want to build on too much space outside the city because nature and agriculture also need space. That is why we want to make better use of existing buildings. We will make more efficient use of existing buildings and available space. The municipality fully supports the conversion of vacant buildings into homes or other facilities:

- **Vacant offices will be redesigned and converted into liveable homes.**
- **Large, expensive homes for which there is less demand can be split into liveable spaces or shared with other residents. This is possible by encouraging the landlady function or allowing long-term temporary rental contracts.**
- **Free spaces above shops are being utilised.**
- **Further top-ups, plinths and additions are encouraged.**

Vacancy rates for homes must be discouraged.

*Volt therefore advocates the Flemish approach, a method whereby **vacancy is tackled with an annually increasing municipal tax**¹⁰. This encourages owners to take action more quickly if their property is vacant.*

New construction

Space in Gouda is scarce and must be divided between housing, facilities and green spaces. Each neighbourhood has its own character, wishes and needs. **In Westergouwe, we can still expand. In other neighbourhoods, such as those around the stations, we can increase density, but it is still important to reserve a place for green spaces in every neighbourhood.**

New homes must be designed and built in such a way that they consider the changing climate (especially heat stress) by providing sufficient insulation, water collection and a green environment. By preparing homes for the future, we reduce the impact of climate change and increase the quality of life in our municipality.

We want to set up cross-border projects with our neighbouring municipality to realise building capacity. This will enable us to meet the demand for housing in Gouda, even though these homes are technically located in another municipality.

¹⁰<https://stadszaken.nl/artikel/6814/lege-woningen-zo-pakken-vlaamse-gemeenten-dat-aan#:~:text=The%20municipality%20levies%20tax%20on%20buildings%20and,this%20will%20be%20doubled%20for%20the%20following%20four%20years.>

New forms of housing

We want to introduce new forms of housing, such as collective living, multi-generational homes, retirement communities and private housing cooperatives.

We can make more efficient use of scarce and valuable space by sharing communal gardens, bicycle racks and technical rooms, as well as facilities such as washing machines or tools that we only use a few times a year.

Furthermore, we are fully committed to lifetime-proof and collective living spaces. Forty per cent of Gouda residents live alone¹¹, ranging in age from their twenties to their nineties. Living together should be easier, for example in a so-called 'friends' house'. **We facilitate rentals with a relaxed conversion permit.**

We can give more people the space and facilities they need by promoting these new forms of living. Volt will work to make modern and flexible housing projects possible:

- **We want the municipality to set requirements in new development projects to enable new forms of housing.**
- **We are using the new Environment Act to promote collective living. After all, the environmental plan offers more scope for customisation and experimentation: initiators can apply for an environmental permit for a collective form of housing, even if the current zoning does not explicitly allow it.**
- **We organise matchmaking sessions between residents' initiatives, housing associations, architects and investors.**

We are inspired by progressive projects in Europe such as La Borda in Barcelona: a cooperative residential building with 28 wooden apartments, designed around communal areas that serve as places to stay, meet and relax.

Volt also wants us to experiment with new ways of homeownership, for example by placing land in independent cooperatives and giving people the opportunity to buy only the house built on it. This will enable them to enter the housing market more quickly.

Future-proof living

We are not only working on new homes, but also helping with existing homes:

- **We encourage and facilitate the collective purchase of insulation measures for homeowners in the same neighbourhood to obtain discounts and extra quality, as is done in Eindhoven, for example, through collective purchasing campaigns.**
- **We focus our approach and our actions on the most vulnerable target groups. Many residents do not need the government to make their homes more sustainable, but for some it is indispensable.**
- **We want many practical energy experts to be trained in Gouda and the surrounding region. See our proposals at [Gouda mbo-stad](#).**

¹¹ CBS 2024

We want to work towards a bright future in our beautiful, historic city. That means we also need to become more energy efficient there.

We also advocate relaxing the rules on sustainability for monuments. New guidelines are already being introduced for solar panels, glass and window insulation: if an application complies with the guidelines, it can now be processed administratively, without advice from the aesthetics committee. Volt supports this relaxation and wants to extend it to other aspects such as roof and wall insulation, installation of ventilation systems or outdoor units for heat pumps.

Safety for everyone in all neighbourhoods

Everyone should feel safe in Gouda. At home, on the street and at work. A safe municipality starts with trust, involvement and an environment that radiates safety.

Safe Neighbourhood Houses

We believe it is important to have good cooperation between emergency services, visible enforcement and safe places where people can go if things go wrong. We are committed to a smart, preventive and people-oriented approach based on cooperation, knowledge and experience.

As in many other cities, we propose, focussing on Community Centres. These are a combination of community police officers, social neighbourhood teams, general practitioners, a neighbourhood director and a community centre. This makes it easy for citizens to ask questions to someone who knows the neighbourhood and can therefore help them more quickly.

