



ANTWERP city of Fashion

Fashion plan | City Council Meeting of 2
July 2021



Executive summary

Antwerp enjoys a special status in the fashion world. As a small city, it has managed to cement its position for several decades, alongside such international powerhouses as Paris, London, Milan and New York. Our city has acquired this status thanks to the strong reputation of the Fashion Department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the MoMu fashion museum and the creativity and innovativeness of fashion entrepreneurs who were trained in Antwerp. The city also has a unique and qualitative retail offering.

But Antwerp's international position as a fashion city is under threat. Elsewhere, designers and entrepreneurs that are just starting out receive better support, contributing to the flight of this creative class from Antwerp. While the urban environment offers unrivalled opportunities, these are also underexploited. The city is thus punching below its weight.

We joined forces with key industry figures and the Flanders District of Creativity to perform a thorough analysis of the fashion industry. We asked British fashion expert Jan Miller to organise an industry survey and develop a proposal for a strategic vision based on this.

The analysis highlights Antwerp's strength in addition to its many weaknesses. Antwerp is lagging behind other fashion cities, both strategically and in terms of an industry-led vision. There is a consistent lack of interaction across the fashion network as a whole. The pool of new fashion entrepreneurs and new retailers wishing to launch their own line to market is still too small. The identity and brand DNA of Antwerpen Modestad/Antwerp Fashion City are barely utilised. The city does not have iconic "fashion moments" that give the industry an opportunity to excel.

With this new vision the City Council also wants to capitalise on bottom-up initiatives from the anchors and the market: we listen to their concerns and 'keep our finger on the pulse'. With the aim of once again punching above our weight. Antwerp has the right tools for this: the networks, infrastructure, talent, competences, supporting organisations and, above all, economies of scale.

This vision focuses on strengthening the association between fashion and the city (as a brand). We intend to develop this in good faith, creating an environment in which emerging fashion talent is valued and can thrive once again. We have translated this vision into five policy lines, or fashion lines:

1. We give the industry and our fashion anchors the recognition that they deserve;
2. We ensure that the fashion industry finds the talent it needs;
3. We promote new entrepreneurship in the fashion industry;
4. We create a permanent fashion experience in the city;
5. We better position our fashion city as a brand, both locally and at international level.

We want to give Antwerp's fashion industry new wind beneath its wings with this fashion plan, setting out guidelines for the next decade, with 2030 as our horizon. At the same time, we are also developing targeted actions, which the City Council wants to see implemented or on the rails before 2025.

Executive summary

Actions in the spotlight:

1. We will **take maximum advantage** of the fashion autumn of 2021 to create new fashion momentum in Antwerp. We will develop a solid network with our fashion anchors – the MoMu Fashion Museum, the Fashion Department and the Fashion Entrepreneurs –, which provides structural support for their international leadership position. The City will designate a **single point of contact** for the fashion industry.
2. From autumn 2021 onwards, we will boost talent that starts a fashion business. We will develop professional **mentoring for new fashion enterprises**.
3. We will offer **business coaching** to fashion entrepreneurs, including fashion retailers launching their own fashion line.
4. We will provide support for entrepreneurship in the fashion industry by paying attention to the **framework conditions**, such as access to talent, capital and markets. Where necessary, we will use the city's subsidy rules to provide support to fashion entrepreneurs.
5. We will provide support to the VDAB (Flemish Public Employment Agency) which has chosen to embed and further develop its **digital pattern drawing** training programme in Antwerp. The fashion industry also urgently needs trained talent with digital skills.
6. We will provide support for private initiatives that provide **ateliers**, shared infrastructure and matchmaking to fashion students and fashion start-ups.
7. From 2022, the City will provide structural support for the Fashion Department's prestigious **annual catwalk show**.
8. We will help strengthen the **outreach activities** of the MoMu Fashion Museum
9. To raise Antwerp's profile as a Fashion and Shopping City again, we will develop an **experience area in the fashion district**.
10. From 2022 onwards, we will make sure that the city offers a permanent fashion **experience**, with a calendar of activities, initiatives and events.
11. In 2022, we will develop the association between fashion and the city (as a brand) to cement Antwerp's national and international reputation as a fashion city. **Fashion continues to be a strong brand for Antwerp**.



Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Momentum
3. Analysis of the Fashion City. Underexploited opportunities
4. Vision for the Fashion City. Punching above our weight again.
5. Action plan Fashion City 2022-2025. Sow and reap

Annexes

00. Introduction

Antwerp launches a new fashion vision, with a horizon to 2030. The fashion industry is continually evolving and by 2030, the industry will have radically changed. This change is already ongoing at international level. Sustainability is becoming increasingly important factor, with a partial return to local production. The link with next-gen materials in various technologies and products - fashion tech - is on the verge of an acceleration. Digital platforms and retail concepts replace physical fashion weeks. Consumers expect an experience and a multichannel approach. Empty shops are putting pressure on the high street. Businesses need to rethink their business models and the demand for technically trained employees is tremendous. Antwerp needs to define a clear vision if it wants to remain in step with this change.

In addition to capitalising on our strengths, we mainly want to take fully advantage of any major growth opportunities to strengthen our appeal. Antwerp enjoys a special status in the fashion world. Despite being a small city, it is still cited in one breath with major international fashion capitals such as Paris, London, Milan or New York, with a strong foundation, such as their annual fashion weeks. And this must remain unchanged in 2030.

Our city owes its fashion city status to the solid reputation of the Fashion Department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the MoMu fashion museum and the creativity and innovativeness of fashion designers who were trained in Antwerp. Antwerp Academy alumni attract a lot of international press coverage. Fashion insiders consider Antwerp Fashion to be a hallmark for high quality.

But it seems that fashion start-ups and emerging fashion designers receive better support in the other cities, thus increasing the risk of the flight of this creative class. Both strategically and in terms of an industry-led vision, the city is lagging behind, even the Tier 2 cities.

The research of British fashion expert Jan Miller revealed that the fashion industry has not been a priority sector for the City of Antwerp in recent years, even though it co-financed several projects. Several ad-hoc fashion initiatives were organised. The City mainly responded to individual requests and needs. But in effect, there was no city-wide, umbrella strategy in place. Perhaps the City underestimated the fashion industry's economic value.

Moreover, the fashion industry and its stakeholders have never organised themselves in a coordinated strategy or lobby for collective support.

With this fashion plan, our aim is to evolve towards a joint objective for the stakeholders, based on what unites us in Antwerp fashion.

With this new vision, the City of Antwerp wants to retain its assets and strengths as a Tier 1 fashion city, catching up with and even trumping the Tier 2 fashion cities in other respects.

The new vision will focus on four key elements:

1. We give the industry and our fashion anchors the recognition they deserve;
2. We ensure that the fashion industry finds the talent it needs;
3. We promote new entrepreneurship in the fashion industry.
4. We create a permanent fashion experience in the city;
5. We strengthen our brand as a fashion city, both locally and at international level.

