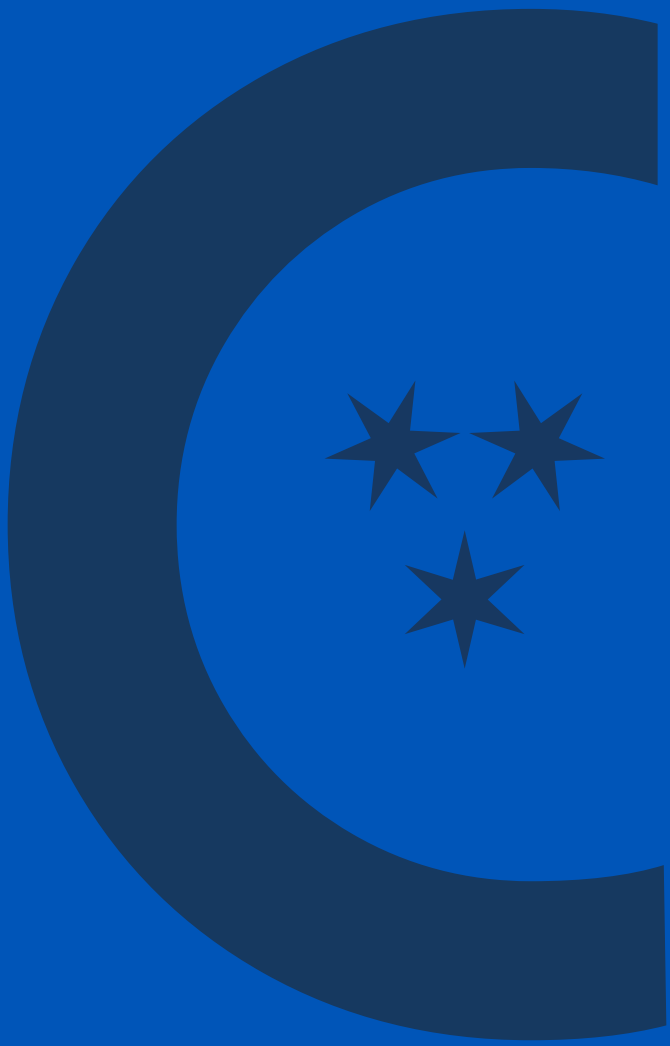
INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

Cities@Heart



CITIES@HEART
TOWARDS A BALANCED CITY CENTRE

URBACT

Co-funded by the European U
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Celje

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1.
Some words from our political leadership

Matija Kovač
Mayor of Celje

In Celje, we believe that the city centre is more than a geographic or economic space – it is the heart of urban life, memory, and future potential. As our cities evolve, and with them the way people live, shop, move, and connect, we must ask ourselves how to make city centres vibrant, relevant, and inclusive for all generations.

The Municipality of Celje is proud to be part of the Cities@Heart network, working alongside like-minded European cities to rethink the role of our historic core. As part of this journey, we are committed to enhancing community engagement and supporting innovative, creative uses of urban space.

Our Integrated Action Plan (IAP) focuses on activating ground-floor spaces with diverse, high-quality content and business ideas that invite people back into the city centre - to live, to create, and to meet. With four strategic objectives and three clear areas of intervention - commerce, public space, and the data-driven management and governance - we aim to unlock the full potential of our centre through collaborative placemaking.

We understand that change cannot be imposed from above; it must be co-created with the community. That is why our approach includes listening to citizens, empowering cultural and creative actors, and using data to inform decisions and evaluate policies.

Celje is ready to learn, to share, and to lead in building a city centre that reflects not only our heritage, but also our aspirations. We are grateful to URBACT and our project partners for the opportunity to walk this path together as cities at heart.

2. Cities@ Heart

Cities@Heart brings together ten European cities with diverse profiles but a shared vision: a city centre that functions as an inclusive, balanced, and vibrant urban oasis – everything, for everyone, at all times. Once the beating heart of social life, creativity, and exchange, many city centres have lost their vitality as shopping malls have taken over the roles of commerce, leisure, and gathering.

To reverse this trend, the project adopts a comprehensive and integrated approach that brings together data, a shared methodology, and expertise from various fields – from governance and citizen participation to digital innovation and climate adaptation. Real transformation requires collaboration among many actors – from residents and local organisations to professionals and city administrations.

If we want city centres to reclaim their central role, they must offer a rich and diverse mix of experiences – places to meet, shop, learn, play, work, and relax.

Cities@Heart is paving the way for city centres that are welcoming, healthy, dynamic – and truly open to all.

Cities@Heart (C@H) is led by the Greater Paris Metropolis and, alongside Celje, includes the following eight project partners representing different territorial, demographic and socioeconomic realities: Cesena (Italy), Granada (Spain), Osijek (Croatia), Lamia (represented by the Amfiktyonies business development organisation from Greece), Fleurus (Belgium), Sligo (Ireland), Krakow (represented by the Krakow Metropolis Association in Poland) and the intermunicipal area between Guimaraes, Braga, Famalicao and Barcelos (Quadrilátero Urbano Association, Portugal).

Celje brings to the network the perspective of a medium-sized historic city that has already developed several policies and implemented numerous actions to revitalise its city centre. With experience in city management, cultural programming, and stakeholder collaboration, Celje acts as a living laboratory where tested measures—such as events, marketing campaigns, and regulations for vacant premises—are combined with new, innovative approaches. Its role is to demonstrate how a city with a rich heritage and proactive governance can successfully implement policies aimed at the renewal and revitalisation of the city centre.

By gathering relevant indicators and using a common methodology, this network aims to create a holistic policy framework for lasting and meaningful change in the heart of the city. Working hand in hand with local stakeholders and users, Cities@Heart is here to develop tools that foster happy, healthy and harmonious places.

3.

Why an integrated action plan?

Celje's city centre is at a crossroads. Despite its historical value, compact structure, and cultural vitality, the old town faces clear challenges: underused public space, commercial stagnation, an ageing population, and competition from suburban malls.

To address these challenges, Celje's Integrated Action Plan (IAP), developed within the URBACT Cities@Heart network, outlines a strategic and future-oriented response grounded in real data, community input, and transnational learning.

The City of Celje is undertaking this work because the city centre has enormous potential – and the Integrated Action Plan is our way to unlock it together. Over the years, we have tested many good ideas: events, mobility measures, support for traders and temporary uses. Now we want to bring these efforts onto one shared path, with a clear vision and stronger coordination. Instead of separate, one-off projects, the IAP helps connect what already works, fill gaps and focus energy where it can meaningfully improve everyday life in the old town.

The city centre is the heart of Celje – a place to live, meet, create and do business. With the IAP, the City of Celje aims to give residents, traders, owners and visitors greater stability and confidence: clearer priorities, transparent decisions, and a framework that goes beyond individual mandates and funding periods. At the same time, the IAP also serves as our "bridge" into the next cycle: it prepares and launches the process of drafting a new, comprehensive city centre strategy, grounded in practical experience and agreed priorities.

The IAP is also a learning tool. By setting targets, collecting data, and sharing experiences with other Cities@Heart partners, the City of Celje can identify what works, improve what doesn't, and adapt to future changes in a smarter way. In this sense, the Integrated Action Plan is not just a technical document – it is a positive commitment and the first step into a new strategic cycle for Celje's centre as a living, evolving place for people, today and in the years to come.

4. Context, needs and vision

4.1. Context

Located in central-eastern Slovenia, the City of Celje is the nation's fourth-largest city and a hub of regional significance. Positioned along the Savinja River, it combines a compact historic core below the Old Castle with more dispersed residential and industrial areas on the outskirts. Good road and rail connections make it an important daily destination for commuters, students, and visitors from surrounding municipalities.

The City of Celje is home to **48,776 residents**, with an average density of 513.4 inhabitants per km². Within this, the city centre stands out with a much higher density of 7,351.1 inhabitants per km² and around 3,149 residents living in a very compact area. Celje's population is aging – 22% of residents are over 65 and 14% are under 14 – while the centre has a slightly younger profile, with seniors accounting for 18% of its population.

The city centre concentrates key public and administrative functions (schools, kindergartens, courts, municipal and state offices) and plays a central role in Celje's cultural life. Events such as "**Summer in Celje**" and "**Fairytale Celje**" animate streets and squares and help position the old town as a cultural and festive hub; Celje was awarded the title "**European Christmas City 2025**" in the category of cities with up to 100,000 inhabitants.

At the same time, structural trends remain challenging. Shopping centres on the urban fringe and the growth of online retail have reduced everyday shopping in the core, leading to closures of some small businesses and a clear lack of commercial diversity, especially in occasional and speciality shopping. This limits consumer choice and reduces the city centre's appeal for a wider range of visitors. Around 10% of ground-floor premises along the main streets remain vacant, largely due to high rents and unresolved ownership issues linked to the incomplete denationalisation process from the former Yugoslav era, which complicates efforts to bring these spaces back into use and slows down commercial revitalisation.

In terms of mobility, the municipality has invested in pedestrianisation, shared-space solutions, public transport, and cycling, yet car dependency and perceived parking pressure still shape how residents and visitors use – or avoid – the historic centre in their daily lives.

4.2. Relevant existing strategies

Integration between local and national strategies

While there are currently no national strategies for the revitalisation of urban centres, the Integrated Territorial Investment Mechanism (ITI) provides recommendations for the regeneration of urban fabric.

The Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia 2050 notes that residents, as well as commercial and service activities, are moving to the outskirts of cities, leading to the construction of shopping centres. This results in a decline in the importance of city centres, poorer service provision for residents, increased private car traffic, congestion, and the loss of agricultural land on the edges of settlements. Nevertheless, **the strategy – like other national documents – does not specifically address this problem**, as its main focus is on strengthening the polycentric urban network and on the division and complementarity of functions between centres and other settlements. Thus, the document provides guidelines for the development of a polycentric system, but not for the development of city centres, whose decline it nonetheless acknowledges.

The **Regional Development Programme of the Savinja Region 2021–2027** does not address this issue either. However, it lists planned projects, among which, under Goal 1 "*Smart Savinja Region*", it includes the revitalisation of the old town centre of Laško, the renovation of utility infrastructure in the old town centre of Celje, and the renewal of several village centres.

At the local level, Celje has an urban planning document defining land uses for the city centre. The plan has been in place since 1986 and has undergone several modifications adapting land uses according to different challenges over its lifespan. The regulations generated by the plan focus mainly on heritage conservation.

The City Council has promoted various thematic strategies and policies with a significant influence on the city centre.