Volt Gouda is inspired by the successful initiative 'bekend maakt bemind' (familiarity breeds affection)¹² by Volt Amsterdam. Investing in the connection between the different communities in neighbourhoods and districts creates more understanding, which improves the sense of safety and quality of life. This helps us to bring people out of social isolation, reducing their vulnerability to 'quick money' and other promises made by criminal organisations.

Always accessible and well-prepared emergency services

In an emergency, every second counts. That is why emergency services must always be available, even in extreme weather conditions or crisis situations. Access roads to and from fire stations, police stations and ambulance stations must be clear and accessible under all circumstances.

Volt wants emergency services to be well-prepared for disasters such as floods, power failures or heat waves. This requires clear agreements and rapid cooperation within the teams and with other services in the region. In this way, we ensure that help always arrives quickly and effectively, where it is needed. Visible training and exercises by the emergency services are part of this, as they build trust among citizens.

¹² <https://voltnederland.org/amsterdam/nieuws/bekend-maakt-bemind>

We prepare for disasters and floods with support from European cooperation (such as through the Resilient Cities Network).

Crime

To reduce crime and intimidation on the streets, it is important that we have sufficient supervisors and emergency workers with the right resources.

We advocate for greater visibility of neighbourhood police officers.

Greater visibility in neighbourhoods ensures that they are approachable and that contact and mutual trust can easily develop between residents and these enforcement officers.

Aggression against law enforcement officers and other emergency services personnel must be severely punished.

To combat crime in our region, cooperation within the security region and with other regions is important. We must not give organised crime the opportunity to exploit vulnerable groups such as children and young people. To minimise the likelihood of people turning to crime, we focus on a solid social foundation (education, employment, social mobility).

More attention for vulnerable groups

Meanwhile, we want to prevent online hate speech and bullying through discussions in schools, clubs, etc. We are stepping up enforcement and providing information about the consequences. We would like to pay special attention to vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly and LGBTIQ+ people.

Volt sees a national trend in which it is becoming increasingly unsafe for LGBTIQ+ people to be themselves. Volt would like to set up information and visibility campaigns in collaboration with active organisations such as the Rainbow Alliance. Reports of aggression and violence against people because of their gender identity and/or sexual preference must also be dealt with quickly and effectively.

Special investigating officers and other municipal employees will receive training to recognise and tackle street harassment and hate crimes against women and LGBTIQ+ people.

In this case, we are looking at the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme and associated funds.

The living environment in Gouda plays an important role in preventing crime. Gouda will become a 'safe city' for women: **the perspective of young women will be a starting point in the design of public spaces. We are aiming for better street lighting, safe nighttime routes, safe waiting areas at public transport stops and reporting points for harassment in nightlife.**

Contact with the municipality

In dangerous situations, no matter how minor, residents must be able to easily contact the police and the municipality. Simple adjustments, such as additional lighting or removing obstacles from the street, can also contribute to a greater sense of safety. The privacy of residents must be protected in this regard.

We will raise awareness of the 'Slim Melden' app among residents. And we will ensure better feedback to people who report incidents via this app.

We also want the local council to take proactive action on repeated reports in this app. For example, if reports of litter are consistently made in the same place, targeted action must be taken at that location to prevent the nuisance, rather than just clearing up the reported litter.

3. Volt makes room for your future

Healthcare Nature Education Youth

Volt invests in what really matters: learning and living in a healthy city. A vital living environment reduces the pressure on healthcare. To this end, we want to prepare our city for a changing climate. We want education where everyone can flourish. And we want accessible and reliable healthcare, close to the people who need it. These pillars form a future-proof Gouda, a city that is not only liveable today, but also for future generations.

- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** a city ready for a changing climate.
- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** Gouda, a city of vocational education for the makers of the future.
- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** start a care cooperative with your neighbours.

Green, healthy and liveable Gouda

The climate is changing. We are already experiencing drier and hotter summers and wetter springs and autumns. This will only become more intense in the future. Here in Gouda, just like all other (European) societies, we will have to adapt to this with climate-adaptive systems. For example, by creating more robust ecosystems by expanding nature, or by making our infrastructure more climate-proof. Volt opts for a future in which nature and health go hand in hand. A green city is a liveable city for everyone.

A green network for Gouda and Midden-Holland

We are greening streets, squares and buildings. We want space for urban forests, as in Paris or Utrecht. This provides shade and coolness, but also the so-called sponge effect and much better drainage of excess rainwater. **We are connecting green spaces into a strong network throughout the city and connecting them with neighbouring municipalities where possible.**

For a healthy life, it is crucial that we have space to relax. We want every neighbourhood to offer opportunities for recreation. In neighbourhoods where recreational opportunities are currently lacking, we want to expand them. We also intend to offer plenty of space for outdoor events.

Together with neighbouring municipalities, we will continue our efforts to keep the nature reserves in the region accessible to everyone and to expand them where possible. We will ensure that nature reserves are better connected to each other.

We will appoint a regional forest ranger for Midden-Holland.