00. Introduction



Antwerp confirms its international role as a laboratory for ground-breaking fashion entrepreneurs: creative, exciting and blessed with a positive reputation

Recognition of anchors and the industry
Antwerp is and will always be a fashion capital, a reputation that we want to reconfirm. We have therefore opted for a facilitating policy, establishing direct relationships with the industry.

We continue to play our international role as a laboratory for ground-breaking fashion entrepreneurs: creative, exciting and blessed with a positive reputation.

We continue to provide support to the anchors of this industry: the entrepreneurs, the Fashion Department, and the MoMu.

Strengthening talent and entrepreneurship
Analyses by Flanders District of Creativity and international fashion expert Jan Miller have revealed that the City insufficiently supports and encourages local talent. Nor does it succeed in holding to its trained talent. This is the one of the most crucial elements in the vision and the associated action plan.
Antwerp has the ambition to provide economic support to industry talent by promoting entrepreneurship in fashion. Fashion entrepreneurs must become the driver behind a real fashion revival in Antwerp. Our fashion entrepreneurs /ambassadors confirm Antwerp's position as the most attractive place to start a fashion business, work in fashion, study fashion and experience fashion.

Recognisability in the city
The city lacks 'fashion moments' to promote the industry to the outside world. In this action plan, we make targeted proposals for creating more fashion moments. The reopening of the MoMu Fashion Museum will be followed by a fashion autumn 2021. Our aim is to retain the best elements of this autumn programme for the following years.
Fashion will also be showcased more widely in the city so that visitors can really sense that Antwerp is a Fashion City.

Association between fashion and the city (as a brand)
The fashion anchors - the entrepreneurs, the Fashion Department and the MoMu - define the DNA and USP of Antwerp as a Fashion City. Market research has shown that fashion is usually in the Top 5 keywords. Always after port city, diamond city, shopping city, and culture city. We want to increase the score for fashion. We will develop a strong national and international marketing approach.
"We have therefore opted for a facilitating policy, establishing direct relationships with the industry".

A rocket is shown launching vertically into space. The rocket is white with a red stripe and is surrounded by a bright yellow and orange flame and a white plume of smoke. The background is a dark blue space filled with numerous small white stars. A white horizontal bar is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the image, containing text.

01. Momentum

For the industry and for the City of Antwerp

01. Momentum for the industry and for the City of Antwerp

In 2020, the City of Antwerp commissioned an industry-wide survey and a SWOT analysis from Flanders District of Creativity and international fashion expert Jan Miller, based on which they were to provide a draft vision. It became clear, after the industry survey, that the momentum to collaborate is definitely there.

Momentum for the industry

A new generation of enthusiastic fashion talent is waiting in the wings. They will instigate a bottom-up movement in the industry with the support of established names and the City. An important fashion programme in the autumn of 2021 offers several opportunities for networking, business support, investments...

A new momentum and a new dynamic is being created.

Our previous generations of designers are prepared to act as mentors and are also looking to connect with the City. The fashion industry is insufficiently aware of the existing support. Using **open communication** we can tackle the major challenges, together with the industry, in the fields of training, innovative entrepreneurship and a fashion experience in the city.

The survey and the interaction in the working groups has brought about a new momentum and a new dynamic. Fashion entrepreneurs **are now speaking with each other** and see opportunities for starting up a business, collaborating or opening a shop in the city, thanks to direct contacts with the city. Given the diverse fashion landscape, **this shared vision offers an opportunity for a new start.**

Momentum for the city

The analysis highlighted Antwerp's unique position as a ground-breaking city, with a specific character and identity, and an internationally-acclaimed reputation for unique quality. To date, Antwerp was able to consolidate its role as a major fashion city in Belgium (and beyond). But Antwerp is facing increasing competition from other cities because of the limited attention and support for the fashion industry in Antwerp in the past ten years. We must now **recognise this unique positioning** and confirm our trust in the industry if we want to remain a Tier 1 city. Capitalising on our image as Belgium's most important fashion city and on the concept of 'Antwerp fashion' in our (inter)national contacts is key in this context.

The reopening of the MoMu is the perfect occasion to position Antwerp internationally as a **fashion city and fashion destination** with a unique and socially relevant take on fashion. Fashion 2.021 creates major momentum for the industry as a whole and marks the start of this strategic plan.

We must **work together to develop a fashion ecosystem** that is conducive to creating a community, with cross-fertilisations with other creative industries. The fashion industry is always one step ahead in terms of innovation and creation, and thus also in terms of value creation.

“A new momentum and a new dynamic is being created”



02. Analysis of the Fashion City

Underexploited opportunities



02. Analysis of the Fashion City. Underexploited opportunities

1. Introduction
2. Community
3. SWOT analysis Underexploited opportunities

02.0 Analysis of the Fashion City Introduction



In 2020, [British fashion expert Jan Miller](#) and FlandersDC were tasked with analysing Antwerp's position as a Fashion City. Jan Miller compared Antwerp with four Tier 2 cities, whose fashion credentials are more or less the same as Antwerp's, i.e., Copenhagen, Berlin, Barcelona and Amsterdam, as well as four Tier 1 fashion cities, namely Milan, London, New York and Paris.

Jan Miller's report on fashion in Antwerp is based on the AS IS report (26/11/2020) which compiled the conclusions of 57 interviews with stakeholders from various levels and fields and a consultation with the relevant departments within the City (11.12.2020 and 07.02.2021). The report has been appended to this fashion plan.

It is important to note that "the fashion industry" was included [as a whole](#). This includes:

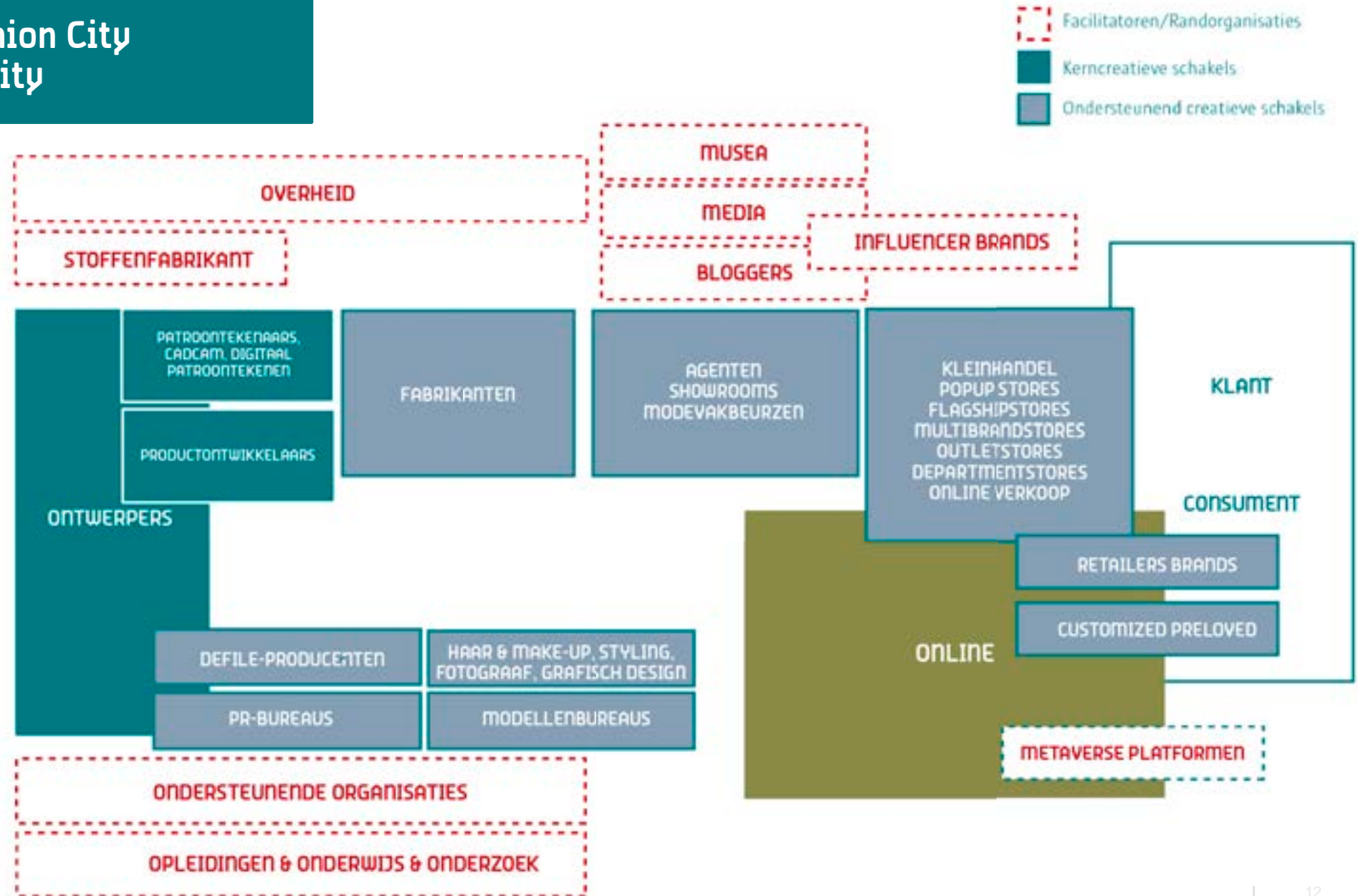
- professional clothing and accessory designers, labels and producers
- fashion retail players
- service providers, suppliers, creative and cultural players who specifically focus on fashion or collaborate with the fashion industry, including fashion photographers, stylists...
- software companies, designers, visual artists...
- institutions offering fashion training
- The companies and organisations that create and/or promote fashion experiences, such as tours and events 1

The [fashion lines](#) of the vision and policy are [based on the analyses and insights](#) that were acquired about the following:

1. Support for high-quality fashion education and guidance to an entrepreneurial career
2. Structural approach to entrepreneurship and support
3. Have the Fashion Museum capitalise on its PR role and international image
4. Use a new set of ambassadors in marketing
5. Better capitalise on our USP of innovation and identity
6. Assist with the development of a strategic vision and policy
7. Facilitate fashion journalists and critical networks
8. Be inclusive and involve a diverse audience and young people
9. Promote and support our talent with fashion moments and events and control quality
10. Target high-end shopping players to attract leading (international) brands and ensure mid-segment brands follow in their wake
11. Create a meeting place in the city where we connect the younger generations with established names

02.1 Analysis of the Fashion City Heterogeneous community

A community that does not (insufficiently) know each other



Source: DE MODE-INDUSTRIE IN VLAANDEREN GESEGMENTEERD | June 2013
With update for new segments in Fashion Plan 2021

02.2 Fashion City: an analysis

SWOT analysis. Underexploited opportunities

- An abundance of creative talent
- A long fashion history
- The Fashion Department is internationally-acclaimed and connected
- The MoMu is in the top 10 of world-class fashion museums
- The city is large enough to be relevant, small enough to care about it, and know each other well, to foster innovation
- Antwerp enjoys unique status as a hallmark for high quality in the fashion world
- Antwerp a strong shopping city

STERKTES

KANSEN

- Antwerp fashion is a USP with an avant-garde and innovative character.
- Make optimum use of the unique character of this industry in consultation with the industry
- Fully recognise and capitalise on the importance of Antwerp fashion for the promotion and image of our city
- Invest in the international and local promotion of Antwerp fashion
- Invest to stimulate interdisciplinary and transversal collaborations at the interface of innovation in materials and technology and creative design industries, including the community of ANTWERP.POWERED BY CREATIVES
- Business coaching and long-term agreements with the Fashion Department
- The Antwerp Management School can develop alternatives to the Fashion Management Summer School and the one-year Master's in Fashion Management



- The fashion stakeholders and infrastructure are insufficiently aligned
- The ecosystem is heterogeneous and does not know each other (sufficiently)
- Insufficient appropriate business support mechanisms
- Antwerp does not invest in its brand image, nor does it protect it
- The higher rental prices for retail properties in or near the fashion district make it exceedingly difficult for young start-ups to have a window/visibility in the fashion district

ZWAKTES

BEDREIGINGEN

- No clearly defined fashion strategy or policy
- A number of parts are lacking or are too weak to develop a full-fledged ecosystem, i.e., the VCs, industry and production.
- The need for systematic attention to Fashion from policy-makers
- No guarantees in terms of the continuity of financing and support for fashion projects
- Complex and expensive start-up process for fashion businesses
- The radical changes in the industry. The power of large numbers and disruptive business models
- Economic recovery after the pandemic is uncertain for the industry
- A number of Tier 2 cities have made much more progress in terms of strategic coordination



03. Vision for a Fashion City

Punching above our weight again



03. Vision for a Fashion City. Punching above our weight again

1. Introduction
2. Strengthening anchors
3. Talent for the fashion industry
4. The new fashion entrepreneurs
5. Experience fashion in the city
6. Fashion as a strong brand



03.0 Vision for a Fashion City Introduction

Punching above our weight again

Antwerp may be a city by the river, but as a city it also likes to swim against the tide, including in fashion. Antwerp has dozens of independent fashion entrepreneurs and retailers who do things differently.

The City will continue to support **innovation** and ‘**doing things differently**’ with a new vision on fashion.

