



Thrive STREETS



Designing mobility for attractive cities

Mobility is at the crossroads of various urban policy: Thriving Streets is connecting mobility with economic prosperity, accessibility, inclusion, participation and health to encourage a change towards more resilient and attractive cities. As an URBACT Action Planning Network, this project aims to improve sustainable local policies through integrated action planning and an organised process of exchange and learning among cities across Europe. It is a network of ten cities working together to improve sustainable mobility in urban areas from an economic and social perspective.

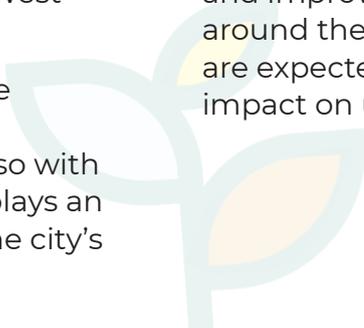


ORADEA

A CITY WITH A VIBRANT, LIVELY CENTRE

City context

- Oradea is located at the North-Western part of Romania, very close to the Hungarian border.
- It is the capital of Bihor County; with its 200.000 population Oradea is an important economic, cultural, and administrative centre in North-West Romania.
- The city has a strong and diverse economy, with numerous multinational companies but also with a large share of SMEs. Tourism plays an increasingly important role in the city's economy.
- Oradea is a traditionally multicultural, vibrant city, with a rich heritage of Art Nouveau buildings in the city centre.
- In recent years major public investments have been made to transform the transport infrastructure and improve public spaces in and around the city centre; these changes are expected to have a significant impact on urban mobility patterns.



Challenge

- **Abundance of parking places attracts cars to the city centre**

Even though the number of on-street parking places has been considerably reduced, their number is still high in the central part of the city. Currently, in the very centre of Oradea, there are more than 800 available on-street parking slots. These are complemented by four large parking houses, with a total capacity of almost 800 cars. Hence, there are more than 1600 parking facilities readily available for cars in the city centre – and easy parking encourages people to drive to the centre.

- **Signposts do not help pedestrians or promote walking**

Use of proper pedestrian information and signposts can play an important role in improving walkability. In Oradea, most of the **signposts for pedestrians** deployed in and around the inner city are not user-friendly: many are poorly placed - too close to the car lanes, often facing the wrong direction (making it difficult to consult them or simply go unnoticed). The quantity and quality of the information displayed also needs improvement - they just indicate the destination, without providing any further details (for instance distance, time needed to reach, etc.).



Ambition

Our ambition is to reshape the historical city centre by transforming it into a vibrant, lively part of Oradea, easily accessible by sustainable means of transportation and with a limited presence of cars in the streets.



Small scale actions

Our small-scale action involved the temporary closure of one important street in the city centre – Piata 1 Decembrie. The street was completely closed to vehicular traffic and a wide range of interesting programs were organized during the day both for children and adults. This specific street was chosen for various reasons: it is a busy street, with numerous on-street parking slots, and it is situated very close to one of the biggest parking houses of the city. Prior to the event we expected some resistance from the shop owners in the area for blocking the parking lots in front of their shops. Surprisingly, however, their reaction was positive – they experienced a massive growth in the number of clients visiting their shops thanks to the increase of pedestrian traffic in the street. The owners even helped with cleaning the area at the end of the event.

Action plan

Our objectives:

- Improving pedestrian signposting in the city centre to encourage walking.
- Revising both the information content and the location of pedestrian signposts, with the goal of helping pedestrians – residents and tourists alike - better find their ways during their business or recreational activities. This is expected to improve walkability and contribute to reducing car use in the city centre.
- Further reducing the number of on-street parking places in the central area.
- Our aim is to reduce the number of on-street parking places by at least 10% by 2024. By implementing this action, the public spaces reclaimed from cars will be given back to the pedestrians, also increasing the share of green spaces in the city centre.

Lessons learnt

- Tests and temporary interventions may end up in disapproving the foreseen changes; that's, however, should not be considered a negative outcome. In fact, they are part of the learning process and can be valuable in designing local policies and help to avoid major pitfalls – as the experience of Antwerp and Nova Gorica clearly demonstrate.
- Working together with our Thriving Streets partners showed that the mindset of city-dwellers (and local politicians, for that matter) is very similar when it comes to urban mobility. Transforming urban mobility is not just an infrastructural challenge – it is at least as important to change the mindset and attitude of people.
- Learning from case studies is useful; however, if one wants to understand the important details, intricacies and all aspects of a successful change process, site visits are crucial. Since they can also be very inspirational and effective in changing mindsets, more politicians should participate in such visits besides technical staff.

The City of **Oradea**
is a partner of the
Thriving Streets network

