



EURO  
CITIES

L'Île de Nantes



## From industrial to sustainable

When the Nantes shipyards closed, they left behind not only physical scars but a strong impact on the local community. The city's regeneration plan is transforming the industrial area into a sustainable living, working and leisure environment.

Shortly after the last ship was built in 1987, the city began exploring the future of the island. With an extensive heritage of port activities, Nantes has always had a strong relationship with the river Loire. But when the shipyards went, this was put in jeopardy. The focus of discussions was on rebuilding this bond. The city wanted to construct an area with space for housing, educational institutes, business, leisure and major infrastructure that would accommodate all populations.

### Phase I (2000-2010)

By 1998, three multidisciplinary teams had been appointed by the city to explore visions for the project together with institutional stakeholders, associations and residents. One team was appointed to lead on the development, and phase I (2000-2010) began.



The creative quarter is the result of 20 years of Nantes cultural policies. But it is also a starting point. Thanks to the creative quarter, a new economy has been born.... Nantes could become one of the European capitals of cultural and creative industries. But to exist tomorrow, we need recognise this and invest today.

*Jean-Marc Ayrault, president of Nantes Metropole from 1989-2012*

cities in action

September 2013

where: Nantes, France  
what: economic development  
when: 1990-2030

This phase was designed to create a vision that would adapt and respond to future urban dynamics. Public spaces were reconfigured and new links were made with the river, including access roads, bridges and footpaths. Traffic was also diverted to provide for a calmer living environment, and connections were established with the city's historic centre.

Developments such as the Prairie au Duc eco-district began, providing a mixed-use area with convenient links to centres of employment, such as the Euronantes business park. By the end of the first phase, some 4,400 new housing units had been built, of which 23% are for social housing.

## From industrial to creative

Phase I also cemented the island's creative future. As early as 1990 it was already establishing its cultural credentials: the first edition of the Les Allumées festival was held in a former factory, and this soon became the festival's nightspot.

Around the same time, thousands of residents gathered for a performance of Othello in a nearby hangar, and just a few years later a group of architects moved into a bunker on the island, paving the way for the island's underground scene.

The former industrial buildings attracted cultural and creative entrepreneurs, including the now world-renowned Les Machines de l'Île. Their arrival shaped a whole new creative and cultural district.

In an effort to preserve the island's heritage, other developments took place in and around the former industrial buildings. The shipyards were turned into an urban park, the Banana Hangar and Quai des Antilles became culture and leisure venues and one of the warehouses was converted into a garden.

## Phase II (2010-2030)

Phase II began in 2010 and will run until 2030. It will continue to develop sites such as the Prairie du Duc and the new creative district, and establish new connections with the rest of the city. A new bus line opened in September 2013 and another is being developed. In

view of sustainability, soft transport modes are favoured; a new bicycle boulevard will connect both ends of the island. Meanwhile, land that had housed the railway infrastructure so important during the industrial era will play a new role. The city intends to redevelop the embankments and build a park on former railway land.

## Making a mark

Industrial decline has a lasting impact, and this is a long term project for Nantes. The first phase helped attract a new generation of industries and residents who are already making a mark on the area.

Figures from 2012 show the average income on the island at 20% lower than that of the rest of the city, and with a young population (35% aged 15-29), the priority is to provide new job opportunities, education facilities and affordable housing.

Upon completion by 2030, l'Île de Nantes is expected to incorporate 160 hectares of reclaimed land, 10,000 new housing units, 450,000m<sup>2</sup> of new office and business space and 350,000m<sup>2</sup> of new infrastructure.