Public tender for the allocation of aid for the development of the economy in the Municipality of Celje

Subsidising employment, extending working hours, rents, improving tourism infrastructure and urban amenities, etc., and is an important measure to support city centre providers.

Link: https://moc.celje.si/images/Datoteke/JAVNI_RAZPISI/2024/09-september/spodbujanje-gospodarstva-2024/razpis.pdf

Public tender for proposals for co-financing of the renovation of buildings and the restoration of sacral heritage in the Municipality of Celje

Since 2014, through this call for proposals, the Municipality of Celje has been co-financing the renovation of facades and roofs in the city centre at a rate of 50% of the investment, with priority given to business entities, owners of listed buildings, and sacral heritage. This call for proposals has already been used to renovate 45 buildings over the last nine years.

Link: https://moc.celje.si/images/Datoteke/JAVNI_RAZPISI/2024/03-marec/javni-razpis-sofinanciranje-obnova-stavb-sakralne-dediscnine/RAZPISNA-DOKUMENTACIJA.pdf

https://moc.celje.si/zakljuceni-projekti?start=36

Celje Old Town Development Strategy

The introduction of city management in Celje began in 2012, when a city manager was appointed in the Mayor's Office. In 2015, the Celje Old Town Development Strategy was adopted; it has since been implemented through a number of events, campaigns, and festivals in the city centre to promote and connect local traders and suppliers. In 2017, the management of the city centre was taken over by the Celeia Celje Institute for Cultural Events and Tourism. Most of the activities to revitalise the town centre are now carried out in cooperation between the Municipality and the Celeia Celje Institute.

A new city centre strategy will be developed in 2026–2027, and this IAP will serve as one of its supporting documents.

Link: https://moc.celje.si/images/Projekti_v_teku/smj/Strategija_razvoja_SMJ_30_1_2015.pdf

Decree on the designation of areas or facilities in the Municipality of Celje for maintenance work

By this decree, the Municipality of Celje designates areas or facilities where maintenance work and measures are to be carried out in order to ensure a suitable external appearance of the city and other settlements in the municipality.

Link: https://www.uradni-list.si/glasilo-uradni-list-rs/vsebina/115487

Ordinance on the Use of Public Areas

Restaurant terraces in the city centre of Celje are regulated by the Ordinance on the Use of Public Areas. It specifies what the shading elements of the catering terrace may look like, how flower troughs may be installed, states that the area of a catering terrace must not be fenced off, and that sufficient space must remain for adequate pedestrian passage alongside the catering terrace. In this way, the municipality ensures that terraces are arranged coherently and do not restrict movement or other uses of the public space.

Link: https://moc.celje.si/images/Datoteke/NPB_MOC/NPB_OOPK/JAVNE_POVRSINE/2022_02_01_NPB.pdf

Decree on Advertising

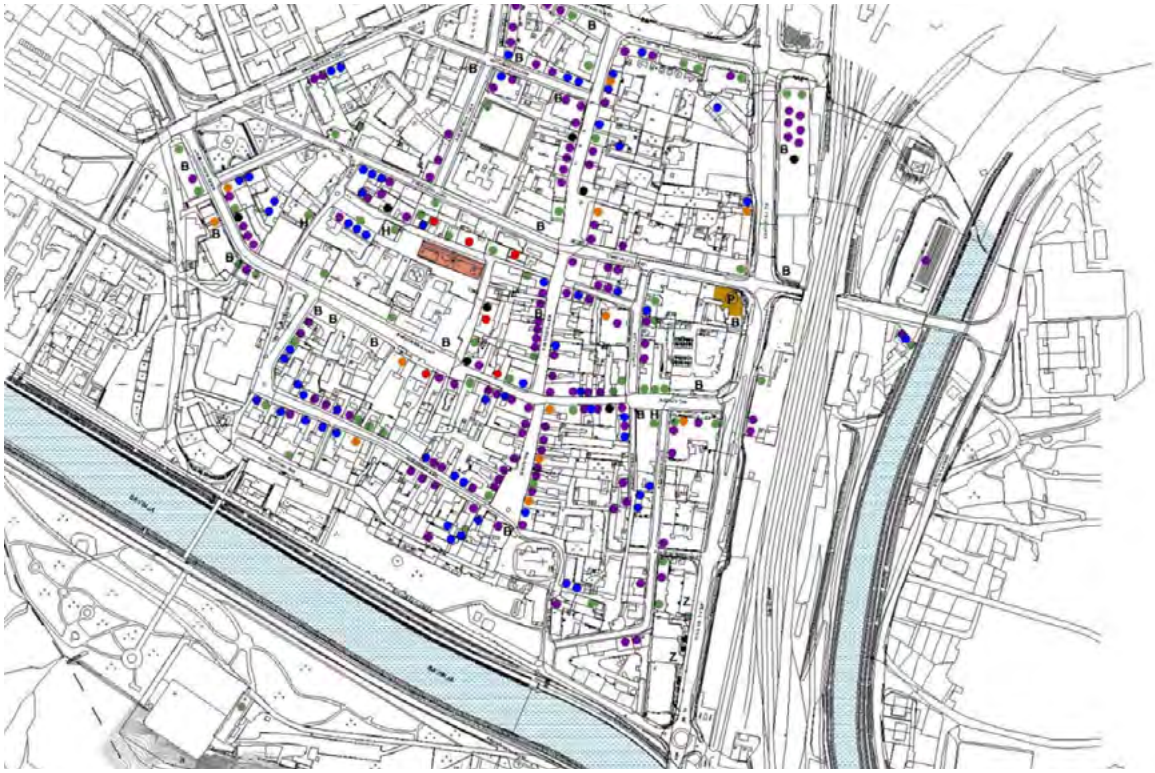
Advertising in public space is regulated by the Ordinance on Advertising in the Municipality of Celje, which specifically sets out the rules for the Old Town area.

The ordinance limits the objects and devices that may be used for advertising, allowing existing poster poles and portable street billboards, the use of which is also restricted. Only one billboard per business unit is permitted, and only at the opening of a business or on special occasions. Advertising on the walls of buildings is permitted only under the conditions set by the competent heritage protection authority, provided that the façade is not a façade with architecturally articulated elements. Advertising on public ground surfaces and structural elements of public infrastructure is permitted solely for the purpose of cultural and other public events, and only for a limited period. Other, more intrusive forms of advertising, such as light displays, are not permitted.

Link: https://moc.celje.si/images/akti/Odlok_o_oglasevanju_v_MOC_NPB1_15_5_2014.pdf

Expert basis for the Celje Old Town urbanisation project

Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oodWBxkhcKmtUYquwzMyD6ERjahLsWf3/view?usp=sharing



Integrated Transport Strategy of the Municipality of Celje

An integrated transport strategy focused on sustainable mobility, reducing the harmful effects of transport on the environment, improving quality of life, enhancing mobility and accessibility, and improving the overall image of the municipality. It addresses all areas relevant also for the city centre: public passenger transport, the introduction of a park-and-ride system, increasing the use of cycling and walking, more efficient use of existing thoroughfares and routes, and the optimisation of existing car parks.

Link: https://moc.celje.si/images/Projekti_v_teku/CPS/publikacija-CPS-CE-low-res.pdf

Ordinance on the Compensation for the Use of Building Land in the Municipality of Celje

The "Ordinance on the Compensation for the Use of Building Land in the Municipality of Celje" is an important document in the context of vacant commercial premises in the city centre. It not only outlines the compensation for the use of building land, but also includes provisions regarding compensation for vacant commercial spaces. In 2023, the compensation for vacant commercial spaces was increased to five times the standard rate.

Link: https://moc.celje.si/images/akti/Odlok__o_nadomstilu_za_uporabo_stavbnih_zemlji_za_obmoje_MOC_NPB2.pdf

Context of Other Interconnected Projects

Certain activities related to the city centre also overlap with the cultural and tourism strategies of the Municipality of Celje.

In 2025, the Municipality of Celje, with the support of the EUI, launched the €4.5 million project "MAG-NET", which aims to develop Celje and Prebold as inclusive, modern, and sustainably oriented urban environments where cooperation between residents, institutions, and city decision-makers contributes to a higher quality of life. One of the five challenges addressed by the project, and particularly relevant to this IAP, is the "city atmosphere".

Institutional Context

Several key municipal, regional, cultural, tourism, business, and youth institutions are involved in preparing and implementing Celje's IAP and in revitalising the city centre.

The Municipality of Celje manages spatial planning, construction, public services, the environment, and education, and is the (co)founder of most listed institutions. RRA Savinja leads regional development and acts as the Regional Mobility Centre from 2025. Nepremičnine Celje d. o. o. manages around 2,000 non-profit apartments and implements local housing policy. The Celeia Celje Institute oversees culture, tourism, and city marketing. The Savinja Region Business Incubator supports young innovative companies. The Celje Youth Centre supports the projects and ideas of young people.

Current Approach to City-Centre Management

City centre revitalisation follows a mixed approach: municipal policies on one side and stakeholder activation on the other. A collaborative TCM model connects the municipality, institutions, the private sector, and civil society, based on the local strategy valid until 2020, which in practice remains relevant. Through the Cities@Heart project, the foundations for a new strategy are also being laid.

4.3. Problem identification with and by local stakeholders

4.3.1. The process

The restructuring of the ULG group emerged as a key milestone, leading to a more focused and dynamic engagement process. By tailoring the group's composition to the needs of the defined problems, we enhanced the relevance and practicality of our outputs. Additionally, the use of interactive tools such as Note & Vote significantly increased the group's efficiency in reaching consensus. This methodology ensured a balance of inclusivity, relevance, and practicality, strengthening the ULG's effectiveness in addressing the project's objectives.