A vision that will only serve to **strengthen Antwerp’s position** as a world-class fashion city. The City and the fashion industry will jointly promote this vision and translate it into policy and actions. The scope of this vision is the period from 2021-2030. *The City has explicitly opted for a long-term approach for fashion.*

We intend to punch above our weight again, starting from our **ambitions and the city’s positioning as a fashion laboratory**.

As a city, Antwerp is large enough to be relevant, small enough to care about it. The city is large enough to have the right tools for international success: the required networks, infrastructure, competences and supporting organisations. At the same time, the city is small enough to ensure easy access to all of the above. Connections are easily made because **everyone is just one connection apart**.

“Antwerp, the Fashion laboratory”: a place where ground-breaking, creative talent receives support, is promoted and challenged to reinvent fashion, the fashion world, and how it is experienced.”

03.0 Vision for a Fashion City Introduction



Building trust

In large fashion cities, the city's strategic vision on fashion is usually determined by the **dynamic in its fashion industry**. The City of Antwerp has therefore decided to develop this vision in consultation with the industry. All the **stakeholders** must be able to endorse this well-defined shared objective.

A vision has more chances of success if everyone endorses it, i.e., the industry, the city and people working at the **crossroads** of fashion and art or of fashion and technology.

That is why the further development of the fashion policy will be tested with the industry first.

That is how we build trust. Together we will strengthen Antwerp's position as a fashion city.

Facilitate, stimulate, and take action.

That is the City's role in this fashion vision and in the fashion action plan. This is not a random order. The City will always start by facilitating industry initiatives and, where possible, stimulating market dynamics. It will only develop its own initiatives where necessary or more efficient. The policy is based on initiatives that are initiated bottom-up by the industry.

The City will stimulate innovative and stronger fashion entrepreneurship, with an emphasis on 'doing things differently', on innovation.

03.0 Vision Antwerp Fashion City 5 fashion lines

Strengthening anchors

- targeted **business coaching** at the Academy
- an 'account manager' facilitates connections
- **alumni relations** at the Academy
- programme focussing on the fashion department's annual catwalk show
- reopening of the MoMu **valorisation**
- MoMu **PR role** fashion industry
- MoMu as a hub in the **fashion district**

Talent for the fashion industry

- **diverse** and inclusive
- strategic partners
- **supply/demand analysis**
- a wider offering
- attention to **technical profiles**

The new fashion entrepreneurs

- link creativity to entrepreneurship
- assistance for start-ups, opening a shop, raising capital
- "rules" Business coaching
- facilitates access to capital or markets
- exchange programmes
- **ideal testing ground**
- proactive approach and facilitation
- 'connecting business'
- value creation at the **intersection of materials and technological innovation and fundamental creativity**

Experience fashion in the city

- (inter)national **positioning** of the city as a creative and innovative hub
- attract **visitors**
- Modenatie as a **physical landmark** for experiencers
- **experience areas - fashion district**
- leading **core shopping area** of the Low Countries
- unique **mix**

Fashion as a strong brand

- develop the association between fashion and
- the city (as a brand)
- orchestrated and **coordinated** marketing approach
- collaboration in terms of message
- marketing of 'Antwerp **fashion**'
- Antwerpians as **ambassadors** of fashion

03.1 Vision for a Fashion City Strengthening Anchors



The vision must be a well-defined shared objective, which all the stakeholders must be able to endorse.

Fashion Department

The Fashion Department gave us a strong past and an active and creative present, and serves as the breeding ground for future talent. The City contributes resources to ensure that the Fashion Department continues to retain its position as a world-class fashion programme.

We express our clear support and develop targeted business coaching in a five-year plan. We raise the idea of an 'account manager' for the Fashion Department. This person connects the school with the urban, business and cultural fabric.

We provide support to set up an alumni outreach programme.

We announce the appointments of Antwerp alumni/fashion talent in Belgium and abroad.

Above all, we develop a programme around the annual catwalk show in June.

MoMu

The ModeMuseum or Fashion Museum must continue to cement its position in the ranking of world-class fashion museums and present a unique and socially relevant perspective on (international) fashion culture. The museum's clout and reputation are used to introduce contemporary Antwerp designers to international visitors.

The autumn of 2021 is an important time because of the MoMu's reopening. We will capitalise on the planned agenda, with the reopening in September 2021, in combination with an OFF calendar, in the following years.

But the MoMu can also play an important PR role for the fashion industry. We examine how we can have the MoMu assume its connecting role as the heart of the fashion district. The fashion district will become an important experience area in the City's retail policy.

The MoMu's potential as a physical hub is limited, however: it only has a few meeting rooms, an auditorium and a café. We will examine how these limited resources can be used for the industry in the medium to long term. One solution could be the interaction with a new, physical hub with the initiative to be taken by the market.

03.2 Vision for a Fashion City Talent for the fashion industry



The City of Antwerp wishes to confirm, strengthen and promote its position as a pioneer in fashion and as a city where ground-breaking creativity thrives.

Education

Antwerp has a lot of fashion talent, which is why we need to ensure that this source does not dry up. Fashion training programmes and fashion jobs must hold appeal for young people from diverse backgrounds.

We aim to **expand the range** of fashion training programmes, to include fashion theory, fashion history, (post)doctoral training programmes, fashion journalism and fashion management. These training programmes are geared towards students, but also include short programmes for managers.

We also pay special attention to the **technical profiles**.

Young people often have no idea or are insufficiently aware that secondary education also paves the way to a career in fashion.

We examine how young people can be guided towards jobs in the fashion industry and which **skills, techniques and profiles** are lacking or have shortcomings in the peripheral professions.

Next to creation and sales, we must also focus on ways of making these supporting professions more visible and appealing, to ensure that more young people are channelled to these professions. **Supplementary training programmes** can help young people with a passion for fashion reorient their careers.

To ensure that fashion becomes a continuing priority in training and employment policy, we will permanently monitor the **supply and demand analysis in terms of training for and jobs in the fashion industry**, along with strategic partners such as the Fashion Department, the Flemish Public Employment Agency VDAB, employer organisations, FlandersDC, the Antwerp Management School and other experts.

03.3 Vision for a Fashion City The new fashion entrepreneurs



The City and the fashion industry will collaborate to facilitate this growth, making the industry future-proof.

Fashion entrepreneurs make up the third lung of the fashion ecosystem, alongside the Fashion Department and the MoMu. **Fashion entrepreneurs** need to combine their **creativity with entrepreneurship**. Creativity and doing business are two sides of the same medal. Future fashion entrepreneurs, i.e., designers, retailers and supporting professions, must operate internationally. The City and the fashion industry will work together to facilitate this growth, making the industry **future-proof**.

That is why we will stimulate innovative and more resilient fashion entrepreneurship by ground-breaking fashion entrepreneurs, that is creative, exciting and blessed with a positive reputation. The ground-breaking creativity of their designs and creations must be reflected in the fashion industry's business models.

