Leeuwarden Wilhelmina Square

Previous state

The Wilhelmina Square is the heart of an area called Zaailand, the southern part of the centre of Leeuwarden. Leeuwarden (with 110.000 inhabitants) is the capital of the province Friesland, in the north of the Netherlands. The Zaailand lies on the edge of the historic centre, and transformed from city edge to urban square over the years. Around the square a series of old and new buildings have gathered over time. The most important one is the old, classicistic courthouse, built in the 19th century. Some thirty years ago a shopping mall and the stock-exchange building was added and an underground parking garage was introduced. Until recently the square was a large, open and windy place, bordering the downtown shopping area and used for weekly markets and incidental festivities such as the yearly fair. A turn was made when the architect Abe Bonnema left the city a large sum of money, dedicated to build a new Frisian Museum on the square. The city greatly accepted this gesture, understanding it as a chance to improve the quality of this part of town. An urban plan was made, to cater for the new museum, enlargement of the parking garage and additional housing and shops. As a result of that, the square became smaller in size, creating opportunities for a more intimate urban space.

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