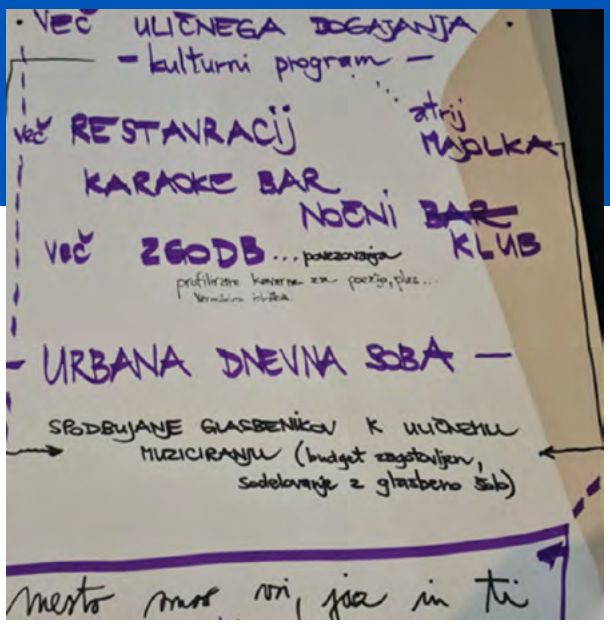
At the beginning of the process, stakeholders jointly reflected on where the local challenge actually originated. In early 2023, the city centre was often described in public debates as a "ghost town", despite the fact that many events and activities were already taking place there. Through walks in the area, analysis of available data, and discussions with residents and businesses, the ULG recognised that this perception was largely shaped by the visual impact of abandoned or empty ground-floor shop windows along key streets. This raised a "chicken-or-egg" dilemma that became central to our problem definition: are the empty shop windows the result of too few visitors to the city centre, or is the lack of visitors a consequence of the vacant and unattractive storefronts? Clarifying this helped the group to move from a vague myth about a "dead" city centre to a more precise, shared understanding of the problem rooted in commercial vacancy and the structure of the offer.

An important part of the process were also involved transnational meetings with partner cities, as well as workshops and lectures within the URBACT programme and the Cities@Heart network. Through this cooperation, we explored the multidimensionality of the topic, compared experiences and challenges with other cities, and became familiar with various methodologies for planning and managing city centres. We studied numerous examples of good practice, which helped us sharpen our perspective and focus our efforts particularly on the field of economic development and diversification of the city centre offer. This international exchange enabled Celje to place its efforts in a broader European context while simultaneously developing solutions tailored to local needs.

The process built upon existing local strategies and several municipal ordinances regulating advertising, the use of public space, and vacant properties. It also took into account changing conditions and a range of activities, both - pilot and ongoing - through which Celje has already been striving to revitalise its city centre.

At the operational level, the IAP process was connected with existing municipal calls for proposals – such as those for economic development and building renovation – and with the activities of key institutions such as Nepremičnine Celje d.o.o. (housing policy) and the Celeia Celje Institute (culture and tourism).

The process was guided by a shared vision co-created with stakeholders: “Celje – a vibrant urban oasis: a preferred place to live, work, visit, and do business at all times.” The vision combines tradition with innovation and places inclusiveness and sustainability at the forefront. The IAP translates this vision into concrete actions across three strategic areas – commerce, public space, and data-driven management and governance – while establishing governance, monitoring, and financing mechanisms that ensure implementation even after the conclusion of the URBACT project.



4.3.2. URBACT Local group stakeholder list, ecosystem map and analysis table

URBACT Local group (ULG) stakeholder list

The URBACT Local Group is the driving force behind the IAP, comprising diverse stakeholders essential for implementing and sustaining the proposed actions. The core group consists of the key coordinating members, including two representatives from the Municipality of Celje and one from the Celeia Celje Institute. The ULG also includes representatives from the public, private, and community sectors to ensure broad-based support.

Stakeholder group	Main role in the city centre	Key connections in the ecosystem	Contribution to the IAP & implementation
Municipality of Celje (urban planning, economic development, mobility, environment)	Strategic planning, regulation, investments, coordination	Connects with all other stakeholders; especially the Celeia Celje Institute, businesses, residents, and NGOs	Leads the preparation and implementation of the IAP, aligns it with municipal strategies, secures resources, and ensures cross-departmental cooperation
Celeia Celje Institute (culture, tourism, city marketing)	Programming of events, cultural offer, destination marketing	Strong links with the municipality, businesses, cultural institutions, media, and visitors	Co-designs actions related to events, image, and promotion of the city centre; bridges culture, tourism, and commerce
Local businesses and business associations (retail, services, hospitality)	Everyday economic activity, jobs, services for residents and visitors	Connected with the municipality and the Celeia Celje Institute; interact daily with residents and visitors	Provide market feedback, test new concepts, invest in new or upgraded offers, participate in calls and pilot actions to activate ground floors
Cultural institutions and creative sector (public and independent)	Cultural content, creative uses of space, animation of the public realm	Linked to the Celeia Celje Institute, NGOs, youth, and businesses (e.g. cafés, galleries)	Co-create programmes in streets and squares, pilot new uses of vacant spaces, help make the centre more attractive and inclusive
Residents and housing / neighbourhood communities	Everyday use of the city centre, local knowledge and needs	Connected with the municipality, NGOs, businesses, and schools	Provide feedback on quality of life, support or challenge proposed measures, participate in consultations, and co-design small-scale actions
NGOs, youth and entrepreneurship support organisations	Inclusion, innovation, social projects, support for start-ups and young entrepreneurs	Bridge between the municipality, residents, youth, vulnerable groups, and potential new businesses	Bring in new ideas and users, support new entrepreneurs, and help ensure that actions are socially inclusive and accessible
Regional and national institutions (development, heritage, mobility)	Framework policies, funding, regulations, expert input	Linked mainly with the municipality; indirectly influence all other stakeholders	Provide funding and regulatory frameworks, support major investments, and ensure that local actions are consistent with wider strategies

4.3.3. Main integration challenges

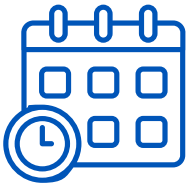
The stakeholder work and integration assessment identified four main challenges:

Territorial and multi-level governance:

limited coordination with regional and national levels for issues that clearly cross municipal borders (mobility, environment, economic development).

Environmental sustainability:

limited NGO capacity in this field, insufficient staffing within the municipality, and strict heritage rules make it difficult to introduce more greenery and climate-sensitive solutions in the historic core.



Time dimension:

many actions are short - to medium - term, while long-term objectives and a clearer strategic path are still being developed – a gap that the new city centre strategy should address.

Sustainable public procurement:

procurement procedures are not yet fully aligned with climate and circular-economy goals, limiting their potential to support green innovation.

The IAP aims to address these gaps pragmatically, within the limits of local competences and resources.

4.4. Local challenge

What the IAP aims to achieve

The IAP defines practical, implementable actions that go beyond the project's duration, focusing on:

- Reviving the **economic and social vibrancy** of the city centre.
- Diversifying commercial uses and **activating vacant spaces**.
- Enhancing the **quality and accessibility** of public spaces and services.
- Promoting **sustainable mobility** and reducing car dependency.
- Establishing better **governance and improving city centre management**.

The aim of all activities is to attract and retain the inhabitants and visitors in the city centre.

Three strategic areas of intervention

1. Commerce:

Bringing life back to ground-floor spaces with innovative and mixed-use activities.

2. Public space:

Upgrading infrastructure for pedestrians, cultural activities and nature.

3. Data-driven management and governance:

Making decisions based on evidence and community feedback.

Why it's needed

- **10% of ground-floor retail spaces are vacant**, often due to ownership issues and high rental costs.
- **22% of residents are over 65**, and the youth population is declining.
- **Shopping malls** pull consumers away, leading to small business closures.
- **Mobility improvements** are under way, but parking still remains a critical issue.

How it builds on what exists

The IAP connects to and strengthens existing strategies and regulations, such as:

- The **Celje Old Town Strategy** and **Integrated Transport Plan**
- Public tenders for **economic support** and **building renovation**.
- Ordinances on **advertising**, **public-space use**, and **vacant properties**.

Who's involved

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) brings together:

- **The Municipality of Celje** (Urban Planning Lead)
- **Celeia Celje Institute** (City Centre Marketing, Cultural Events and Tourism)
- **Local businesses and NGOs**
- **Cultural institutions, residents**, and the **tourism sector**

Using tools such as stakeholder mapping and participatory workshops, the group has evolved into a focused task force driving change.

From plan to action

To ensure the IAP's success, Celje is:

- Strengthening local **governance and coordination**
- Using **URBACT tools** to monitor and adapt actions
- Leveraging **local and EU funding** for implementation

The IAP is not just a document—it's a commitment to creating a resilient and inclusive city centre, shaped by and for its residents.

Shared vision

Celje – A Vibrant Urban Oasis

A preferred place to live, work, visit and conduct business at all times.

This vision, co-created with local stakeholders, blends tradition with innovation and prioritizes inclusivity and sustainability.

4.5. Small-scale actions

Testing Objectives for Celje as Part of Cities@Heart

The City of Celje focused its small-scale actions on piloting practical tools and methods to revitalize the city centre. The aim was to address commercial vacancy, attract new entrepreneurs, and explore data-driven approaches for monitoring visitor flows.

1. Commercial vacancy analysis

Mapping of vacant commercial premises was carried out, starting with municipally owned units and later expanded to privately owned properties through cooperation with a local real estate agency. Standardised questionnaires ensured consistent data collection, while the municipal IT department integrated the results into the city's GIS, creating a new "Vacant Commercial Premises" layer. The database is now continuously updated by the municipal head of business recruitment.

The process not only provided a valuable database of vacant premises but also highlighted several important lessons for future work:

Key learnings from "Commercial vacancy analysis"

1. **Continuity is essential** – The database must be regularly updated to remain reliable and useful for decision-making.
2. **Stakeholder collaboration** – Active involvement of property owners and other stakeholders is crucial for both data accuracy and long-term activation of premises.
3. **Improving data visualisation** – The GIS layer requires further refinement to enhance clarity and usability for different user groups.
4. **Expanding the scope of data** – User feedback revealed that actual data needs go beyond what was initially captured, especially regarding functional suitability and market potential.
5. **Diversified communication channels** – To reach potential users and data seekers more effectively, information should be disseminated through multiple channels (e.g., a dedicated website, improved SEO, and targeted outreach).

2. Attracting entrepreneurs

To support new and potential entrepreneurs, the city developed an A3 one-pager consolidating all key information—from available spaces and co-financing opportunities to permits, event support, and networking possibilities. Designed in collaboration with a professional studio, the one-pager was distributed digitally and via stickers placed on shop windows of businesses benefiting from municipal support. Each sticker included a QR code linking directly to the online resource, which is regularly updated to remain relevant.

The development and testing of the one-pager for entrepreneurs highlighted several important lessons:

Key takeaways from "Attracting entrepreneurs"

1. **Promotion matters** – It is essential to use diverse channels (print, digital, QR codes, shop window stickers, and social media) to effectively reach target users.
2. **Regular updates are crucial** – Information must be continuously revised to remain accurate and useful for entrepreneurs.
3. **Focus on truly relevant data** – The greatest value lies in providing information that entrepreneurs most struggle to find elsewhere, such as permits, co-financing opportunities, and access to space.