We apply the 3-30-300 rule in Gouda:

- 3 trees visible from every house,
- 30% of the street has shade from trees

- the nearest park is no more than 300 metres away

We encourage the water permeability of roads, thereby restoring the soil's ability to absorb CO₂ and water.

We want to encourage Gouda residents to make and keep their gardens and facades green. Volt would like to maintain the free facade gardens that residents can apply for. We will continue to support residents with rainwater collection.

In addition, we wish to investigate with the water boards whether we can green larger areas (squares, business and parking areas, etc.) and provide financial incentives to the owners of these areas through the tax system. A green area that facilitates water infiltration can result in a reduction in taxes.

We are also committed to strengthening the social infrastructure for climate adaptation. We believe it is important for people to look out for each other and trust each other. We also want people to be better informed about what to do when the climate changes and how to act in acute emergencies. Volt therefore wants all relevant companies and institutions to practise for (climate-related) emergencies. The insights gained from this are of great importance if an emergency actually occurs.

In this way, we will make Gouda healthier, more beautiful and more resistant to heat and flooding.

A clean environment

Everyone has the right to a healthy and clean living environment. Dog faeces is one of the biggest annoyances for people: 57 per cent of Dutch people say they experience nuisance as a result.¹³ That is why we are installing more places for free 'clean-up bags' and we are monitoring more strictly with supervisors and enforcement officers.

In particular, the increase in litter from torn PMD waste bags (for plastic waste and empty cans) is unhygienic and annoying. We are installing underground PMD containers and placing more public bins.

Volt also wants to raise awareness among residents. We appreciate the successful 'Schoon, doen we toch gewoon?' (Clean, isn't that what we do anyway?) campaign in The Hague¹⁴. This has resulted in a much cleaner and tidier city. Volt would like to set up a similar communication campaign on the theme of a clean city.

We are investigating whether post-separation of waste can be more efficient and cheaper than the pre-separation we currently use. This would mean that residents would no longer have to separate their waste, but that the waste processors would do this themselves. We are looking at the example of Rotterdam, where post-separation was deliberately chosen a few years ago. What are the results there, and would it also be a suitable alternative for Gouda?

¹³ <https://download.cbs.nl/maatwerk/Veiligheidsmonitor-2023.pdf> Chapter 2.3 Nuisance in the neighbourhood (pg 20)

¹⁴ <https://schoondoengewoon.nl/>

Education that nurtures every talent.

Education is the foundation for equal opportunities and a just society. That is why we invest in modern and inclusive schools that prepare children for the challenges of tomorrow.

Volt wants appropriate education to revolve around the development of each child. Personality, talents and skills are central, not the limitations of the system.

Schools are becoming multifunctional centres where education, childcare, sports and community care come together, as is the case in Finland, for example¹⁵. When renovating and constructing new buildings, local authorities are taking responsibility for making them accessible and inclusive. The 'fresh schools' standard is also recommended as a starting point.

Volt opts for structural funding instead of separate subsidies and for cooperation instead of competition. Cooperation between schools and childcare centres is paramount in this regard.

We support and endorse the free school meals provided by Volt. We are in favour of expanding this to the Swedish model, where school meals are seen as part of the curriculum. This promotes healthy eating, tackles inequality and ensures that no one goes hungry in class.

No child left behind

Compulsory education officers listen to what children and young people need and work together to find solutions. [Every school has access to a liaison officer¹⁶ and support for dealing with pupils with disabilities.](#) The liaison officer is there for all questions and concerns that are not directly related to education. They also look at opportunities: what is needed to enable pupils to use their talents?

Gouda, city of vocational education: creators of the future

Just like the rest of the Netherlands, and even Europe, Gouda has a huge need for practically trained professionals. We are facing major challenges in today's developments. The energy transition, the housing shortage and the ageing population are creating significant challenges in technology, construction and healthcare. MBO students are the installers, makers and carers of the future. Volt wants to talk to companies and organisations about internships and work-study programmes that can be set up for MBO students. Volt wants Gouda to develop into the city for MBO students: a place where education, business and the city mesh seamlessly.

¹⁵ <https://avs.nl/actueel/artikelen/in-finland-komt-de-zorg-in-de-school/>

¹⁶ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/passend-onderwijs/subsidieregeling-brugfunctionaris>

We see MBO students not only as pupils, but as young professionals who are already making a difference. That is why we create space for collaboration, innovation and entrepreneurship. Volt wants companies and institutions to open their doors, we want schools to invest in customisation and the city to provide a vibrant and easily accessible living environment in which you can grow. As a student and as a person. Gouda will thus become the natural starting point for anyone who chooses an MBO programme, because Gouda has the courage to truly bring education and the city together.

Volt wants to work with MBO students to determine what is needed to make Gouda attractive to them, from housing and facilities to culture and sports. We will then work with MBO and secondary schools to develop the programmes needed for the future. Further training and retraining will be part of the project.

