

Alblasserdam, traditionally a home port for entrepreneurs

# “We are a dynamic community”

For centuries, Alblasserdam and entrepreneurship have had strong connections. The maritime industry and logistics sector have played a crucial role in the development and culture of this small city located on a dike at the river Noord. It is for a reason that industrial estates cover approximately half of the urbanised area. We are a dynamic community.

Alblasserdam with its open connections to the North Sea and situated next to the A15 motorway has always been an attractive business community. This small city in the province of South Holland has 155 hectares of industrial space with no less than 840 enterprises, accounting for 7,250 jobs. A small city where the labour force actually surpasses its working population. With three highly operational industrial estates, Alblasserdam boasts four quays and a container transfer depot served by inland shipping lines to and from the Port of Rotterdam.

The industrial estates cover about 50% of urban territory in Alblasserdam. 10 hectares are still available. Aerial photos Cees Schilthuisen



Councillor Peter Verheij: We are a dynamic community, dedicated to maintaining good contact with entrepreneurs. Photo Henk van Veen.

### Small city character

With a population of only 20,000 inhabitants, the character of the small town is reflected in the close cooperation and short lines of communication with local government. “We are a dynamic community and appreciate the importance of maintaining good relations with entrepreneurs. This suits our role in governance and the community agendas, created in cooperation with residents, entrepreneurs and educational institutions”, says Peter Verheij, councillor for economy and employment. Also the quarterly consultations with local

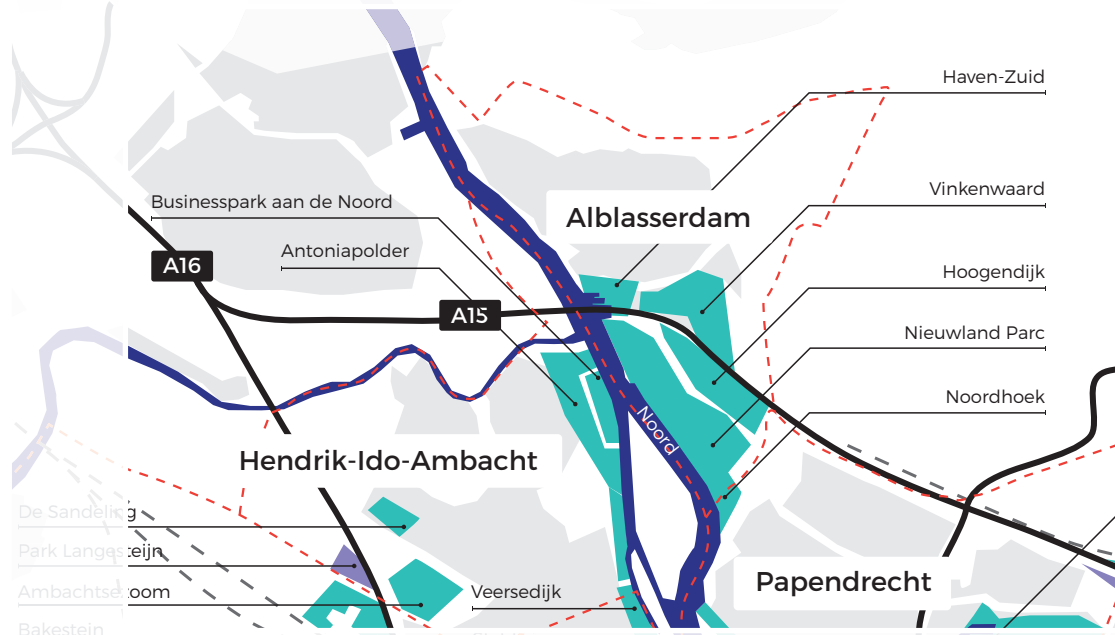
business representatives, company visits and the presence at networking events held by entrepreneurial associations fits in this way of governing.

### Connecting

Alblasserdam also has two company contact officers: Lennard Elsman and Peter Bakker. They are the first point of contact with the local council. “We facilitate and support entrepreneurs who can approach us with a variety of questions and ideas or complaints. We familiarise them with local government matters and actively inform them on developments”, says Lennard Elsman. Peter Bakker: “Additionally, we connect entrepreneurs with each other. We visit numerous companies, which helps us finding opportunities for collaboration and sharing our contacts.”

### Entrepreneurial Fund

The creation of an Entrepreneurial Fund in 2016 marks a new phase in collaboration. The initiative of the Entrepreneurial Association De Noord and Entrepreneurial Circle Alblasserdam (OKA) has been further developed in collaboration with the municipality. The introduction of a small surcharge in municipal tax allows entrepreneurs to collaboratively finance such plans as collective security measures in industrial areas, atmospheric street lighting in shopping areas and the further improvement of connections between educational institutes and the labour market.



All organisations participate, including non-profit organisations such as educational institutions, health care organisations and the municipality itself. Elsman: “This fund is a way to strengthen the organisational power of entrepreneurs and to collaborate to further boost both the business climate and economic development of Alblasserdam.”

Substantial investments have been made by the affiliation of the six cities that form the region Drecht Cities, to create connections between educational institutions and the labour market. Alblasserdam’s successful company ‘technology route’, invites even the youngest pupils to get acquainted with career opportunities in the innovative local manufacturing industry.

### World League

Both the mayor and contact officers are actively involved with social media and share any economic developments in Alblasserdam, whenever it is possible. Verheij: “Our commitment is strong. We take great pride in the dynamics of Alblasserdam as part of the Drecht Cities, the leading maritime region in the Netherlands.”