3. Testing visitor data tools

The City of Celje piloted a radar-based pedestrian counter to gather objective data on visitor numbers in the city centre. However, the pilot proved unsuccessful, as comparisons with event attendance figures and anonymised mobile phone data collected through the municipal Wi-Fi system revealed that the counter's results were inconsistent. The city is therefore exploring alternative, financially sustainable solutions for tracking visitor flows.

The pilot revealed important lessons for designing a sustainable and acceptable system for visitor monitoring:

Key takeaways from "Testing visitor data tools"

1. **Technical and ownership constraints** – Installing radar counters or cameras on buildings is highly challenging in the historic centre, as most façades are protected by cultural heritage regulations, have limited access to electricity, and many of the most suitable buildings are not municipally owned.
2. **Relative, not absolute data** – Achieving 100% reliability is unrealistic. Instead, the goal should be to use existing Wi-Fi systems and other tools to recognise patterns and correlations with events, weather, and commercial activity, rather than striving for absolute visitor numbers.
3. **Sensitivity of the public** – Cameras, in particular, raise strong concerns. Clear communication, transparency, and careful presentation of methods and purposes are essential to ensure trust and acceptance.
4. **Broader insight** – The pilot showed that measuring visitor flows is not only a technical exercise but also a question of governance, communication, and linking different data sources. Sustainable monitoring requires combining technical feasibility, financial affordability, and social acceptability.

4. Public call for business ideas

The last small-scale action focused on creating a framework for a **public call and competition for business ideas to activate vacant premises**. The aim was to stimulate entrepreneurial initiatives connected to city-building and sustainable development, while directly addressing vacant premises and the need for innovative local businesses. The process included:

- Defining objectives, eligibility criteria, and transparent evaluation methods.
- Designing an implementation timeline, promotional strategy, and expert selection committee.
- Preparing support measures for applicants such as workshops, advisory services, and mentoring.
- Securing municipal budget resources for 2025 to provide financial support alongside professional guidance.

Key learnings and takeaways from "Public call for business ideas"

1. **Clear structure is essential** – Transparent objectives, criteria, and evaluation methods build trust among applicants and ensure the credibility of the process.
2. **Support measures matter** – Beyond financial resources, mentoring, advisory services, and workshops are critical to help entrepreneurs transform ideas into viable businesses.
3. **Sustainability of funding** – Linking the competition to the municipal budget provides stability, but future calls may also require exploring co-financing or partnerships for broader impact.
4. **Long-term perspective** – Such calls should be seen not only as a one-off initiative, but as part of a broader strategy to continuously attract innovative businesses and reduce vacancy.
5. **Promotion and outreach** – Reaching the right audience requires a strong promotional plan to engage creative entrepreneurs who can bring new energy into the city centre.

The competition is designed not only to generate immediate projects but also to have a lasting impact: attracting sustainable business models, filling vacant spaces, and strengthening the city centre's economic and social vitality.

Together, these small-scale actions not only provided tangible outputs—such as a live GIS database and practical tools for entrepreneurs—but also generated valuable lessons for future action: the importance of continuity in data management, close collaboration with property owners and stakeholders, improved data visualisation, expanding datasets to reflect real user needs, and diversifying communication channels (e.g., dedicated webpages, SEO, targeted outreach).

4.6. Vision and focus of the IAP

Celje's vision is to transform the city centre into:

Celje – A Vibrant Urban Oasis

A preferred place to live, work, visit, and conduct business at all times.

The IAP will focus on enhancing community engagement and economic vitality by populating ground-floor premises with diverse businesses that contribute to placemaking.

This vision reflects Celje's ambition to create a dynamic and inclusive environment that prioritizes community well-being, economic activity, and cultural preservation. The plan integrates insights from local stakeholders and transnational partners, offering practical actions tailored to the city's needs.

The municipality of Celje will focus on economic development in the city centre, with a view to achieving diversification of activities in the city centre. However, it will introduce mandatory data monitoring in order to monitor results and adopt objective solutions.

The expected result of IAP will be a team of people with established work processes, resources, tools and data monitoring capabilities for the execution of particular projects related to the city centre, aimed at creating a vibrant, livable urban environment by addressing various aspects of infrastructure, culture, and community engagement.

5. Overall logic and integrated approach

The Integrated Action Plan takes a comprehensive, data-driven approach to revitalising the city centre. It horizontally integrates sustainability, gender inclusivity and digitisation, while pursuing four core objectives: **strengthening community engagement, promoting economic activity, attracting and retaining residents in the centre**, and **enabling information-based policy evaluation**. These objectives are operationalised through three main areas of intervention where the City of Celje has the strongest leverage: **commerce, public space** and **data-driven management and governance**.

Public calls for financial and mentoring support prioritise diverse and inclusive business ideas, especially those led by under-represented groups. This opens space for new businesses, broadens participation and helps create a more dynamic, supportive economic environment in the city centre. Digitisation underpins evidence-based decisions: tools such as pedestrian counters and data analytics provide concrete metrics on visitor flows, business performance and the use of public space, enabling more precise targeting of measures and better use of limited resources.

Businesses are encouraged to develop outdoor and collaborative activities that reflect local culture and heritage, strengthening the centre's identity and making everyday life more attractive for residents and visitors. Unified PR and marketing campaigns, supported by simple tools such as one-pagers and stickers, improve visibility and access to key information, creating multiple contact points with the community and entrepreneurs. Urban renewal planning integrates content needs, sustainability principles and cultural preservation, so that new investments respect both ecological goals and heritage values. A dedicated role focuses on attracting businesses and activities that complement the city centre's economic, social and cultural fabric.

Together, these measures form a coherent, inclusive and future-oriented ecosystem that supports economic activity, makes living in the centre more attractive and lays the foundations for continuous, data-based policy learning.

5.1. Logic of intervention

The logic of intervention explains how the measures in this plan are expected to lead from inputs to concrete results. Building on the four strategic objectives and three areas of intervention outlined above, it links available resources and tools – public calls, mentoring and financial support, dedicated staff, data collection and digital counters, PR and marketing instruments, and urban renewal projects – with key activities in **commerce, public space,** and **data-driven management and governance**.

In the **commerce** area, activities focus on activating vacant ground-floor spaces and supporting new and inclusive businesses through recurring public calls, tailored mentoring, and proactive attraction of missing services. In the **public space** area, measures improve the quality, safety, and use of streets and squares, promote sustainable mobility and integrate sustainability and cultural heritage into urban renewal. In the **data** area, the city establishes a continuous "data cycle" for monitoring, indicators and policy evaluation, using tools such as pedestrian counters, improved databases and simple digital feedback channels.

These activities are expected to generate outputs such as a more diverse commercial mix, better-used and more welcoming streets and squares, stronger participation by residents and entrepreneurs, and clearer data on visitor flows, business performance and user satisfaction. In the longer term, they contribute to attracting and retaining residents and businesses in the city centre, strengthening its cultural and social life and enabling ongoing, evidence-based adjustment of city-centre policies. Within this framework, the four strategic objectives can be summarised as follows.

Strategic objectives

1 **Enhance community engagement**

Revitalisation relies on residents, businesses and visitors feeling ownership of the city centre and having a real say in its future. Engagement is ensured through ongoing dialogue rather than one-off consultations, with inhabitants, traders, cultural actors and NGOs involved in shaping solutions. It is closely linked to **commerce** and **public space** (e.g. community-oriented use of streets and squares), while the **data** area provides structured ways of collecting and using feedback.

2 **Promote economic activity**

A resilient and diversified economic base is essential for a lively centre. The **commerce** interventions support new and existing businesses, improve the use of ground-floor premises and attract missing types of services through recurring calls that combine financial support, mentoring and inclusion criteria. Quality **public space** helps increase footfall and dwell time, while better **data** guides where and how to target business support.

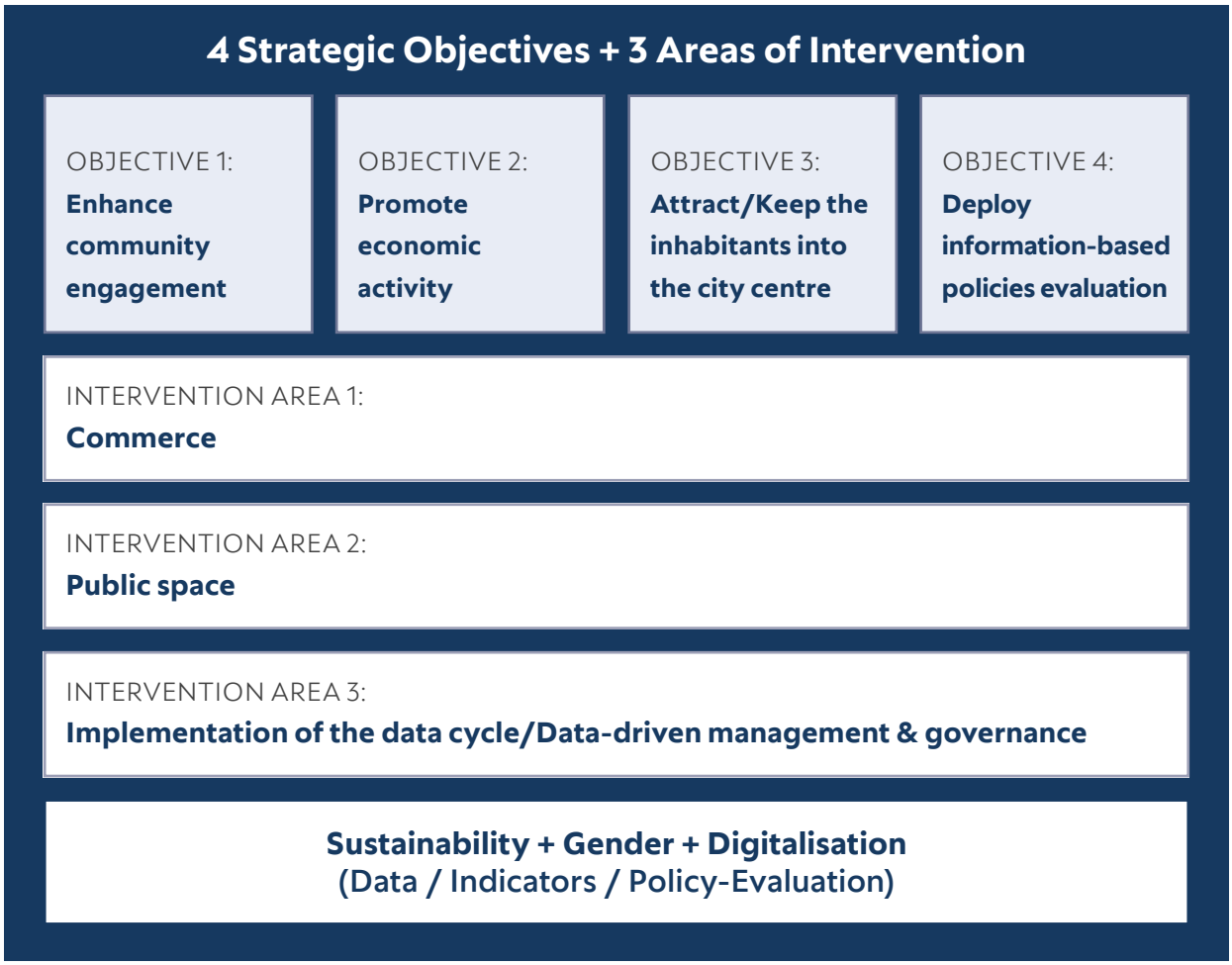
3 **Attract and retain residents in the city centre**

The centre must be a desirable place to live, not only to visit. This objective focuses on everyday quality of life, including access to services, safety, and comfort in public spaces and a balanced mix of functions. **Public space** measures – needs-based, gender-sensitive street renewal, and better management of outdoor areas – directly improve daily experience, while **commerce** brings in services that support neighbourhood life. **Data** on flows and satisfaction show whether these measures genuinely improve residential attractiveness.