Together with the business community and social partners, we are building a powerful image of Gouda as the MBO city of Holland.

We are also looking at successful examples such as the Centre for Innovative Craftsmanship in Manufacturing in Limburg¹⁷.

Your city, your future

Gouda must be a city where young people and those starting out in life can live in a place where they feel at home. An affordable and vibrant alternative to the big cities. Easily accessible by public transport from Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, Gouda is uniquely located in the Randstad. Volt is committed to a Gouda where young people not only live, but also build their own future and our city.

More entertainment venues and meeting places are needed, more space for youth culture. In addition, we give young people themselves the opportunity to make a difference: from parties to festivals. We simplify licensing procedures and provide a licensing support officer to help them. The neighbourhood director is also involved in this process.

Volt wants to see the housing programme given a significant boost. Volt contributes to progress with creative solutions. For example, we wish to make housing more accessible to young people by actively promoting alternative forms of housing. Think of tiny houses and youth housing associations, such as those set up in Amsterdam¹⁸, Leiden¹⁹ and Utrecht²⁰. We are also making it easier to find youth housing consultants, so that independence really becomes possible.

Volt wants a youth and start-up council so that young people can have a say in what the city needs.

¹⁷ <https://www.gildeopleidingen.nl/gilde-bedrijfsopleidingen/samenwerken-regio>

¹⁸ <https://www.afwc.nl/databank/themas/gemengde-wooncomplexen-voor-jongeren>

¹⁹ <https://shwj.nl/>

²⁰ <https://www.volkshuisvestingnederland.nl/documenten/praktijkverhalen/2025/06/24/woonin-pioniert-met-woongedelen-voor-verschillende-groepen>

Healthcare: simple, accessible, close by and humane

Every resident of Gouda should be able to count on good, understandable and accessible healthcare. Families facing multiple problems often receive little help or get lost in a maze of rules and bureaucracy. Volt believes that healthcare should start where the problems are greatest.

Volt wants every resident of Gouda to have access to a single, clear point of contact for healthcare questions: physically at the neighbourhood team or a community service point, and online in a simple, clear environment. Residents can go here with all their questions about support, guidance and youth care. The information is available in understandable language and in multiple languages. People can choose whether they want help digitally, by telephone or in person.

Digital and physical accessibility is being tested by residents with disabilities to ensure that it is accessible to everyone.

We want to expand the neighbourhood teams in the neighbourhoods with the greatest care needs. These neighbourhood teams actively help, and do not wait for people to come to them. Volt wants faster and easier access: shorter waiting times through extra capacity at peak times, and a 24/7 help desk for urgent questions.

Volt wants a cross-border approach to care. Gouda is working together with the surrounding municipalities on this and is expanding it where possible, so that care does not stop at the municipal border and can be purchased strategically, including from neighbouring municipalities outside its own region. Volt wants better alignment with national healthcare: collaboration with hospitals, specialised institutions and health insurers to prevent fragmentation. Volt wants more room for customisation: less bureaucracy, more trust in professionals, and a single point of contact for residents.

Because Volt believes it is important that care and support are close to residents, we are making agreements with housing associations and project developers for more opportunities such as practice rooms and community centres.

Volt wants better support for informal carers and volunteers: more respite care, training and support to prevent overload. Volt sees care cooperatives, such as Austerlitz Zorgt²¹ in Zeist, as an inspiration for more prevention, mutual support and connectedness. A care cooperative is a local association of residents who organise care services together to enable residents to live healthier lives at home for longer. The members organise services such as shopping, transport and social activities, with the help of volunteers and paid staff.

²¹ <https://www.austerlitzzorgt.nl/>

4. A Smart City that connects us

Digital, Circular, Public services, Mobility, Industry, Shops

We strive for a Smart City, where digitisation, circularity, smart mobility and public services are central. The core elements here are an accessible and service-oriented local government.

- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** Give Gouda its first alderman for Digital and International Affairs.
- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** Your own car? That's no longer necessary.
- **DO SOMETHING NEW:** Take control of the local energy transition.

Smart and accessible government

A smart government, at every level, is a priority for Volt. The municipality should be helpful, accessible, understandable and efficient. A smart municipality focuses on improving the quality of its services through digitisation and openness to every resident.

Digital government

With Volt, digital affairs will be given more space in the municipal organisation. For example, we want an alderman for Digital and International Affairs (D&I) in Gouda. This alderman will ensure that Gouda deals with all digital affairs in a sensible and ethical manner, and will also ensure that the large group of international residents is well served. Residents must be included in digital policy and the digitisation of public services. The councillor will also ensure that the municipality is well prepared for cyber attacks and disruptions to vital infrastructure.

Volt Gouda is inspired by the German city of Frankfurt, where a Volt councillor was appointed with this portfolio in 2021²².

Digital accessibility

In Gouda, we are making the digital world accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. We are adding an option to the [Slim Melden Gouda app](#) to report non-compliance with accessibility rules and we will ensure that the organisations concerned are held accountable.

