



## Hoogeveen 'pleasantly different'

### 1. The context



Hoogeveen is situated in the south-west of Drenthe, in the northern part of the Netherlands. Hoogeveen fulfils an important function as a regional centre for retail, industry, education and care, and has a large catchment area in all of these sectors. The actions of the municipal authority are directed on all fronts for maintaining a high level of level of amenities and retaining and strengthening the city's regional function.

Hoogeveen has a proven track record in the design and implementation of local strategies towards a city centre revitalisation with a strong focus on retail.

Back in 2006, and in view of an incipient trend of closure of retail business, the Council decided to engage in a redevelopment strategy for Hoogeveen's city centre.

Following a wide-ranging review and interactive process with the city's residents and entrepreneurs, Hoogeveen adopted the vision called 'Pleasantly Different', whose aim is to not only improve the quality of Hoogeveen as an attractive city to live and work, but to position it as an influential regional centre. The Stichting Centrummanagement Hoogeveen, the Foundation dedicated to the city centre management, was one of the most relevant outputs of the joint collaboration work towards a the city centre strategy. The Foundation was also a key

actor leading to the creation of a BID project for the city centre in Hoogeveen, the first one to be approved in the Netherlands (2009). As result of the process started in 2006, Hoogeveen's city centre was singled out as "The best inner city in the Netherlands 2011-2013" for medium-sized municipalities.

Although the project was already well underway, Hoogeveen was not kept safe from the global economic crisis of the last decade. Unemployment reached 15% (2014) among the resident population and the retail sector again evidenced the effects with a new increase in vacancies and **High Street** shops closing (12% empty shops in 2016).

Therefore, and as a part of the RetailLink Integrated Action Plan process, the Council decided in 2016 to renew and update the vision 'Pleasantly different'. The Council approved this renewed strategy for the city centre and retail revitalisation in June 2017 ([https://www.hoogeveen.nl/stadscentrum/Visie\\_stadscentrum](https://www.hoogeveen.nl/stadscentrum/Visie_stadscentrum))

With the renewed vision and the IAP, Hoogveen expects to impact on a range of different aspects. In a nutshell, the IAP will contribute to positioning Hoogeveen as an attractive city in which to work, buy and live:

*"We want to achieve a more vital and viable city centre, by making it become a more compact, attractive and feel-good city centre, based on the city DNA."*

The renewed vision is an integrated plan and links to all of the relevant policy areas such as sustainability, mobility, culture, recreation and tourism, among others.



## 2. The plan - What Needs to Be Done

Because a combination of factors is required to give retail sector a boost, the city will continue to redevelop its city centre through a variety of complementary, integrated means, amongst

them: the enhancement of public spaces; participation in networks to foster joint work on the city centre revitalisation; continuation of the surveying of visitors and analysing buying flows to get a better understanding of consumers' preferences.

The city will also continue working on the agenda of promotional campaigns and events associated with retail together with local retailers, the catering sector, street market representatives, and representatives from the culture and recreation & the tourism sector.

## Priority objectives

Key project objectives to be developed include:

### 1. Attracting more visitors to the city centre

Hoogeveen expects to attract 20% more visitors from 2015 to 2020. To make this projection happen, the city is undertaking a number of activities focused on improving both mobility and events for enlivening the area.

The first key action is the linking of the parking areas with the Hoofdstraat to facilitate access and flow of visitors to the city centre. The second key action consists of a number of events to be developed in the main street in the inner city Hoofdstraat, over a period of 3 years (2018-2020), including the Super Saturdays that involve retailers and the public in a series of thematic activities primarily addressed to families.