4 **Deploy information-based policy evaluation**

This objective embeds a continuous "data cycle" into city-centre management: defining indicators, collecting and analysing data, and using the results to adjust policies and communicate transparently. The **data-driven management and governance** area establishes a multidisciplinary team, improves databases, deploys pedestrian counters and connects key data sources. This makes support in commerce more targeted, investments in **public space** more efficient and enables continuous learning and more transparent decision-making.

Together, the four objectives and three areas of intervention form a coherent framework in which community engagement provides legitimacy, economic activity and residential attractiveness ensure long-term vitality, and evidence-based policy evaluation underpins a learning and adaptive approach to managing the city centre as a living, evolving place.



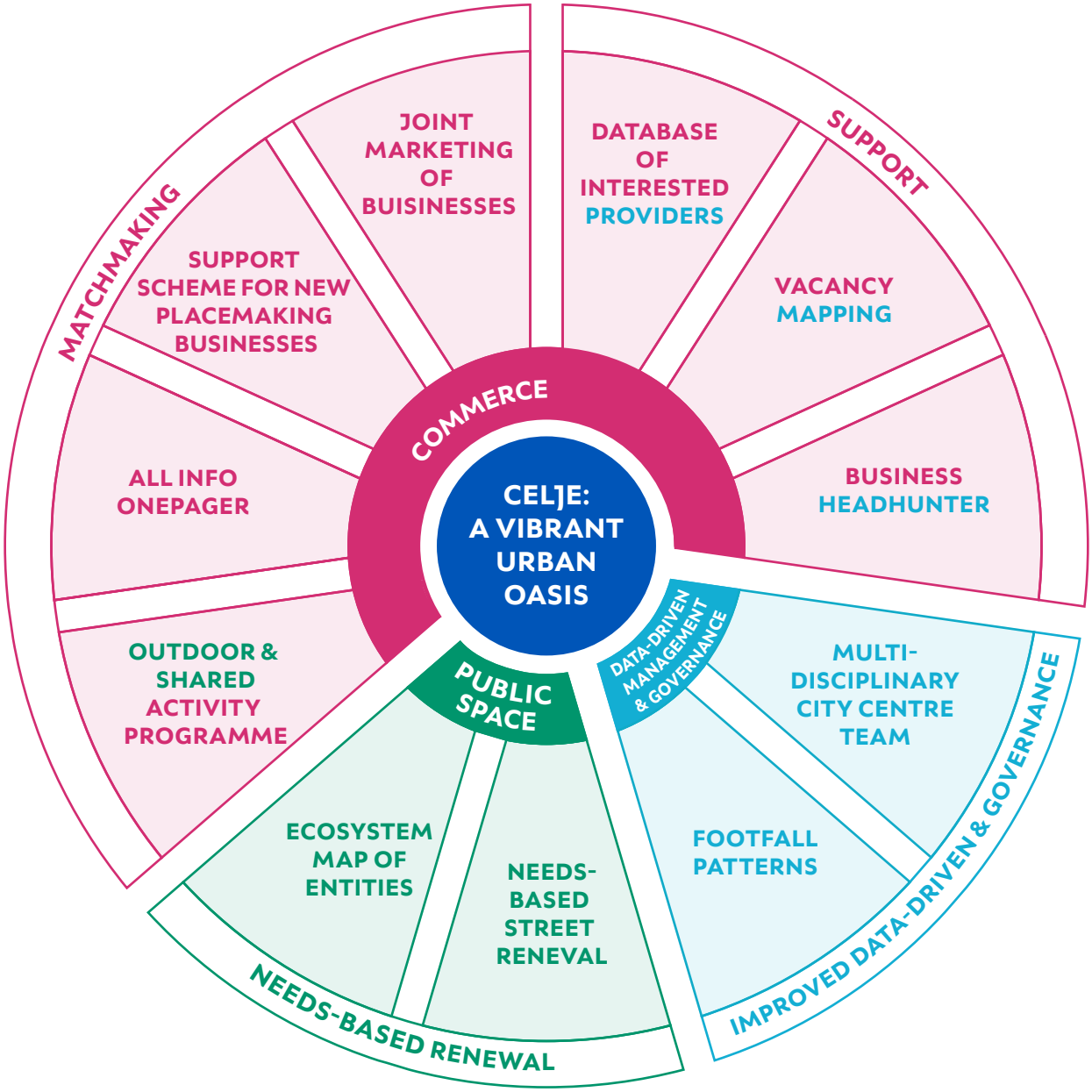
4 Strategic Objectives + 3 Areas of Intervention

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: **ENHANCE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: **PROMOTE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: **ATTRACT/KEEP INHABITANTS INTO THE CITY CENTRE**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: **DEPLOY INFORMATION-BASED POLICIES EVALUATION**



AREA OF INTERVENTION **A – Commerce**

Specific objective 1: Matchmaking between interested businesses and vacant premises (Actions A1, A2, A7)

Action	Summary	Outcome
A1 – Mapping empty spaces (vacant premises) within the city centre	Create a complete, geo-referenced overview of all vacant ground-floor premises in the city centre and set up a system for regular updates.	Faster and better-informed decisions on how to use vacant premises, leading to a lower vacancy rate and more suitable uses in key locations.
A2 – Mapping interested subjects to provide business in the city centre	Build and maintain a digital database of entrepreneurs and organisations interested in opening or expanding businesses in the city centre.	Improved matchmaking between owners and potential tenants and a more diverse, resilient business mix.
A7 – Dedicated person for "headhunting" missing commerce and content	Recruit a dedicated person who proactively attracts missing types of commerce, services, and cultural content to key city centre locations.	Increased number and diversity of quality businesses and content in the city centre, better aligned with local needs.

Specific objective 2: Support entrepreneurship, stimulate placemaking businesses, and support their visibility (Actions A3, A4, A5, A6)

A3 – Public call for financial and mentoring support	Design and implement recurring public calls that offer financial support and mentoring for business ideas filling vacant privately owned premises in key intersections.	New, innovative, and sustainable businesses in vacant premises and a significant reduction of vacancy in priority streets.
A4 – Motivating businesses for outdoor and shared activities	Encourage businesses to co-create outdoor and shared activities (events, pop-ups, street programming) that activate public spaces.	Livelier streets and squares with higher footfall, longer dwell time and stronger cooperation among local actors.
A5 – Common PR and marketing activities of new businesses	Develop a unified marketing toolkit and joint PR campaigns to promote new and existing businesses in the city centre.	Stronger, more coherent image of the city centre and increased visibility and customer reach for participating businesses.
A6 – One-pager and sticker with relevant information for providers	Produce and distribute a concise one-pager and sticker (incl. QR code) with key contacts, support schemes and collaboration opportunities for providers.	Providers can quickly access essential information, resulting in greater uptake of support measures and joint activities.

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AREA OF INTERVENTION **B – Public space**

Specific objective: Needs-based renewal (B1 in B2)

Action	Summary	Outcome
B1 – Mapping existing entities and identifying missing ones	Map all businesses and organisations in the city centre, classify them by activity, and identify gaps to guide public-space renewal and business attraction.	A clear understanding of market concentrations and service gaps, enabling better-targeted investments and the attraction of missing services.
B2 – Planning street renewal aligned with needs, including gender-based	Redesign key streets and public spaces based on functional, safety, and inclusivity needs, with a focus on women and vulnerable groups.	Safer, more inclusive, and more attractive streets with an improved walking experience and higher satisfaction among residents and businesses.

AREA OF INTERVENTION **C – Data-driven management & governance**

Specific objective: Improved data-driven and collaborative management of the city centre (C1 in C2)

Action	Summary	Outcome
C1 – Establishing a multidisciplinary team	Establish a permanent multidisciplinary team that coordinates city centre actions, aligns sectoral plans, and oversees the implementation of the IAP.	More coherent, cross-sector interventions, faster and better responses to issues, and more efficient use of municipal resources.
C2 – Measuring hot spots with pedestrian counters	Install pedestrian counters and set up data management to monitor flows, and identify hot spots for planning, events and business decisions.	Data-informed decisions on street design, events, and investments, leading to better use of public space and improved safety in busy locations.

6. Action planning detail

6.1. Objectives and key actions

A Commerce

Specific objective 1: Matchmaking between interested businesses and vacant premises (Actions A1, A2, A7)
Specific objective 2: Support entrepreneurship, stimulate place-making businesses, and enhance their visibility (Actions A3, A4, A5, A6)

A1 Mapping empty spaces (vacant premises) within the city centre

Objective

To deliver a comprehensive overview of all vacant premises in the city centre and establish a reliable system for continuous monitoring and updating, serving both internal purposes and potential entrepreneurs seeking an overview of available commercial spaces.

Key objectives

- By Q4 2025, deliver a comprehensive, geo-referenced map of all vacant spaces in the city centre.
- Ensure that data is updated biannually from 2026 onwards.

Lead

Project manager (municipality).

Key partners

Municipal GIS/IT department; real estate agencies; local business associations; community groups and residents.

Resources

€ 2,000/year + municipal staff time; GIS software; survey equipment.

Timeframe

Initial full map by Q4 2025; biannual updates from 2026 onwards.