Start-ups in Antwerp

Since 2009, the fashion industry's turnover has increased by 39%, and added value by 23%. While Antwerp is lagging, compared with Flanders and other creative industries, we have succeeded in more or less retaining our position as a fashion city, compared with other cities.

We want to increase the number of fashion start-ups, whether in design, retail or peripheral professions. **Guidance for starting up a business or opening a shop in Antwerp and raising capital** or specific coaching should therefore be promoted through the most optimal **communication channels**.

The City will use its Business coaching "rules" for fashion and fashion retail startups.

Growth and internationalisation

Fashion entrepreneurs must use the city as a platform for growth and internationalisation. The city must offer an attractive alternative to finding a job in one of the leading international fashion houses. Antwerp must boost entrepreneurship in fashion. Possible **incentives** must tie in with the Ontwikkelingstrajecten KMO and Open Marktplaats "rules". These can be used to facilitate **access to capital or markets and provide support for innovation projects**. Major (international) **exchange programmes** such as united-fashion.eu will be offered.

03.3 Vision for a Fashion City

The new fashion entrepreneurs



The City expects that a fashion hub with ateliers and coaching will be developed as part of a private initiative.

Retail

The major brands have a presence on Antwerp's main shopping streets, but a **unique and original fashion offering** thrives in their shadow. It is also completely different from what's available on shopping streets all over Europe. Antwerp thus is the **perfect testing ground** for new products, designs or retail concepts, because we are situated at the crossroads of northern and southern cultures.

We will **proactively approach and facilitate** international fashion and retail brands so they come to see Antwerp as the perfect living lab for their new fashion and retail concepts.

Ecosystem

Antwerp needs a dense fashion industry ecosystem that sustainably reinforces innovation and value creation. The City will facilitate and offer support for research and partnerships in this context. This includes doctoral research, which will be financed with Baekelandt mandates.

In the meantime, we also help to **'connect business'** and the important fashion networks of the MoMu, the Fashion Department, FlandersDC, the Antwerp Management School, the Bryo fashion path, the Flemish Public Employment Agency VDAB... with each other so that these new fashion entrepreneurs can post exponential growth.

A central hub, in which all the stakeholders can meet with each, plays an important part in such an ecosystem. The Modenatie building, which is home to the MoMu, serves as a beacon for Antwerp's fashion industry, but it is not a real business hub. The City expects that a **fashion hub with ateliers and coaching** will be developed as part of a private initiative.

Crossovers

The abundance of talented (fashion) designers in the city can make a significant contribution to economic growth, the rejuvenation of traditional industries, and the creation of new jobs. Here too, however, the fashion industry must take advantage of every opportunity. Focussing on crossovers is crucial in this respect: the greatest value creation takes place at the **crossroads of materials and technological innovation and fundamental creativity**.

03.4 Vision for a Fashion City Experience fashion in the city



Events and B2C product development plays an important part in a more comprehensive experience offering because they create a sense of urgency.

Events and B2C product development

In our quest for a distinguishing story for Antwerp, we claim that Antwerp fashion enjoys unique status: that fashion, like diamonds, shopping, the port or Rubens, is inextricably linked with the city. Fashion is an asset for Antwerp. It contributes to **the city's (inter)national positioning as a creative and innovative hub**. Antwerp fashion is an internationally-acclaimed brand that we can be proud of. If we wish to maintain this claim, then fashion must have a tangible, visible presence in the city and in any experience of the city. In addition to retail as the most visible manifestation of fashion and its industry, we must therefore roll out a more comprehensive experience offering.

Events and B2C product development play an important part in a more comprehensive **experience offering** because they create a sense of urgency. They must contribute to **attracting visitors with a pure fashion motivation (OWN crowd), visitors with an increased interest in fashion (IN crowd) and the public in general (US crowd)**.

We have opted for a facilitating and negotiating policy in which coordination between the providers and the ecosystem plays an important part.

On the streets

As a B2C hub, the Modenatie is a strong icon, that can also be used visually and graphically in communication and marketing. **As such, the Modenatie becomes a physical landmark for people seeking a fashion experience in the city**. Besides this, the city's retail clusters underscore the city's image as a fashion destination. We analyse the role of a fashion district to develop **experience areas** and a new fashion hub. There is certainly some margin for accentuating the creative fashion aspect in public space. We examine whether creative installations can be installed in **public space** for a short or longer period of time (as a legacy of Fashion autumn 2021).

Innovative hotspots

Antwerp is home to the **leading core shopping area of the Low Countries**. The city offers a complete but **quirky mix** of mainstream retail, high-end fashion and charming, original boutiques as well as innovative concepts in a unique historic setting. In addition, Antwerp also has exceptional historic and cultural heritage and a diverse and high-quality hospitality offering. All within walking distance. The shopping area has international allure and the experience areas in it are easy to distinguish and market.

The city consistently capitalises on this in its international marketing campaigns.



03.5 Vision for a Fashion City Fashion as a strong brand

Marketing and communication about the fashion landscape help to make the abundance of creativity in fashion more visible for locals, visitors and international professionals. Anyone walking around Antwerp must see and experience the fashion city.

The City will develop the **association between fashion and the city (as a brand)** to reassert Antwerp's position on the international fashion scene, with the support of a new fashion vision.

City marketing, PR and communication underscore the key elements of the new fashion vision in an orchestrated and coordinated marketing approach. We thus start from a shared identity and the ecosystem capitalises on the same assets. We showcase Antwerp fashion as a source of ground-breaking and pure creativity to draw the attention of the local, national or international press, critics and influencers.

Focus on the message instead of the format.

In view of the heterogeneity of the partner landscape, our marketing approach must focus on **collaboration in terms of the message**, instead of format. Each of the involved partners thus is free to package the message starting from his/her own brand. A longread outlines the shared approach to be used for marketing 'Antwerp fashion'. The longread is a promotional and accessible translation of our long-term vision. We develop three variants, based on the distinction between three target groups: experiencers, entrepreneurs and talent.

Antwerpians as fashion ambassadors

Besides these three target groups, we must continue to capitalise on the local population's perception of Antwerp as a fashion city And on **locals' pride** in their city. As such, Antwerpians become ambassadors of fashion.

Orchestrated and coordinated marketing approach



04. Action plan 2022 – 2025

Sow and reap



04. Action Plan Fashion City. Sow and reap 2022 - 2025

1. Introduction
2. Strengthening our anchors
The Fashion Department
MoMu
2. Talent for the fashion industry
Education
3. The new fashion entrepreneurs
Start-ups and growth International
entrepreneurship Framework
conditions Crossovers
4. Experience fashion in the city
Fashion moments
Tourism/cultural product development
New hotspots
5. Fashion as a strong brand

04.0 Action Plan Fashion City Introduction



Coordination and exchange between networks, infrastructure, competences, and supporting organisations



To become a fashion lab, the city must promote coordination and exchange between networks and provide infrastructure, competences and supporting organisations.