### 2. Reducing vacancy levels within the city centre by 60% from 2015 to 2020

To reach this objective, the city has put forth an ambitious local project of compacting the city centre and redeveloping the real estate sector, in particular to refill the vacant units. Actions include:

- Enabling a local grant scheme for retailers in the city centre so that they can relocate their businesses within the compact area and also transform their business into other functions like housing.
- Transformation of the passage of the Tamboer (shopping mall) to other functions by using the grant scheme for retailers.
- Upgrading the theatre area and the surrounding public space.
- Developing a plan for a mix of brands, including the strategic acquisition of retail and hospitality units.
- Undertake a study for the introduction of a supermarket in the inner city centre to allow more daily footfall in the area.
- Linking the Dwingeland Park with the Hoofdstraat to offer more leisure activity near the main retail area so as to extend dwelling areas in the inner city.

### 3. Achieving higher retail turnover, up to 10% more per shop in 2020 with respect to 2015.

In this respect, the city will focus on supporting entrepreneurs - not only retailers but also the hospitality sector and other businesses, while also up-keeping and promoting the area for tourists and visitors:

- Scan for presentation and profiling of retail shops.

- Enable a local grant scheme for city centre retailers to undergo shop facade renovation/refurbishing.
- Enhance mutual co-operation of entrepreneurs to organize thematic meetings and workshops.
- Apply the toolbox MKB Noord/banks which help retailers and hospitality sector players improve their business.
- Improve the promotion of hotspots in the city centre by signing them up to be active parts of touristic routes.
- Maintain the inspection of public spaces (health/safety/servicing).
- Continue a coordinated promotion and marketing of the city centre.

The management required to support achieving these objectives involves three main functional areas: monitoring, co-production of strategy and funding

### Monitoring

The implementation of the above objectives will be monitored by means of locally developed indicators:

- Purchase flow analysis (East Netherlands): undertaken every 5 years.
- Footfall count: through WIFI-sensors performed every day/week/month/year.
- Parking income through the municipal parking fee: every week/month/year.
- Vacancy level of retail units, monitored by the City Centre Management Foundation quarterly.
- Consumer survey in the city centre, undertaken every 4 years.
- Monitoring of the vitality city centre by means of the Vitality Formula, as presented below. The formula is based on three indicators - turnover, visitors, and, parking income, in a way that the score shows the vitality effect of an event or specific day, in the city centre.

## Monitoring Vitality city centre

**Vitality formula:**

$$V = (3xT) + (2xv) + (1xP) / 6$$

V = Vitality score

Three indicators:

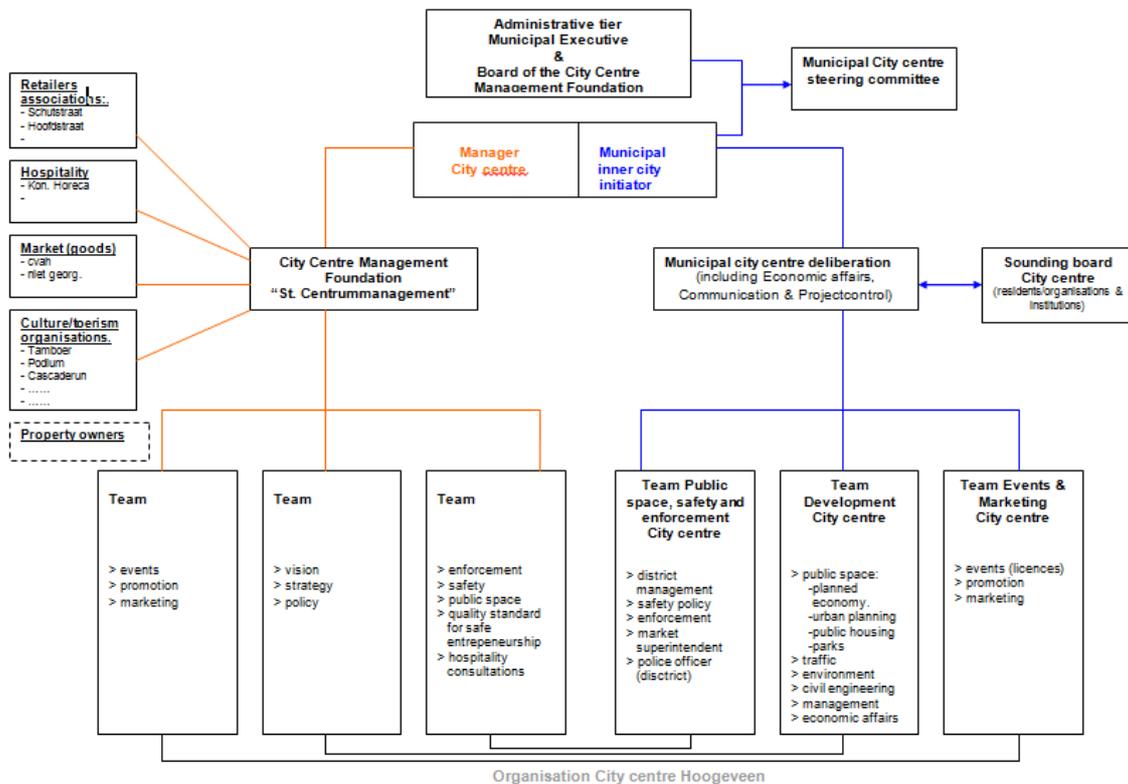
T = Turnover  
v = Visitors  
P = Parking income