Digitisation will never be at the expense of personal contact: service points with staff will be set up in the town hall, telephone assistance will remain available and the physical counters will remain in place. In addition, Volt wants to set up a 'DIGI-TAAL' house. These are places in libraries and community centres where free training courses in digital skills are offered.

²² <https://www.digitale-welten.org/grusswort-eileen-osullivan/>

All digital services and information will be designed with accessibility in mind, including for people with visual impairments. At the national level, we advocate for a MijnOverheid 2.0, in which everything is clearly organised in one place, with proactive assistance from the government.

Artificial intelligence: people-oriented, goal-oriented, European

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming part of municipal policy. Volt opts for European and human-centred solutions developed in Europe, rather than solutions from American tech companies.

We strive for the conscious use of AI. YES where it helps to improve processes and efficiency, NO where it can negatively impact, for example, privacy or the human dimension. Consider the following applications:

- Administrative documents, such as extracts from birth registers, are generated automatically.
- Simple requests from citizens are processed immediately. Examples include moves within the city and the inflow and outflow of residents.
- Traffic management and parking policy.
- Translations of documents or web pages for immigrants and tourists.

In Kortrijk, Belgium, AI is used as a virtual assistant that answers the many questions citizens ask the municipality. AI is also used for tourist information in Madrid. In the Netherlands, Goes, Borsele, Kapelle, Reimerswaal and Veere are experimenting with AI²³.

Decisive local government

We often see how difficult it can be to translate ambitious policy into effective and comprehensible implementation. Volt pays extra attention to this. There are three main objectives:

1. Short policy documents, focused on concrete implementation. These clearly describe where and how the municipality takes control.
2. We ensure that proposed decisions are communicated clearly and in a timely manner, so that residents are not taken by surprise by changes in their living environment.
3. We are exploiting the full potential of the Environment Act²⁴ and offering more scope for new initiatives:

At Volt, we like to look beyond today; we are committed to the long term. We are implementing a **generation test** for all municipal decisions. The generation test²⁵ will

²³ [Creating a Virtual Assistant with Generative AI for City of Kortrijk](#)
[Transforming tourism in Madrid with Azure OpenAI Service | Microsoft Customer Stories](#)
[Municipalities divided over use of AI, expert warns of dangers](#)

²⁴ Since 2024, the Environment Act has replaced all existing laws relating to the existing environment, but it has not been fully implemented anywhere in the Netherlands. Future environmental plans will offer much more flexibility and scope for customisation than the former zoning plans. Applications will be processed more quickly. Projects will be assessed holistically, taking into account economic, social and environmental aspects.
<https://iplo.nl/regelgeving/omgevingswet/>

²⁵ <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/downloads/document?id=2023D18049>

provide insight into the expected effects of decisions, policies and investments, both now and in the long term.

Inclusive and transparent municipality

In Gouda, too, more and more municipal affairs are being handled digitally. This is efficient, and Volt supports the digitisation of public services, but personal contact must remain. Everyone should have the choice to speak to an employee and receive a letter that is understandable. We support people in using digital resources if they wish to do so.

The Huis van de Stad (House of the City) has a walk-in function for these services. Volt Gouda advocates for additional administrative desks in neighbourhood service centres as well.

An open municipality is a reliable municipality. Gouda residents must be able to see what is happening and why certain choices are being made for our city. That is why we believe it is important that all relevant documents, such as budgets, decisions, policy plans and geographical data, are easy to find and understand.

We want to make Gouda's open data platform more accessible and better known. Gouda follows various registers in this regard, both in the Netherlands and in the rest of Europe²⁶.

Instructional videos and audio files are intended to inform the residents of Gouda about this.

Volt wants all communication between the municipality and residents to be easier, better and smarter. Whether it concerns letters, telephone calls or information on the website, everything must be understandable to everyone. This also applies to the above-mentioned budget, council meetings and other public documents.

That is why we focus on clear language, use pictograms where possible and avoid jargon and 'officialese'. All communication to citizens must be written at B1 level. It must also be accompanied by clear images and videos to aid understanding.

Queer Gouda

Volt stands for a city where everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, can be completely themselves. This requires structural attention, funding, protection and visibility.

Locally, we facilitate meeting places for young people, families and anyone who wants to connect with the LGBTIQ+ community. During the day, there is space for coffee, conversations and workshops (such as Jong & Out), and in the evening, accessible activities such as film nights and games. With visible (rainbow) symbols, good accessibility and safety as prerequisites, in close collaboration with queer organisations and hospitality entrepreneurs.