We confirm the world-class position of the MoMu and capitalise on the fashion autumn of 2021 with an exhibition, retail and business programme aimed at our visitors and locals in the following years. To permanently promote Antwerp as a Fashion & Shopping City we will develop the Fashion District experience area in addition to creating a permanent fashion experience in the city.

We structurally tighten the ties with the Fashion Department so that its international talent and offshoots are further developed, by searching for a long-term solution for the annual catwalk show, helping to set up the alumni outreach programme and better explore the opportunities for guiding alumni to a career as fashion entrepreneurs.

By the end of the coalition period, we will have analysed the current needs in fashion education and how we can better target young people with an action plan that focuses on 'Training for the fashion industry'. In addition, we will offer guidance to this abundance of talent so they become ground-breaking entrepreneurs, holding on to them by offering mentoring, business coaching and development projects. We will also invest in the cross-fertilisation with materials and technical innovation and creative design.

At the end of 2021, we will launch a strategic exercise for the long-term marketing approach to give Antwerp the national and international image it deserves, while capitalising on our image as a ground-breaking and creative city.

We will invest in a fashion coordinator, who will become a permanent point of contact for the industry in the city. He or she will keep an internal helicopter view of umbrella cooperations and search for a sounding board in the industry. He or she shall also implement a coordinated policy, aimed at networking, infrastructure, competences and building support. This paves the way for industry SPOCs, who can also play a coordinating role in their respective fields.

“The City of Antwerp has set aside 10,600,000 euros of fashion-related resources in its multiannual budget for this coalition period. Approximately 53% of this amount consists of investment resources. The City will also use generic resources to roll out this action plan. Fashion, for example, will consistently be included in all of the city's shopping campaigns.”

04.1 Action Plan Fashion City Strengthening our anchors The Fashion Department



The Fashion Department is the source for our reputation as a fashion city

Antwerp's Fashion Department makes a significant contribution to Antwerp's reputation as a fashion city and is internationally-acclaimed. It is consistently included in the top 10 of unofficial rankings of world-class fashion programmes.

The Fashion Department is the source for our reputation as a fashion city. The Fashion Department gave us our strong past and an active and creative present, in addition to being the breeding ground for future talent. We must therefore provide robust support to this academic training programme, which is a mainstay and anchor of our fashion city.

Every year, exceptional talent that garners international coverage graduates from Antwerp's Fashion Department. With this fashion plan, we intend to provide support for this international reputation:

- We want to establish closer and more structural ties with the Fashion Department.
- We jointly facilitate business coaching of new talent for the fashion industry and also invest in long-term B2B and B2C communication.
- We develop an open communication network with the industry.
- We support the appointment of an account manager or relationship manager at the Academy, who will try to integrate the school in the urban, business, and cultural fabric, both in Belgium and abroad, and facilitate partnerships.
- We help to develop an Alumni Outreach programme. Many fashion training programmes have strong alumni outreach programmes. The Fashion Department currently lacks this, but will set up such a programme in 2022. Alumni outreach programmes promote a constant link with the industry, whether in Belgium or abroad. This is also crucial for the network and to achieve lasting integration.
- We facilitate the strengthening of the business programme of VOKA (Bryo and Plato) and the Antwerp Management School.

The City will use its resources to develop a structural solution for the Fashion Department's annual catwalk show. The show creates tremendous momentum. To date, support for the show was provided on an adhoc and last minute basis. A mutual long-term agreement (financial, location, relevant practical support, communication) will reduce the sense of urgency. The programme in the margin of the catwalk show brings a lot of international visitors to Antwerp but you could capitalise on this in several other ways including:

- link the business programme to the exhibition opening;
- create a prize consisting of a work placement or a scholarship;
- a meet & greet with the designers;
- use ambassadorship in combination with city communication.

04.1 Action Plan Fashion City Strengthening our anchors The MoMu



In early September 2021, the MoMu will open with an extensive programme. This important autumn season and the agenda, including the reopening combined with an OFF calendar, must be valorised in the following years.

The MoMu's activities will receive full support from the city. The Fashion Museum will be positioned as one of the anchors of the new fashion policy. The Antwerp Management School will conduct a study to map the museum's visitors and profiles. The learnings can be used for future policy.

A hub in the ecosystem

In addition to the MoMu, the Modenatie is also home to other important fashion industry players, such as the Fashion Department and Flanders DC. Together with leading fashion designers, who have retail premises nearby, this venue is an intrinsic part of the fashion district: a neighbourhood with a creative and cultural dynamic. The MoMu is a museum, but it also plays an important PR role for the fashion industry. See also "public outreach coordinator" under experience in the city.

Can the MoMu take fashion outside its walls and become the hub of the ecosystem, both as a physical building and in its PR role? The MoMu's potential as a physical hub is limited: it only has a few meeting rooms, an auditorium and a café. We will examine how these limited resources can be used for the industry in the medium to long term. Perhaps B2B (frequency to be determined) fashion events can be launched, bringing together entrepreneurs and fashion industry professionals. Other options to be examined include evening openings and an expansion.

The MoMu invests in [sustainability](#), [creativity](#) and [craftsmanship](#). A number of collabs were developed for the new MoMu shop and the museum is currently looking at how to communicate this. As part of this exercise, the MoMu is also currently looking at locations where the products of these collabs can be sold. The MoMu is also interested in interacting with a hub to be investigated if such a hub is set up by external partners.

"In the next few years, the MoMu will develop its programme, confirming its reputation as one of the top 10 world-class fashion museums. The MoMu is also looking at how it can attract an even [wider \(young\) audience](#) in a super-diverse city such as Antwerp and how to raise enthusiasm among this audience for fashion. Whereas the MoMu has mainly focused on Antwerp/Belgian avant-garde designer fashion in the past 20 years, both in its exhibition and collection policy, in the coming years it will investigate how initiatives can be developed to [involve other fashion segments](#), such as [streetwear](#), in its operations and exhibitions. In addition, the museum is exploring the possibility of a [textile lab \(together with DOEK vzw\)](#) at an external location, to attract and inspire [young people in a very accessible way](#). A textile lab where young people can acquire hands on experience working with techniques and machines has the potential to inspire a wider audience or even guide them towards a fashion-related job or training.

The museum also wants to play a [community-building role](#) with such initiatives."



04.2 Action Plan Fashion City Talent for the fashion industry Education

We must investigate how young people are oriented towards fashion training programmes

In terms of education and the Labour Market it is worth investigating how young people are oriented towards fashion training programmes:

This analysis can be completed by the end of the coalition period, culminating in an Action plan on 'Training programmes for the fashion industry' which shall include the following:

- start early
- community building, peers
- diversity
- in very accessible activities
- textile lab
- connect communities - community/neighbourhood outreach (Doek vzw)
- what do the surrounding countries do?