He points out yacht building at Oceanco and welding robots at Valk Welding: featuring in the world’s group of leading companies. Just ‘around the corner’ in Kinderdijk, IHC builds vessels and parts for the dredging and off-

### Industrial estates

**Hoogendijk:** 16 hectares  
**Parc Nieuwland:** 47 hectares  
**Vinkenwaard:** 43 hectares  
Ten (10) hectares available for new construction at Hoogendijk and Parc Nieuwland sites.



### Company Contact Officers

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Company Contact Officers Peter Bakker (left) and Lennard Elsman. Photo Cees van der Wal



shore industries. Steel producers, Nedstaal and FN Steel are located on the other side of the A15 motorway. Alblasserdam has an extensive logistics sector with international transporters like Maat, De Haan and Mondial Movers and just recently, the Staay Food Group, international supplier of a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Additionally, Alblasserdam is home to many suppliers in the maritime industry. From coating firms to naval architects, engineering consultants, pipeline companies, marine electrical and other technical specialists. These firms focus on sustainability, lower energy consumption, reduced emissions and a so-called circular economy. Furthermore, the small city has lots of people who don’t mind rolling up their sleeves. “This also belongs to the tradition of Alblasserdam: a powerful work ethic.”

Alblasserdam is strong in innovative manufacturing industries. Photo Cees van der Wal





# Oceanco – Almost a quarter of a century linked to Alblasserdam

## ‘Top of the world in yacht building sector’

When entering Alblasserdam, whether approaching by bridge or by water, one cannot avoid noticing the enormous black and white sheds of Oceanco. Luxury mega yachts, that sail the world are built here. “Pride in our company, in this village, is immense and justifiably so. Do not underestimate what is built in Alblasserdam. This is truly the top of the world in the field of yacht building.”

Oceanco is part of the centuries-old shipbuilding tradition on the banks of the river Noord in Alblasserdam. Its location on the river with open connections to the sea, was for this company with headquarters in Monaco, the reason to set up in the village in 1993. An order for three mega yachts forced Oceanco to search for a suitable shed at least 95 metres long. Anno 2016, every year, one or two mega yachts are still launched. A new climate-controlled yacht building shed (33 metres tall, 152 metres long with a dry dock of 10 meters deep) with offices, has recently been opened, with a third yacht building shed being a possibility in the future. ‘About 10 years ago, the average yacht had a length of 40 to 50 metres. Our previous owner had predicted that within a few years we would be building

70 to 80-meter yachts. Mohammed Al Barwani, our current owner foresaw a demand for even longer vessels: 90 to 120 metres. This trend is set to continue. As well as designing and building motor yachts, we also build super sailing yachts with a length of 85 to 110 metres”, says sales manager Bas Swanink.

### Transparent

In the board room, he points at fine scale models, just like the real yachts with a swimming pool, jacuzzi or helideck. Especially customers from the Middle East, Russia and the United States are fond of large custom-built super yachts, sometimes not inferior in height to six-storey buildings. Due to clever foresight, Oceanco bought the Alblasserdam shipyard, including

A luxury mega yacht built by Oceanco in 2015.

All photos originate from Oceanco



New climate-controlled shed with offices, operational in 2015 (33 meters tall, 152 metres long with dry dock of 10 metres deep).

the old shed and surrounding area. Then the first plans were made for expansion. “We negotiated successfully with the local council”, says marketing manager Paris Baloumis. “The municipality has been most positive and its well-organised infrastructure is attractive to entrepreneurs: regulations are transparent with good support and efficient communication channels. Inhabitants also warmly welcomed us. At the opening of our new yacht building shed in 2015, we welcomed some 4,000 people in just two days.” Oceanco involved all final-year pupils of Alblasserdam’s primary schools in creating a work of art to commemorate this highlight. Connecting with the youth is important to us. Consequently, we also sponsor a local events organisation. This enables us to give something back to the community”, says Swanink.

Oceanco involved all final-year pupils of Alblasserdam’s primary schools in creating a work of art to commemorate the opening of the new yacht building shed.



Gemeente  
**Alblasserdam**



Using high-tech telematics, Oceanco can provide 24/7 support to yachts from headquarters.

### Innovative

Baloumis: “After the open day, parents called us to ask what their children should study to be able to work at Oceanco. We can always use young, well-educated people, we are a young, dynamic and innovative company. The knowledge and expertise is here in Alblasserdam. Oceanco employs 180 permanent staff, mainly in research and development, design, engineering and management. Designing and building yachts is not the only thing we do. Using high-tech telematics, we can support yachts 24/7 from our headquarters. In case of technical problems, our technicians can provide remote support. Additionally, we can advise owners about optimum energy consumption.”

### Passion

“Our customers are demanding and choose Oceanco because of its quality and innovative designs, as well as our progressive lines. In addition, they choose us because of our passion and attention to detail: we invest a considerable number of hours into building the perfect yacht, together with hundreds of employees and sub-contractors. Sometimes 1,000 people are working at the shipyard. We always look for the best professional contractor to carry out the work: sometimes a local, sometimes from somewhere else. Players with whom we regularly work, usually settle in this maritime region”, says Swanink. “We strongly believe that quality is all that matters and the municipality is of the same opinion. Cooperation is key, with subcontractors and the municipality. We depend on each other to strengthen each other.”

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