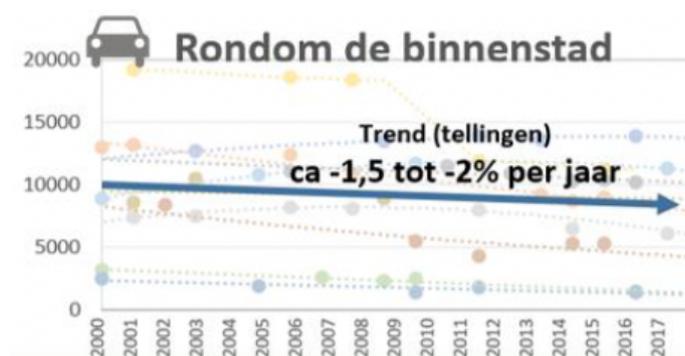
²⁶ [Data register of the Dutch Government - Government data, Open Government Partnership | Committed to making governments more open, accountable, and responsive to citizens](#)

The new mobility

By redesigning the space and investing in new technologies and means of transport, we want to offer more space and more options to our residents.

Fair distribution of space

Public space is scarce; there is not enough room to park all the cars of residents and visitors in the city centre. We are working on an ambitious vision for the future in which every means of transport has its own place: pedestrians, bicycles, public transport, shared cars, private cars, delivery vans and lorries. Above all, we are creating more space for walkers, cyclists, greenery and social interaction.



Decline in car traffic in and around the city centre in recent years (VCP 2021)

Cycling and walking contribute to a healthy, sustainable and accessible municipality. It reduces traffic congestion, improves air quality and promotes the health of residents.

- We are developing a comfortable network of footpaths throughout the city. Gouda will transform into a city where a maximum of 15 minutes' walking is the norm for daily activities.
- Clear signage and enforcement will make it clear to everyone where (and when) you can walk, cycle or both.
- Fast bicycles, such as fat bikes, will no longer be allowed on cycle paths. They will be moved to public roads.
- Traffic lights for cyclists will be set for fast traffic flow: we want you to be able to reach the city centre faster by bicycle than by car.

These changes will sometimes lead to radical spatial redesign. To restore balance, it is often necessary to redesign a square, a street, a block or a neighbourhood. This is also an opportunity to improve accessibility, historical connections, greenery, surfaces and appearance. Here we focus on two areas:

- Nieuwe Veerstaal, where Gouda can regain its waterfront appeal. Better connections and visibility could also allow Goudasfalt to flourish as an events venue and a craft and cultural hotspot. At present, however, traffic is still far too dominant and very dangerous for cyclists, pedestrians and pushchairs.
- Kleiwegplein. This should become a central connecting point for our city, where cars are currently far too dominant. There needs to be more space for meeting places

and walking routes between the station, the city centre and the north. And less waiting time for cyclists and pedestrians.

We are turning residential areas into low-traffic areas²⁷ to increase safety, improve the sense of community and give our children more space to play outside. In the residential environment, Volt always gives priority to space for play, socialising and safety over accessibility by car.

More shared cars: more space, more money

²⁸One shared car can replace up to six individual cars. This means we need up to five fewer parking spaces, or 50 square metres of space, which we can use for other purposes such as children's play, greenery, meeting places or housing. Shared mobility is not only better for the environment and public space. It is also more economical and often more practical for people who do not need a car daily and live in urban areas, as they do not have to worry about parking spaces, permits or maintenance.²⁹

Shared cars need to become more visible to offer solutions for most residents. That is why we are lowering parking standards where possible.

In 2028, we will deploy a hundred extra electric shared cars in Gouda, which will free up 5,000 m² for the city.

We are aiming for a car-free city centre

Our ambition is to gradually move towards a car-free city centre by promoting alternative modes of transport and redesigning public spaces. We are following successful models from several European cities such as Delft, Leiden and Strasbourg (which did this 20 years ago). We are also seeing the positive effects in Paris, where large parts of the city have now been made car-free or even car-free. This is also already being done in the Netherlands, for example in Utrecht³⁰ and in Den Burg on Texel³¹.

This is only possible if good alternatives are offered to residents who need individual cars. We want more parking facilities around the city centre or on the outskirts. We will achieve this through better cooperation with Q-Park, the use of private car parks outside opening hours, and additional parking spaces above or below ground. In cities such as Woerden and Amsterdam, large underground car parks have been built beneath the historic centre. Volt wants to investigate the possibilities for Gouda.

To improve the livability of the city, we are introducing a maximum speed limit of 30 km/h in built-up areas. We do, however, distinguish between main roads such as Burgemeester van Reenensingel, where 50 km/h is still permitted, and neighbourhood streets, where 30 km/h will become the norm.

20 km/h is also an option in streets where safety is particularly important (near schools, for example).