The A'REA UP plan offers several short-term possibilities. Within A'REA UP, there is a need to give students the opportunity to develop their talents and make study choices that reflect this. In the context of the future perspective of children and young people, it is crucial that they not only become acquainted with the obvious courses in compulsory education that lead to a career in the fashion industry. Other (STEM) training programmes that can culminate in a career in the fashion industry should also be highlighted.

Agreements are made with the Antwerp Management School about:

- an offering that is tailored to designers in short, affordable programmes, better alignment with the education that is provided in the Fashion Department;
- coordinate alumni outreach activities, link Fashion Management students with students of the Fashion Department;
- focus on collaborations between their business students and creative & academy students and start-ups.
- We have committed to a long-term research project, in collaboration with the University of Antwerp and the Antwerp Management School on craftsmanship and artisan/professional knowledge. The proposal is to use Antwerp as a testing ground for sharing knowledge (master-pupil) in line with the textile industry's needs in Antwerp.

With the VDAB we are a supporting partner for:

- the VDAB's training centre for digital pattern drawing and CAD/CAM that will be moving to Antwerp in 2022;
- alignment with secondary education with shortage professions in the fashion industry;
- matchmaking to fill vacancies at fashion companies.

We will investigate whether training is given in new techniques and business models and where a community can be built around circular textile and technology. Existing Maker Spaces and spaces for prototyping can be used more optimally here.

04.3 Action Plan Fashion City

The new fashion entrepreneurs

Start-up and growth



In the call for development projects, we ask fashion entrepreneurs to submit innovative projects.

From 2021, the City of Antwerp will offer support and guidance to new fashion entrepreneurs for their start-up and growth with [mentoring](#), [business coaching](#) and [development projects](#).

We target the right networks and optimise direct communication with the fashion industry through the fashion coordinator in order to make these instruments known and deploy them on the projects with the most potential for growth and internationalisation.

There will be a specific call for development projects for fashion in 2021, with a budget of 150,000 euros. In it, we call on fashion entrepreneurs to submit [innovative growth projects](#).

A [possible physical hub](#) can become the point of contact for Antwerp fashion entrepreneurs in a relationship with the MoMu, the Fashion Department, the Antwerp Management School and the wider network in the fashion industry. The City will only facilitate and support this hub if there is an interesting offer in the market. Community activities that support the ecosystem are also important in this regard. If the hub includes a B2C segment, this will be located in a core shopping area. In any event, it must rely on a dominant private initiative and the business model must provide for [ateliers](#) and [business matchmaking](#).

For fashion entrepreneurs with a publicly accessible point of sale, we deploy our existing [coaching initiatives as provided for in the retail trade policy](#) with networking sessions, individual coaching sessions and a grant for entrepreneurial collectives (that organise coaching). We will promote this more to fashion retailers and collectives. If desired by the industry, a small-scale networking session can be dedicated specifically to fashion (from 2022). If there is a physical hub with a trading location, the coaching can also be deployed there.

Together with the real estate market and major retail players, the desirability and feasibility of temporarily filling [vacant buildings](#) as a start-up location for the new fashion retailers must be investigated.

04.3 Action Plan Fashion City

The new fashion entrepreneurs

International business



Thanks to the international recognition, our fashion talents can also grow in Belgium.

In 2022, we will map out how we can support the exports of several brands and how we can set up international partnerships. These collaborations can consist of soft landing packages with foreign fashion incubators or collaborations with international fashion training programmes or leading fashion agents.

The City of Antwerp will continue to strengthen ties with Antwerp talent in other countries and deploy them as

ambassadors to assist local designers with their growth.

We also try to attract international brands to Antwerp in order to strengthen Antwerp's "fashion" image. The latter also makes it easier for local talent to choose to stay in Antwerp.

The City also offers its support for new doctoral research into the critical factors for successful internationalisation of our fashion and retail entrepreneurs. What are factors for (un)successful internationalisation? What are the big missing links? How do we ensure that Antwerp continues to be a breeding ground for the next generation of leading fashion retailers?

Many fashion cities support and invest in local production. Designs are converted into prototypes on the spot and produced locally before contracting out production to large Asian or Southern European producers. We are closely monitoring this trend and facilitating the initiatives that are taken here.

04.3 Action Plan Fashion City

The new fashion entrepreneurs Framework conditions



If the city wishes to connect fashion entrepreneurs with Antwerp and wants to capitalise on the appeal and reputation of their fashion talents, these entrepreneurs must have sufficient access to networks.

The city wants to support Antwerp fashion entrepreneurs by offering them access to networks. These networks can give access to capital, markets, and talent. The 'open marktplaats' rules are suggested for this.

Access to capital

- map out industry needs and bottlenecks at investors;
- organise a specific call for fashion projects under the development projects rules;
- matchmaking;
- coaching to capital.

Access to markets

- local in the industry;
- interdisciplinary;
- Antwerp fashion city as a unique attraction for acquisition;
- develop soft landing packages - matchmaking/attract existing international programmes;
- guidance for growth and export plans.

Access to know-how

- map out needs and bottlenecks, skills and talent;
- facilitate to existing national and international programmes; coaching skills and talent.

We make networking opportunities such as [FashionTalks](#), which will be organised again in 2021, a permanent fixture.

We also offer support to programmes such as [ANTWERP. POWERED BY CREATIVES](#) to enable fashion entrepreneurs to collaborate with other innovative entrepreneurs. This promotes interdisciplinary working, across various sectors.

04.3 Action Plan Fashion City The new fashion entrepreneurs Crossovers

An ambitious program will be rolled out in autumn 2021, initiated by the City of Antwerp, VISITFLANDERS and the MoMu in collaboration with various fashion players. Flanders DC for Fashion and curator Baloji (Starflam) are responsible for the [A/PART retail project](#). These are 20 collaborations between designers, creatives and influencers whose products are sold at 20 retail locations in the city.

The valorisation of the A/PART project is a good example of a [symbiosis between retail, fashion and culture](#) and is an important part of the fashion autumn. Since this project and the collaborations have already been deemed successful, a follow-up is desirable.

We also provide matchmaking at the interface between materials and technological innovation and creative design. [Technology](#) is a major accelerator of circular processes, for example, and we pay special attention to innovative, new-gen materials thanks to a plethora of young designers and fabric makers looking to radically reduce the industry's climate impact through more environmentally-friendly materials.

We also establish a connection between the fashion industry and the programmes of the Antwerp Management School, the University of Antwerp, Artesis Plantijn Hogeschool or other educational institutions. Together with these stakeholders, we investigate where we can strengthen the crossovers. In the autumn of 2021, the Antwerp Management School is organising a [programme on sustainability](#) (the sustainable fashion series), including a pitch by starting entrepreneurs to a panel investors.