Responsibilities

- Lead/project manager: coordination, task assignment, and progress monitoring.
- GIS/IT department: database integration, mapping, and updates.
- Real estate agencies: provision of property data.
- Business associations & residents: feedback and additional insights.
- Survey team: execution of on-site documentation.

Tasks

- Define city centre boundaries and categories of premises.
- Collect and cross-check property data (municipal, private, online).
- Conduct field surveys with geo-tagged photos.
- Engage stakeholders to validate and complement the data.
- Consolidate data into GIS and publish the results.
- Maintain biannual updates from 2026 onwards.

Expected results

- **Geo-referenced GIS map of vacant premises.**
- **Consolidated database with ownership, technical, and visual data.**
- **Stakeholder report with proposals for use.**
- **Potential entrepreneurs will find business premises more quickly.**
- **Vacant properties will be rented or sold more quickly.**

A2 Mapping interested subjects to provide business in the city centre

Objective

To build a database of entrepreneurs and organisations willing to open or expand businesses in the city centre, reducing vacancy rates, fostering diversity, and enabling better matchmaking with owners of vacant commercial premises.

Key objectives

- Build a digital database with at least 50 interested businesses by the end of 2025.
- Reduce vacancy rate in focus areas to less than 5% by 2027.

Lead

Economic development team

Key partners

Business associations; Incubator Celje; real estate agencies; chambers of commerce; event organisers.

Resources

€1,500/year + staff time; campaign materials; digital survey tools.

Timeframe

2025 until the vacancy rate falls below 5%.

Responsibilities

- Economic development team: coordination of outreach and evaluation of candidates.
- Marketing/communications unit: design and execution of campaigns.
- Business associations: partners in awareness-raising.
- Incubator Celje: mentoring support.
- Municipal departments: alignment with the city strategy.

Tasks

- Define desirable business categories and target profiles.
- Launch an online interest form and a targeted outreach campaign.
- Collect leads through business events and networking.
- Conduct interviews and site tours with prospects.
- Provide information packages and opportunities.
- Prioritise businesses and maintain an updated database.
- Publish a list of preferred candidates with follow-up plans.

Expected results

- **Digital database with at least 50 businesses by the end of 2026.**
- **Personas of target profiles and a prioritised candidate list.**
- **Outreach materials and event-participation logs.**
- **Successful matchmaking between seekers of business premises and owners of vacant private commercial premises.**

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A3 Public call for financial and mentoring support

Objective

To stimulate entrepreneurial initiatives by launching public calls offering financial aid and mentoring, focused on revitalising vacant privately owned premises in key city centre intersections.

Key objectives

- Publish the first call by Q2 2025 and award support to at least 2 businesses annually.
- Achieve a vacancy rate of <5 % at key intersections by 2027.

Lead

Municipal economic development team.

Key partners

Sponsors and investors; business mentors; chambers of commerce; evaluation committee.

Resources

€50,000/year;
municipal budget allocation;
mentorship time.

Timeframe

2026–until vacancy rates drop below 5%.

Responsibilities

- Economic development team: coordination, call design, and monitoring.
- Evaluation committee: fair and transparent selection.
- Mentors: capacity-building for selected businesses.
- Sponsors: financial support packages.

Tasks

- Define objectives, eligibility criteria, and the evaluation system.
- Develop a promotional and outreach plan.
- Promote calls via multi-channel campaigns.
- Recruit financial sponsors and mentors.
- Launch the application and selection process.
- Announce winners and provide tailored support packages.
- Monitor progress and report.

Expected results

- **Annual public call launched from 2026 onwards.**
- **A minimum of two supported businesses annually.**
- **Financial and mentoring packages provided.**
- **Public showcase events and press releases.**
- **A greater number of successfully operating new place-making businesses.**

A4 Motivating businesses for outdoor and shared activities

Objective

To encourage businesses to expand activities outside their premises and collaborate in joint city-centre initiatives, increasing visibility and vibrancy.

Key objectives

- By the end of 2026, involve at least 30% of companies in joint outdoor activities.
- From 2026, organize at least 4 joint events per year.

Lead

Celeia Celje Institute

Key partners

Local business associations; cultural and tourism institutions; municipal permitting departments.

Resources

Staff hours;
small budget for incentives and promotional campaigns.

Timeframe

From 2026 onward, continuous.

Responsibilities

- Celeia Celje Institute: design incentives and facilitate permitting.
- Business associations: mobilisation and participation.
- Event organisers: coordination of logistics.
- Businesses: participation and joint promotion.

Tasks

- Conduct surveys to identify business interests.
- Design an incentive program and present the benefits.
- Plan collaborative events (markets, festivals, seasonal campaigns).
- Organize networking and workshops.
- Simplify permitting processes.
- Monitor, evaluate, and share case studies.

Expected results

- **A minimum of four collaborative events per year from 2026.**
- **At least 30% business participation.**
- **Incentive programme and case study portfolio.**
- **More people will come to the city.**
- **Public space will be well used for people.**

A5 Common PR and marketing activities of new businesses

Objective

To support the visibility of new businesses through coordinated PR and marketing, including shared social media, one-pagers, and stickers.

Key objectives

- Establish a unified marketing toolkit (branding, social media, one-pagers, stickers) by Q2 2025.
- Support over 20 new businesses with joint PR by 2027.

Lead

Municipal communications office and/ or Celeia Celje Institute.

Key partners

Design studios;
PR professionals;
participating businesses.

Resources

Shared municipal budget;
design and printing costs;
staff time.

Timeframe

2025–2027

Responsibilities

- Communications office or Celeia Celje Institute:
strategy, campaigns, and monitoring.
- Design studios:
visual identity and layouts.
- Businesses:
active participation in campaigns.

Tasks

- Develop branding guidelines and templates.
- Design social media campaigns and content calendars.
- Draft one-pager materials with business information.
- Print and distribute one-pagers and stickers.
- Organize collaborative PR events.
- Monitor campaign performance.
- Launch joint campaigns on social media and offline.
- Monitor campaign performance and adjust strategy.

Expected results

- **Unified marketing toolkit.**
- **At least 20 businesses supported by 2027.**
- **Hashtag campaigns, one-pagers, and sticker distribution.**
- **Regular reports on marketing impact.**
- **More place-making businesses in the city centre.**
- **Fewer business closures.**
- **More optimised use of business owners' time.**
- **More people will come to the city centre.**

A6 One-pager and sticker with relevant information for providers

Objective

To provide a quick-reference tool with relevant contact, support, and collaboration information for providers in the city centre.

Key objectives

- Produce and distribute one-pager and sticker to 100% of city centre providers by Q4 2024.
- Provide annual updates of information.

Lead

Municipal coordination office

Key partners

Design agencies;
business associations;
city departments.

Resources

Printing and design costs;
municipal staff hours.

Timeframe

Ongoing from 2024.

Responsibilities

- Coordination office:
content definition and updates.
- Design agencies:
layout and visualisation.
- Business associations:
dissemination to members.

Tasks

- Identify relevant content.
- Design one-pager and sticker.
- Print and distribute materials.
- Host a digital version with QR access.
- Update annually.

Expected results

- **One-pager and sticker distributed to 100% of providers.**
- **Digital resource with QR code.**
- **Annual updates.**
- **Entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs will find information more quickly.**

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A7 Dedicated person for “headhunting” missing commerce and content

Objective

To recruit missing types of commerce, services, and cultural content to strengthen city centre vibrancy.

Key objectives

- Recruit a dedicated headhunter by Q2 2024.
- Secure commitments from at least 10 new businesses by 2026.

Lead

Project coordinator

Key partners

Local government; business associations; property owners.

Resources

Salary and operational budget for headhunter;
municipal coordination time.

Timeframe

Ongoing from 2024.

Responsibilities

- Project coordinator:
  defines role and supervises progress.
- Headhunter specialist:
  active outreach, recruitment, and onboarding.
- Associations and landlords:
  support and facilitation.

Tasks

- Define gaps in commerce and content.
- Recruit a dedicated headhunter.
- Develop outreach strategy and materials.
- Engage prospective businesses.
- Track progress and adapt.

Expected results

- **More diverse and higher-quality offer.**
- **At least 10 new businesses by 2027.**
- **Outreach materials, agreements, and monitoring reports.**

B Public space

Specific objective: Needs-based renewal

B1 Mapping existing entities and identifying missing ones

Objective

To provide a comprehensive overview of businesses and organisations in the city centre, identify gaps, and develop strategies to attract missing entities.

Key objectives

- Develop a comprehensive entity database by Q4 2025.
- Identify at least 3 priority gaps to be addressed by 2026.

Lead

Municipal economic development and planning departments.

Key partners

Business associations; NGOs; residents; chambers of commerce.

Resources

Municipal staff time; survey and analysis tools.

Timeframe

Ongoing from 2024–continuous.

Responsibilities

- Municipality: framework definition and data consolidation.
- Business associations and NGOs: stakeholder engagement.
- Survey team: data verification.

Tasks

- Define categories for classification.
- Collect and validate entity data.
- Conduct surveys and field verification.
- Analyze distribution and identify gaps.
- Create a visual representation of the distribution.
- Develop a strategy to fill the gaps.
- Consult stakeholders and publish the report.

Expected results

- **Database of existing entities by Q4 2025.**
- **Visual maps of distribution.**
- **Strategy to attract missing entities.**
- **More diverse and higher-quality offer.**
- **More people will come to the city centre.**

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B2 Planning street renewal aligned with needs, including gender-based

Objective

To redesign streets to meet functional, safety, and inclusivity needs, with a focus on women and vulnerable groups.

Key objectives

- Complete at least 1 pilot renewal project by 2026.
- Ensure ≥70% satisfaction among residents and businesses in renewed areas.

Lead

City urban planning department.

Key partners

Women's advocacy groups; local businesses; police and safety authority.

Resources

Municipal planning and investment funds; EU or national co-financing.

Timeframe

2025–continuous.

Responsibilities

- Urban planning department: design and coordination.
- Police: safety standards and monitoring.
- Businesses: participation in safe-spot initiatives.
- Advocacy groups: gender-based expertise.

Tasks

- Audit existing infrastructure.
- Consult residents, especially women and parents.
- Design renewal plan with safety and accessibility measures.
- Define content and safety needs, including gender perspectives.
- Implement pilot projects in high-risk areas.
- Communicate initiatives to the public.
- Monitor impact and satisfaction.