²⁷ [Woonerf: A Living Street Concept For Shared City Spaces](#)

²⁸ <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/zakelijk/zakendoen-met-rijkswaterstaat/werkwijzen/werkwijze-in-gww/nederland-bereikbaar-hinderaanpak/toolbox/factsheet-autodelen>

²⁹ [Municipal Policy – Car Sharing Coalition](#)

³⁰ [Making the city centre car-free | Municipality of Utrecht](#)

³¹ [Car-free centre of Den Burg](#)

This is already the case in Amsterdam³² and is being followed throughout Europe.³³

Mobility hubs

We support the development of mobility hubs: places where it is easy to switch between modes of transport and where people can sometimes also find facilities such as a parcel service and bicycle repair. **We are committed to shared bicycle hubs (including cargo bikes) in Gouwe Park and at parking facilities around the city centre (Park & Bike).** **We are investing in secure and monitored bicycle parking facilities at mobility hubs^{34 35}.**

Park & Ride facilities (P+R), such as those in Rotterdam and Leiden, are important in this regard. In this way, we encourage motorists to park their cars outside the city centre and use free shuttle buses to cover the last stretch to the city centre.

We support the construction of additional P+R facilities around the city centre.

Logistics hubs for Gouda city centre

The largest lorries cause traffic congestion, dangerous situations and damage to the cobbled streets of the old town. Outside the main routes for large and heavy vehicles, we want to impose restrictions on large freight traffic.

In consultation with local businesses, we are creating logistics hubs on the outskirts of the city to cover the last few kilometres of transport emission-free.³⁶

In principle, we will prohibit the heaviest lorries (>15t) from entering the historic centre. Exemptions will only be granted if absolutely necessary.

We are inspired by the example of Strasbourg, which has banned most lorries from its historic centre since 2018³⁷.

We support the principle of the current zero-emission zone for commercial vehicles. The agreements made between the sector, municipalities and other parties³⁸ take into account the sector's wishes to enable a feasible transition to clean cities.

However, Volt recognises that many entrepreneurs have serious concerns. We are happy to engage in dialogue with entrepreneurs to discuss any necessary adjustments. In this way, we can increase support for this necessary step towards a cleaner city. We will also keep a close eye on any unforeseen circumstances and other limiting factors (such as inadequate charging facilities due to grid congestion). We are sticking to the core objective of the zero-emission zones: by 2030, Gouda must comply with WHO air quality standards.

In this way, we are ensuring that government policy is as predictable as possible, without penalising entrepreneurs who have already made the switch.

³² [Design principles for a car-free city](#)

³³ [REALLOCATE - Eurocities](#)

³⁴ [Shared mobility hubs – lessons learnt from the ShareDiMobiHub project - European Commission](#)

³⁵ [Mobility hub: how it helps with your mobility transition](#)

³⁶ [Network vision for logistics hubs](#)

³⁷ <https://www.aefinfo.fr/depeche/591353-strasbourg-cree-une-zone-a-circulation-restreinte-pour-reduire-l-acces-de-son-centre-ville-aux-vehicules-de-livraison>

³⁸ <https://www.technieknederland.nl/home/nieuws/2024/deze-14-gemeenten-voeren-een-zero-emissiezone-in-per-1-januari-2025/>

At the same time, we are investigating the possibility of extending the zero-emission zone to the station area.

Good and affordable public transport

We are committed to providing good and affordable public transport because access to work, education, healthcare, family and leisure starts with accessibility. We are working closely with the province and our neighbouring municipalities on this and are investigating new public transport solutions. This is important for people with limited mobility.

Volt is considering the following:

- Regular and affordable minibus transport in and around the city centre.
- Working with the province to plan fares and routes in such a way that new housing developments have good public transport connections from the outset.
- We are in favour of a new public transport station between the fifth village of Corteland (municipality of Zuidplas) and Westergouwe, because accessibility is an essential part of new construction.

More support for new mobility

We want positive communication about the major change in mobility. We are committed to a cultural change when it comes to mobility and are inspired by, for example, the [global Parking Day](#) (as in Amsterdam, Münster or Cologne).

The transition to a new mobility system must be done in the right way, in consultation with residents. Residents of the city centre must be offered affordable parking rates. Visitors to the city centre will be charged a rate that discourages parking in the city centre if there are also parking spaces within walking distance. A solution will be sought for professionals and people who really need a car on a daily basis (e.g. due to a disability). **If there is an increase in rates, this must be done gradually and announced well in advance.**

We involve the city's residents and businesses in the preliminary stages of all major changes.

Sustainable and affordable energy for the future

An ambitious goal: Gouda natural gas-free by 2040

At European level, Volt is striving for a sustainable energy system by 2035 and a fully sustainable economy by 2040 to combat climate change and improve Europe's competitive position in the 21st century. At municipal level, too, we are committed to a sustainable future because climate change can only be tackled collectively. This is not a green dream, it is purely economic realism. Natural gas will certainly not become cheaper in the coming years, and we must protect our (most vulnerable) citizens against this. We want Gouda to implement this perspective locally and to collaborate with other municipalities in doing so.

Gouda being natural gas-free by 2040 is the right ambition.