Monitoring in 7 areas each Supersaturday

## Co-production of the implementation strategy of the vision and IAP

The initiative to revitalise the city centre and the retail sector has been built upon structural public-private partnerships with allocated budget, which, according to the main stakeholders in Hoogeveen City Centre, translates into flexible, efficient and results-oriented initiatives. Progress of the Action Plan is being monitored by the municipal authority, as well as by the City Management Foundation.

Two key governing bodies oversee the initiative: a) the Municipal inner city initiator, the local government administrator responsible for the city centre development, who works in close cooperation with b) the City Centre Management Foundation, and the private business partnership representing 400 entrepreneurs from different sectors in the area, including retailers, catering entrepreneurs, market stallholders and representatives of the recreation and the tourism sector. The working structure of the URBACT Local Group, responsible for the development of the plan, relies on the already existing working groups, as shown below.



## Funding

For the implementation of all the actions there is a budget of 12 million euros, funded by the local and regional government. A budget of 2 million will be cofinanced by property owners and market players.

## 3. Conclusions

### Key project learning and Innovation

## DNA Hoogeveen and Place branding

For Hoogeveen, the methodology and research used to know and better understand the local consumer and its DNA has been the most impressive and most helpful learning aspect in the process of developing a retail and city marketing strategy. Identifying retail DNA based on research and emotions has been quite revealing for all concerned.



During one of the RetailLink workshops, led by the retail expert Lluís Martinez-Ribes, the project team developed the 'Next door family' concept. This concept has been used as a guiding tool in the city search of a new local identity and marketing strategy. It ended with the final proposition: "Hoogeveen the most child friendly city in five years, in the northern part of the Netherlands", which eventually turned out to be the basis for the plan developed for the following years.

In addition, the "place making" tools presented by Simon Quin (Institute of Place Making in Manchester) during one of RetailLink's transnational meetings, were also instrumental for stakeholders to understand the type of retail that best suits the city of Hoogeveen according to the profile of the residents and how they use the city centre. The joint reflections on the type of town centre according to footfall analysis as well as the factors influencing its vitality and viability were critical for the planning team of Hoogeveen to develop its new strategy.

Finally, in terms of branding, Hoogeveen's new marketing strategy will unfold as a result of the discussions on the five key questions of the method proposed by Roger Pride (Heavenly, UK), which were aimed to help inspire reflections on the potential of branding in Hoogeveen.

During the transnational meetings, the RetailLink team of Hoogeveen experienced several good examples of events to enliven city retail from an innovative approach. The entrepreneurs of the city centre of Hoogeveen were highly impressed by the REC.0 Experimental Stores of Igualada, which provides customers with an attractive and unique shopping experience. This event inspired the entrepreneurs from Hoogeveen and made them create a new event in the city of Hoogeveen, 'Strunen in 't stro'.