Expected results

- **Pilot renewal project by 2026.**
- **≥70% satisfaction of residents and businesses after the first three years of renewal.**
- **Comprehensive holistic renewal plan.**
- **Public space used more effectively for people.**
- **Better experience for residents and businesses.**
- **More coherent interventions in the city centre.**
- **More people will come to the city centre.**

C Data driven management and governance

Specific objective: Improved data-driven and collaborative management of the city centre

C1 Establishing a multidisciplinary team

Objective

To establish a multidisciplinary team that coordinates actions, integrates perspectives, and ensures long-term sustainability of city centre interventions.

Key objectives

- Form the team by Q1 2026 with at least 5 different disciplines represented.
- Conduct annual evaluations of team effectiveness.

Lead

City manager (chair).

Key partners

Municipal departments (planning, economic development, culture, tourism, social); residents; NGOs; academia.

Resources

Staff time; small meeting/analysis budget.

Timeframe

Team formed by Q1 2026; ongoing.

Responsibilities

- Chair: coordination, escalation, and agenda setting.
- Members: deliverables per domain, liaison across teams.
- Municipal staff: technical and analytical support.

Tasks

- Recruit ≥5 disciplines into the team.
- Define roles, cadence, and methodology.
- Integrate workplans across disciplines.
- Conduct annual reviews.

Expected results

- **Terms of reference and roster.**
- **Annual workplan and integrated reports.**
- **Yearly effectiveness reviews.**
- **More coherent interventions in the city centre.**
- **Faster and more targeted responses to problems.**
- **Public space used more effectively for people.**
- **Better experience for residents and businesses.**
- **More stable, long-term improvements in the city centre.**
- **More efficient use of municipal resources.**

C2 Measuring hot spots with pedestrian counters

Objective

To monitor pedestrian flows and identify high-activity areas, guiding urban planning and business development.

Key objectives

- Install at least 5 pedestrian counters at key locations by Q2 2026.
- Deliver baseline footfall report by end 2026.

Lead

Municipal public space and IT department.

Key partners

Technology providers; safety authority; local stakeholders.

Resources

€ 10,000/year for devices and maintenance; staff time for analysis.

Timeframe

2026, with updates ongoing.

Responsibilities

- Municipality: permits and vendor coordination.
- IT department: database management.
- Vendors: provide technology and install devices.
- Stakeholders: support communication.

Tasks

- Define objectives and select locations.
- Select counting technology and vendors.
- Secure permits and approvals.
- Install counters in key locations.
- Collect and manage data securely.
- Analyze and report.

Expected results

- **Five counters installed by Q2 2026.**
- **Baseline report by the end 2026.**
- **Annual footfall updates.**
- **Better understanding of pedestrian flows and hot spots in the city centre.**
- **Data-informed decisions on public space design and street management.**
- **More strategic placement of services, cultural events, and street activities.**
- **Stronger evidence base for supporting or attracting businesses in high-activity areas.**
- **Improved safety and crowd management in busy locations**
- **More efficient allocation of municipal investments in the city centre.**

6.2. Framework for delivery

1. Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders

Municipality of Celje

- Lead institution and main coordinator of the IAP.
- Responsible for strategic decisions, allocation of municipal resources, and integration with local policies and regulations.
- Ensures alignment with the Old Town Development Strategy, Integrated Transport Plan, and other relevant strategies.

City Manager's Office

- Day-to-day management of IAP implementation.
- Oversees mapping activities, coordination of public calls, monitoring of indicators, and stakeholder reporting.

Celeia Celje Institute (Cultural Events and Tourism Institute)

- Lead partner for marketing, cultural and tourism-related activities.
- Coordinates events, branding, and collaborative campaigns with businesses.
- Supports public space activation through cultural programming.

Economic Development Team (Municipal Department)

- Leads actions related to attracting new businesses, financial incentives, and incubation support.
- Cooperates with Incubator Celje, business associations, and real estate agencies.

Incubator Celje & Business Associations

- Provide mentoring, entrepreneurial training, and networking opportunities.
- Act as the first contact point for entrepreneurs interested in city-centre business opportunities.

Local Businesses and Entrepreneurs

- Direct beneficiaries of support schemes and key actors in implementing shared activities.
- Participation in joint public relations, outdoor activities and co-creation of the city centre offer is expected.

Residents' Associations & NGOs

- Ensure inclusion of citizens in decision-making processes.
- Provide feedback on public space renewal and community activities.

External Experts (urban planners, data analysts, IT specialists)

- Provide technical support in mapping, data collection, monitoring pedestrian flows, and designing renewal projects.

2. Governance and coordination mechanism

URBACT Local Group (ULG)

- Core decision-making and coordination body during the URBACT support period.
- Brings together municipality departments, Celeia Celje Institute, business associations, NGOs, residents, and experts.
- Meets quarterly to review progress, approve adjustments, and ensure cross-sectoral integration.

Steering Committee (after URBACT support)

- Established as a permanent coordination structure under the Municipality of Celje.
- Chaired by the City Manager with representatives from Celeia Celje Institute, Economic Development Department, and business/resident organisations.
- Responsible for long-term oversight, resource mobilisation, and alignment with future city strategies (e.g. new city centre strategy 2026–2027).

Operational Teams

- Thematic working groups for Commerce, Public Space, and Attractivity.
- Each team is led by the relevant municipal department in cooperation with partners (e.g. Economic Development Team for commerce, Projects Department for public space).
- Deliver concrete outputs, report to the Steering Committee, and propose adjustments.

3. Monitoring and sustainability

Monitoring and evaluation

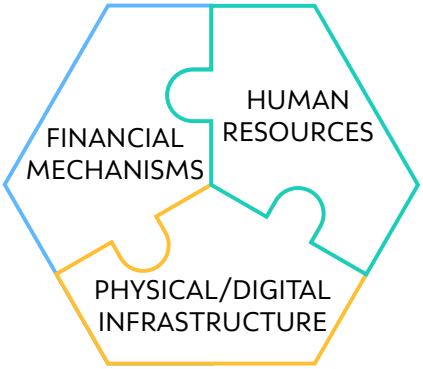
- Data collection mechanisms (pedestrian counters, vacancy mapping, stakeholder surveys) integrated into municipal IT systems.
- Annual progress reports presented to the Steering Committee and City Council.

Sustainability beyond URBACT

- The Municipality is committed to financing key positions (e.g. city manager, headhunter for businesses) even after the project ends.
- The Celeia Celje Institute ensures the continuation of marketing and cultural activation activities.
- The Steering Committee guarantees continuity and prepares integration into the new City Centre Strategy 2026–2027.

6.3. Resourcing

Delivering the Integrated Action Plan requires a combination of:



tailored to each type of action. While some activities will require direct funding (e.g. financial support schemes, infrastructure renewal), others rely more on structural and organisational changes (e.g. improved governance, data management, business networking).

1. Required resources

Staffing

- City Manager and supporting municipal staff (coordination, monitoring, reporting).
- Dedicated business "headhunter" to attract missing commerce.
- Project managers within the Economic Development Team and Projects Department and IT department.
- Cultural Events and Tourism Institute staff for marketing and cultural activation.
- External experts (urban planning, IT/data analytics, mentoring).

Physical infrastructure

- Municipal office spaces for coordination and ULG meetings.
- Public spaces and vacant premises in the city centre for activation and testing actions.
- Digital infrastructure: online databases, GIS systems, marketing platforms, pedestrian counters.

Capital and revenue expenditure

- Capital costs: street renewal projects, installation of pedestrian counters, design/printing of materials, digital platforms, public call for financial and mentoring support.
- Revenue costs: salaries (headhunter, city manager), annual budgets for marketing campaigns, business mentoring, monitoring.
- Structural changes: ordinances on advertising and use of public spaces, compensation system for vacant premises, sustainable

2. Innovative financing solutions

To complement municipal and national budgets, innovative financing models will be explored:

- Co-financing with private sector: partnerships with local businesses, chambers of commerce, and property owners to support marketing, events, and space activation.
- Crowdfunding and sponsorships: campaigns for specific projects (e.g. cultural events, street renewal design competitions).
- Public-private partnerships (PPP): redevelopment of selected vacant or strategic buildings through shared investment.
- Foundations and philanthropic funds: targeting cultural heritage, sustainability, and youth entrepreneurship.

3. Potential funding sources

National public funding – Slovenia (line ministries)

- **Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport**
  Support for entrepreneurship, innovation, tourism and creative industries, including:
  - incentives for SMEs and start-ups,
  - programmes for hospitality, retail and tourism products in the city centre,
  - support for business infrastructure (coworking, incubators).
- **Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development**
  Management of EU cohesion policy funds (ERDF, ESF+ and other instruments) and integrated territorial investments. Relevant for:
  - integrated urban development projects and regeneration of the city centre,
  - sustainable mobility measures and public-space improvements,
  - pilot and demonstration projects that combine social, economic and spatial impacts.
- **Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning**
  Competent for spatial planning and the regulation of built space. Potentially relevant for:
  - planning and implementation of public-space upgrades in the historic centre,
  - brownfield regeneration and temporary uses of vacant plots and buildings,
  - integrating climate-resilient design into street renewal..
- **Ministry of Culture**
  Relevant for cultural programming and heritage-based revitalisation, including:
  - cultural and artistic interventions in public space,
  - support to cultural institutions and NGOs activating vacant ground-floor spaces,
  - projects that connect cultural heritage with contemporary creative industries.
- **Ministry of Public Administration / Ministry for Digital Transformation**
  Relevant for digitalisation, open data and smart-city approaches, for example:
  - co-funding of digital participation platforms and e-services linked to the city centre (A.1, A.2),
  - pilot projects using real-time data (pedestrian counters, dashboards) for managing the centre (B.1),
  - capacity-building for municipal staff in digital tools and data-driven decision-making.

EU funds

- **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**
  - Supports urban regeneration, sustainable mobility, and digitalisation.
  - Relevant to actions: street renewal, pedestrian counters (B.1), digital platforms for mapping (A.1, A.2), and marketing campaigns (A.5).
- **European Social Fund (ESF+)**
  - Supports capacity building, skills development, and entrepreneurship.
  - Relevant to actions: public calls with mentorship (A.3), training programmes through Incubator Celje, engagement of residents and NGOs (A.4).
- **Other EU Urban Initiatives**
  - European Urban Initiative (EUI): co-financing of pilot actions linked to sustainability, inclusiveness, and governance innovation.
  - Horizon Europe / Horizon 2020 legacy: opportunities for data-driven policy, digital innovation in urban planning, and smart city solutions.
  - Urban Innovative Actions (UIA): potential for testing new models of city-centre management and governance structures.
  - Cultural and Creative Europe programmes: for heritage and cultural events in the city centre.