We will also draw more attention to existing international programmes such as fashion tech works, which has been co-facilitated by Flanders DC. These important programmes enable acceleration and [international exchange](#).

In the diamond policy programme, we position Antwerp as Belgium's largest and most varied jewellery centre. The [diamond industry](#) is increasingly exploring collaborations as part of crossovers. We are therefore looking for starting points to introduce open-minded diamond companies to fashion entrepreneurs.

Matchmaking between materials innovation, technology and creative design can accelerate the growth of our fashion industry.

04.4 Action Plan Fashion City

Experience fashion in the city

Fashion moments



Fashion must be tangible and visible, events play an important part in a more comprehensive experience offering because they create a sense of urgency.

We position Antwerp fashion by making room for fashion as a part of an urban events programme. At the same time we set up **unique and differentiating fashion events** that attract different groups of experiencers in and to the city.

- We set up regular consultations about the **events offering**, which are led by Fashion as a public outreach coordinator.
- Fashion is a permanent part of the experience events calendar. Small-scale events are also included in this calendar.
- We organise a **clustered number of fashion events**, together with all of the stakeholders, around which the annual fashion experience revolves.
- We launch a **prospection and acquisition process** for fashion events.
- **Fashion editions of urban activities** are organised. These existing or new events now have a fashion slant.

We foresee the following measurable targets.

- Annually recurring internationally distinctive event programme in which we organise distinctive fashion events ourselves (fashion week, graduation show)
- 2 (inter)national fashion events per coalition period with hosted fashion events of an existing concept (fashion awards, conferences,...)
- Each year, 1 event or fixed provider is convinced to include fashion as a topic for the programme (e.g. arts festival, exhibition in a museum, etc.) and we examine which events/permanent providers can dedicate part of their programme to fashion.

The following timing is proposed:

- Fashion is a common thread in the experience calendar: May 2021
- Appointment of a public outreach coordinator for fashion: September 2021
- Start-up fashion experience consultation: September 2021
- A first edition of the annual clustered fashion moment: December 2022
- A first fashion edition of an urban activity: December 2023
- A first international B2B and B2C fashion event: December 2024

04.4 Action Plan Fashion City Experience fashion in the city Tourism/cultural product development



Tourism-cultural products with a link to fashion
that can be experienced permanently, for different
types of visitors

We put Antwerp fashion on the map by using fashion as the subject of various types of tourist-cultural product development.

We put together an activity menu, that is tailored to different motivations (OWN, IN and US), ages (schools, adults, families) and to different types of visits (individual, in group) and that ensures that fashion becomes a **wider, permanent experience**. All the stakeholders join forces to devise a product range.

- **The MoMu as a public outreach coordinator:** Following on from the intra muros programme, the MoMu acts as network manager for tourism-cultural product development in the city. To this end, the museum will recruit a public outreach coordinator who will take on this role and stimulate product development around fashion. Through product development in its own name, but also by advising external parties on new products. The network manager manages and monitors the fashion events calendar (official MoMu programme and OFF-calendar).
- A product range is **permanently bookable** or can be permanently experienced (for free). This product range is evaluated and supplemented annually.
- A **quality process for fashion-related product development** is launched.

The following timing is proposed:

- Appointment of a public outreach coordinator for fashion: September 2021
- Start-up fashion experience consultation: September 2021
- A product development pathway will be started up: September 2021
- Delivery of a set of three new fashion products: April 2022
- Supplement with new fashion products: April 2023
- A second supplement or replacement with new fashion products: April 2024

04.4 Action Plan Fashion City

Experience fashion in the city

New hotspots



Investing in the identity and streetscape of shopping streets

Antwerpen Modestad focuses on the identity and visual recognition of a clear fashion street scene in shopping streets.

In implementation of the Retail policy memorandum, the city is developing **experience areas** with retail players and traders, which are used to both strengthen the city's offering and direct visitors to it. An experience area is a (retail) neighbourhood with its own identity and/or thematic association. We take the overall (experience) offering in the neighbourhood into account for this. Fashion is an important aspect of this experience in several of these experience areas. The redevelopment of, for example, Schuttershofstraat and Wapper is an excellent example of the streetscape to be achieved and of how we want to strengthen the identity of shopping areas.

The city also has a good overview of the available commercial real estate in Antwerp, at building owners, developers, real estate agents and in its own city management. They often consider the **opening of a shop by a promising fashion entrepreneur** – or creative entrepreneurs in general – as an interesting **retail or experience function** which will increase the value of the total development project. **Affordable business accommodation** continues to be important. We are available to facilitate a specific business matching of supply & demand for fashion entrepreneurs.

We permanently establish a **connection between fashion players, fashion activities and the retailers**. If fashion entrepreneurs want to organise something themselves that is linked to other interesting fashion initiatives, we examine together whether it is worth involving other partners.

In 2021 and 2022, the specific collaboration opportunities include the **Smart Retail Area project or data-driven shopping areas**. With the 'Smart Retail Area' project, the City of Antwerp, in a partnership with Thomas More University of Applied Sciences, aims to strengthen the competitiveness of retailers and shopping areas as well as improve urban services. The project partners want to achieve this by deploying smart technologies and promoting their use at retailers.

Specific questions relating to **Sunday shopping or later evening openings** as part of a collaboration within a fashion district or streets with a specific clientele will be examined with the entrepreneurs or the centre manager.

04.5 Action Plan Fashion City Fashion as a strong brand

Translate the vision for Antwerp fashion into a relevant and differentiating communication discourse.

In 2022, we will organise a [strategic exercise](#) for the long-term marketing approach.

We translate the long-term vision of this fashion plan into an [appealing and accessible longread](#) to be used as a starting point for the way in which the various industry partners promote “Antwerp fashion”. We work out three variants for this, based on the distinction between three target groups: experiencers, business and talent. After all, the evidence is different for each target group type.

In view of the heterogeneity of the partner landscape, our marketing approach must focus on [collaboration in terms of message, instead of format](#). Each of the involved partners thus is free to package the message starting from his/her own brand. A longread outlines the shared approach to be used for marketing ‘Antwerp fashion’.

Besides these three target groups, we must continue to capitalise on the local population’s perception of Antwerp as a fashion city [Emotional value is bought and sold in fashion](#). In so doing, we take maximum advantage of the locals' sense of pride in their city. As such, Antwerpians become ambassadors of fashion. The existing criteria for umbrella channels form a starting point for this. Antwerpen Modestad is also included in the [triennial shopping survey about shopping in Antwerp](#). Fashion is an important reason for visiting the city. The results of this survey can be used to engage with and target visitors,

We draw up a quarterly marketing and communication plan in which we compare the communication initiatives of the various partners. We aim for maximum synergy, using the longread as a shared basis.

To initiate this marketing approach, we propose to engage an external agency, which guides and coordinates this process with the various partners.



| 06. Annexes

06. Annexes

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