It is in line with the CO₂-neutral ambition for the Netherlands and the whole of Europe. However, it is high time to put words into action. More control, more pace. **Because this is an exciting transition for the first neighbourhoods, the authorities are making an extra contribution by organising neighbourhood-specific subsidies and/or public funding.**

- ³⁹Here, we are inspired by zero-energy projects in Europe, such as in the Sneinton neighbourhood in Nottingham, UK, where 150 homes have been made fossil-free through standardised insulation measures.⁴⁰
- Augustenborg in Sweden shows how large-scale renovation (1,800 homes) can be linked to a fossil-free heating system.⁴¹
- Closer to home, Terheijden in the municipality of Drimmelen (NB) is a fine example of a bottom-up transformation project: here, more than 500 homes are gradually being connected to an aquathermal system.⁴²

New energies for Gouda

We are researching and developing alternative heat sources that we can unlock in the short term, such as residual heat, aquathermal energy from the lakes of the Reeuwijkse Plassen, heat and cold storage, and green gas. We are starting immediately. A heating programme will be launched in 2026 to shape the entire natural gas-free by 2040 strategy. We apply the following principles:

- A clear preferred solution and a target date for making every neighbourhood in Gouda sustainable.
- The municipality must set an example. Our ambition is for 90% of municipal property to be natural gas-free and well insulated by 2035.
- From 2031 onwards, a new neighbourhood in Gouda will switch to a sustainable heating supply every year, which should eventually be cheaper than natural gas.
- In urban areas, heat networks help to reduce the load on the electricity grid. They are also cheaper for society than other solutions. However, these are complex projects that require careful management by the municipality. We are therefore taking a clear and definitive position on the development of one (or more) heat networks in Gouda. We are prioritising social housing and apartment complexes.
- Insulation and hybrid heat pumps are now becoming the standard where possible, except in neighbourhoods where a heat network is being installed.
- Where these are being developed, we are working closely with energy cooperatives (e.g. Energiecoöperatie Kort Haarlem).

When it comes to electricity generation:

- We advocate large-scale development of solar and wind energy at the regional level, preferably along heavy infrastructure such as motorways and industrial estates. We promote this in the Regional Energy Strategy.
- With regard to solar energy, we prefer the Cooperative Energy Generation Subsidy Scheme (SCE), which allows a neighbourhood to invest jointly in large-scale energy

³⁹ This means that over the course of a whole year, the home produces as much energy as it consumes.

⁴⁰ https://hdawards.org/scheme/nottingham-energiesprong-phases-1-and-2/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁴¹ <https://world-habitat.org/world-habitat-awards/winners-and-finalists/ekostaden-augustenborg/#award-content>

⁴² <https://www.nplw.nl/proeftuinen/terheijden-drimmelen>

generation (possibly supplemented with a neighbourhood battery) and self-consumption.

- We aim for 50% local ownership of sustainable energy projects.
- Where possible, Volt wants to equip the roofs of commercial properties and housing associations with green roofs and/or solar panels.

Through this way of working together, we are building a sustainable future in which local communities play an active role in achieving climate goals. And where the municipality also takes on a leading role.

Solving congestion on the electricity grid

Congestion of the electricity grid is an urgent challenge for the whole of the Netherlands, including Gouda. In the coming years, several new construction projects and new businesses will be hampered by insufficient capacity on the electricity grid. This problem stands in the way of a sustainable and future-oriented energy supply.

As a municipality, we are ensuring sufficient space for cables, transformer stations and substations. This will enable us to upgrade the electricity grid.

We help residents and businesses to use electricity more consciously, for example by charging cars outside peak times, using smart grids in new buildings so that heat pumps are not all in operation at the same time, and using grid-aware neighbourhood batteries. Gouda is making room for these developments in new construction projects.

- *Utrecht uses car batteries for storage and flexible use of sustainable energy. A specially developed charging station allows the stored energy to be discharged back into the grid (bidirectional charging)⁴³.*
- *In Bornholm, Denmark, households were provided with smart meters, smart thermostats and access to real-time price signals (15-minute price profiles). This leads to smarter use of renewable energy without any loss of comfort.⁴⁴*

⁴³ <https://www.wedrivesolar.nl/>

⁴⁴ <https://insideenergy.org/2015/06/03/on-a-tiny-danish-island-making-electricity-demand-meet-supply/>

Closing remarks

New politics require new practices. This is how we want to carry out our mandate:

Co-leadership

At Volt Europe, we adhere to the principle of co-leadership. Almost all leadership positions are shared between a woman and a man. We also adhere to this principle in the campaign for the local elections and for our upcoming mandate:

- The two main candidates are co-leaders during the campaign.
- If we win one seat, the mandate will be split in two: the two co-leaders will take turns being councillor and citizen councillor.
- If we win two or more seats, the party chairmanship will alternate between the two main candidates.

Governing party

We are a relatively new party, certainly in local politics, but we have many skills and administrative experience in our list of candidates and in our community. We are prepared to participate in coalition talks and to provide an alderman.

Accountability

Every year, the Volt faction is accountable for, among other things, which special motions we have voted for or against and which amendments we have submitted.