6.4. Risk analysis

A – Commerce		
A1 **Mapping empty spaces (vacant premises) within the city centre**	**Risk Type:** Technical / Operational **Risk Level:** Medium	**Mitigation Measures:** Use reliable GIS/digital tools, validate data with stakeholders, and update regularly
A2 **Mapping interested subjects to provide business ideas and models**	**Risk Type:** Technical / Operational **Risk Level:** Medium	**Mitigation Measures:** Standardize data collection, verify feasibility of proposed models, protect personal data, and maintain an updated registry
A3 **Public call for financial and other kinds of support (mentorship of different business skills), new ideas with the goal to fill vacant privately owned business premises**	**Risk Type:** Financial **Risk Level:** High	**Mitigation Measures:** Transparent fund allocation, diversify funding sources, establish contracts with clear conditions, and conduct regular audits.
A4 **Motivating businesses to do activities outside of their business premises and collaborate in shared activities**	**Risk Type:** Behavioural / Staffing **Risk Level:** Medium	**Mitigation Measures:** Provide incentives, ensure transparent criteria, coordinate with municipal authorities, and engage businesses in training/ mentorship.
A5 **Common PR & marketing activities of new businesses (social media, one-pager, stickers)**	**Risk Type:** Behavioural / Operational **Risk Level:** Medium	**Mitigation Measures:** Define communication guidelines, involve professional PR teams, monitor public perception, and adjust campaigns as needed.
A6 **One-pager and sticker with all relevant information for providers**	**Risk Type:** Operational / Legal **Risk Level:** Low	**Mitigation Measures:** Fact-check information before publication, set up update protocols, make digital versions available, and verify compliance with GDPR and trademark rules.
A7 **Dedicated person for "headhunting" the missing commerce and content**	**Risk Type:** Staffing / Behavioural / Legal **Risk Level:** Medium	**Mitigation Measures:** Define competencies and goals (KPIs), ensure budget and resources, set ethical guidelines, prevent dependency on one person, and report progress regularly.

B – Public space

B1 **Mapping existing entities by field of activity and identifying missing/needed ones**	**Risk Type:** Technical / Operational **Risk Level:** 🟡 Medium	**Mitigation Measures:** Use standardized classification methods, validate data with stakeholders, keep the database regularly updated, and publish results transparently to avoid bias.
B2 **Planning street renewal in line with content needs and complementing existing needs in the city (also in regard to gender-based needs)**	**Risk Type:** Legal / Financial / Behavioural **Risk Level:** 🔴 High	**Mitigation Measures:** Conduct inclusive public consultations (considering gender and vulnerable groups), secure adequate funding, ensure legal compliance for public procurement, and pilot-test designs before full implementation.

C - Data driven management and governance

C1 **Establishing a multidisciplinary team, where each member focuses on their own area of expertise, working collaboratively to address activities related to the city centre**	**Risk Type:** Staffing / Organisational **Risk Level:** 🟡 Medium	**Mitigation Measures:** Define clear roles and responsibilities, appoint a strong coordinator, implement structured communication channels, schedule regular reviews, and ensure institutional support for long-term continuity.
C2 **Measuring hot spots (pedestrians) in the city centre by installing pedestrian counters**	**Risk Type:** Technical / Financial / Privacy **Risk Level:** 🟡 Medium	**Mitigation Measures:** Choose reliable and durable devices, ensure GDPR-compliant data collection, allocate resources for maintenance, and combine quantitative data with qualitative surveys for accuracy.

7.
Annexes

Public tender for the allocation of aid for the development of the economy in the Municipality of Celje

https://moc.celje.si/images/Datoteke/JAVNI_RAZPISI/2024/09-september/spodbujanje-gospodarstva-2024/razpis.pdf

Public tender for proposals for co-financing of the renovation of buildings and the restoration of sacral heritage in the Municipality of Celje

https://moc.celje.si/images/Datoteke/JAVNI_RAZPISI/2024/03-marec/javni-razpis-sofinanciranje-obnova-stavb-sakralne-dediscnine/RAZPISNA-DOKUMENTACIJA.pdf

https://moc.celje.si/zakljuceni-projekti?start=36

Celje Old Town Development Strategy

https://moc.celje.si/images/Projekti_v_teku/smj/Strategija_razvoja_SMJ_30_1_2015.pdf

Decree on the designation of areas or facilities in the Municipality of Celje for maintenance work

https://www.uradni-list.si/glasilo-uradni-list-rs/vsebina/115487

Decree on Advertising

https://moc.celje.si/images/akti/Odlok_o_oglasevanju_v_MOC_NPB1_15_5_2014.pdf

Ordinance on the Use of Public Areas

https://moc.celje.si/images/Datoteke/NPB_MOC/NPB_OOPK/JAVNE_POVRSINE/2022_02_01_NPB.pdf

Ordinance on the Compensation for the Use of Building Land in the Municipality of Celje

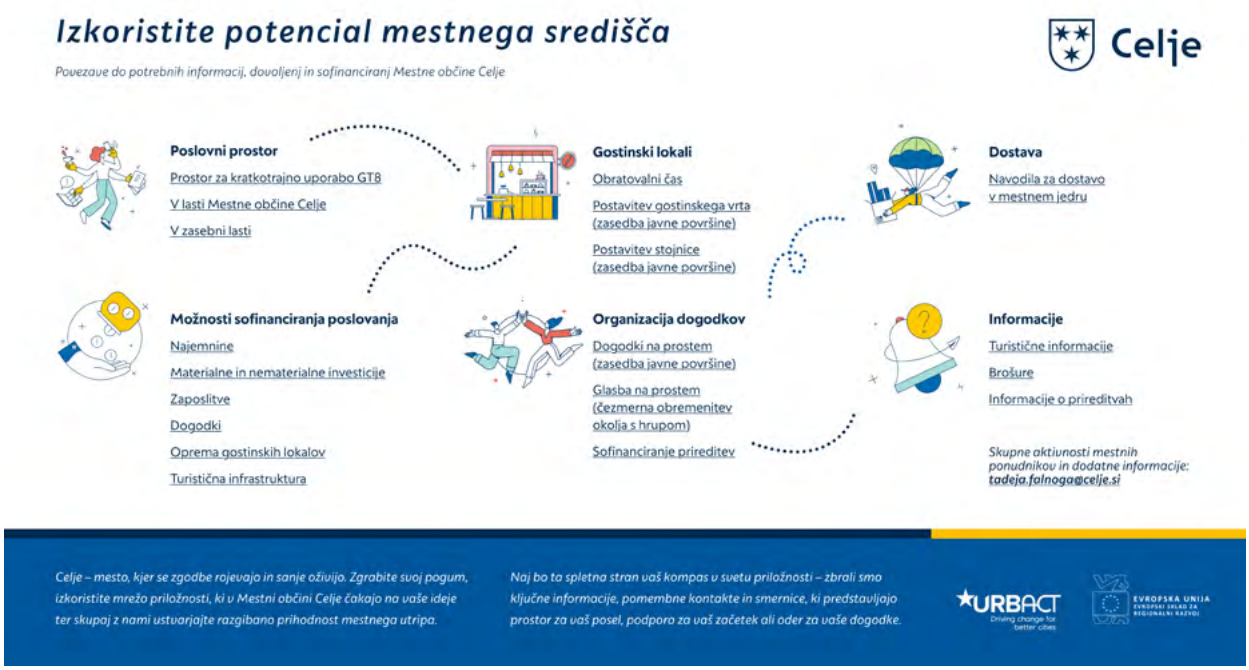
https://moc.celje.si/images/akti/Odlok__o_nadomstilu_za_uporabo_stavbnih_zemlji_za_obmoje_MOC_NPB2.pdf

Expert basis for the Celje Old Town urbanisation project

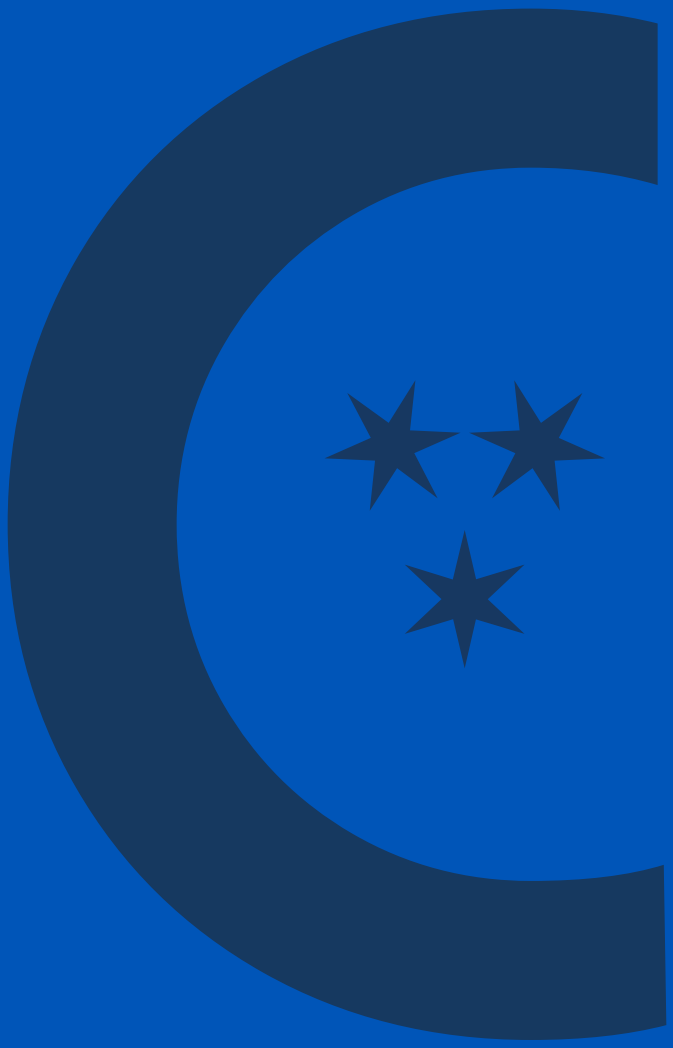
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oodWBxkhcKmtUYquwzMyD6ERjahLsWf3/view?usp=sharing

Integrated Transport Strategy of the Municipality of Celje

https://moc.celje.si/images/Projekti_v_teku/CPS/publikacija-CPS-CE-low-res.pdf



The upper graphic is the one-pager we mentioned on the page 19.



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TOWARDS A BALANCED CITY CENTRE

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