## Transfer potential

Hoogeveen considers that the vitality formula as introduced in Section 2, is useful and transferable to other cities. The formula is a monitoring tool for city centres or retail areas monitoring and allows assessing the real effect of activities and interventions in an area. It thus assists in the decision-making processes by providing evidence-based results.

The project-based initiatives to revitalise the city centre and the retail sector have been built on structural partnerships with allocated budget and have proved to be successful in terms of efficiency and results. In this regard, the city centre development vision has constituted a project in and of itself. By working towards setting long-term structural policy as well as long-lasting cooperation schemes between the municipality and diverse entrepreneurs for the city centre project, it is a co-creation model to showcase to other cities interested in exploring potentially similar cooperation initiatives.

Indeed, the Hoogeveen BID approach has been well regarded by other Retailink partners looking for a town centre management structure precisely for its being stability-focused and participatory. After more than an eight-year experience in implementing a BID project in the city centre, Hoogeveen is able to offer some knowledge on success and failure factors for BIDs. For more information, see the video: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1zcfQDzu4ink>]

## 4. Contact information

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## 5. Roadmap

Agenda vision citycentre Hoogeveen				
Actions	Priority	Time	Delivery involved	lead/keypartners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Attracting more visitors to the city centre: 20% more visitors in 2020 (in comparison to 2015 )</b></li> </ul>				
<b>New projects public space</b>				
Revitalisation Hoofdstraat (tussen 't Kruis t/m Tamboerplein) incl. overige pleintjes	1	2018-2019	Gemeente	
Revitalisation Van Echtenstraat	2	2021	Gemeente	
Herinrichting Van Echtenplein	1	2020	Gemeente	
Revitalisation impuls verbindingen (stegen) tussen parkeerterreinen en Hoofdstraat	1	2020-2021	Gemeente	
Revitalisation Nicolaas Beetsplein	1	2020	Gemeente	
Revitalisation Bilderdijkplein	1	2021	Gemeente	
Revitalisation Schutsplein	3	2021	Gemeente	
Revitalisation Raadhuisstraat + Grote Kerkstraat (winkel/horecadeel)	2	2020	Gemeente	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Reducing vacancy levels: 60% less vacancy in 2020 (in comparison to 2015 )</b></li> </ul>				
<b>Projects Property (re)development/compacting citycentre</b>				
Revitalisation Tamboerpassage naar andere functies	1	2017-2019	Vastgoedeigenaren/Gemeente	
Invulling leegstand op strategische (toekomstige) locaties	1	2017-2019	Vastgoedeigenaren/Gemeente	
Stimuleringsregeling voor verplaatsing en transformatie*)	1	2017-2019	Gemeente	
Opstellen brancheringsplan, gekoppeld aan strategische acquisitie, incl. horeca	1	2017	Centrummanagement/Gemeente	
Onderzoek vestiging supermarkt in kernwinkelgebied	1	2017	Centrummanagement/Gemeente	
Verbinding tussen park Dwingeland en Hoofdstraat	3		Gemeente	

• ***Achieving higher retail turnover: 10% more turnover per shop in 2020 (in comparison to 2015 )***

***Actions entrepreneurship / Foundation city centremangement***

Opzetten presentatie- en profileringscan**)	1	2017-2018	Centrummanagement
Aanpak puien & gevels middels stimuleringsregeling***)	2	2017-2019	Gemeente
Onderlinge samenwerking ondernemers versterken	1	2017	Centrummanagement
Inzet toolbox MKB Noord/banken	1	2017	Centrummanagement
Afstemming winkeltijden	1	2017	Centrummanagement
Versterken presentatie en poortfuncties centrumgebied	1	2018-2019	Centrummanagement/Gemeente
Behouden schouw openbare ruimte	1	2017 e.v.	Centrummanagement/Gemeente
Promotion and marketing citycentre	1	2017 e.v.	Centrummanagement/Gemeente