



## A SHARED VISION OF THE CITY CENTRE RETAIL. THE CASES OF HENGELO AND HOOGEVEEN IN THE NETHERLANDS

### CASE STUDY III



*URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development. The URBACT Programme enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal changes. URBACT helps cities to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. The URBACT method enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe.*

# PRESENTATION

Two of the RetailLink partners, Hoogeveen and Hengelo (NL) have developed a forward-looking vision for the city centre and its retail sector. Their visions have been developed within a public-private collaborative partnership. What the two cities obtained from their respective consultation and cooperation process inspired their strategies, which are being implemented today. Below are brief summaries of the two cases, what motivated them to undertake such an exercise, how they developed their visions, the different elements of the strategy they came out with, and the management structures enabled to plan and implement.



## Why visioning the future? The global economic and retail trends adversely impacted on local vitality

### HENGELO

#### VISION OF A "FUTURE RESILIENT CITY" AND SHARED DNA IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

During the worst years of the economic crisis, the city of Hengelo (81.000 inhabitants) in the north-eastern province of Overijssel, had seen a steady decrease in retail employment and a parallel increase in the number of vacant retail units that raised from 53 (2011) to 70 (2015). A combination of factors, including the economic recession and the steady growth of e-commerce, led to a decline of Hengelo's economic vitality in general, and the retail sector in particular.

With an aim to enliven retail and related economic sectors in the city centre, Hengelo initiated a consultation process to jointly develop a vision that was shared by all the relevant stakeholders in the city centre economy and that led to a common strategy for a mid-term period.

### HOOGVEEEN

#### 'PLEASANTLY DIFFERENT' and 'THE NEW HIGH STREET' A TWO-STAGE STRATEGY FOR THE CITY CENTRE IN HOOGVEEEN

Previous to the economic crisis, Hoogeveen (55.000 inhabitants), in Drenthe, North East of the country, had already experienced a significant decrease in the retail sector vitality:

- Retail turnover had lowered.
- Inner city vacancy rates reached 23%.
- The retail association collapsed in 2004.
- E-commerce was rising as in the rest of the country.

As a result, fewer visitors were attracted to the city centre.

The Council rapidly reacted to this situation and decided to engage in a redevelopment strategy for Hoogeveen city centre. An interactive process with the city's residents and entrepreneurs led the city of Hoogeveen to adopt the visioning strategy called 'Pleasantly Different'.

While the project was already being implemented, 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 (up to 12% empty shops in 2016).

## Visioning purpose: find our place and put us on the (regional) map

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As a result, of the participated process, Hengelo agreed upon a shared vision of a 'Future Resilient City Centre' to make it more attractive and a unique place to live, work and recreate in.

The resulting strategy was expected to help Hengelo appear as distinctive from neighbouring cities in direct competition, such as Enschede (where the University of Twente is located) and build a strong and attractive retail and leisure offer for residents and visitors.

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The aim of the 'Pleasantly Different' vision was not only to improve the quality of Hoogeveen as an attractive city to live and work, but also to position it as a strong regional centre.

Hoogeveen was seeking a broadly supported strategy for the City Centre that, in the mid term, brings together retailers and other business representatives (hospitality, property owners, banks) along with the Council to help create a common sense of identity and purpose for the area.

## The vision requires a solid and sustainable operational structure

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In Hengelo, the Vision was largely developed and promoted by the City Management Organisation of Hengelo (Stichting Centrum Management Hengelo, SCH) the company managing the city centre, made up of local private stakeholders: entrepreneurs, property owners, the housing association and the local Rabobank.

After a first Report of the City Management Organisation for a 'Future Resilient City Centre in Hengelo', the City Council embraced the strategy and contributed to its practical implementation. The strategy also received the support from the regional government of Twente.

The Council joined the core action team that also includes representatives from the SCH, the real estate sector, and Bureau Hengelo, the local marketing and events organisation for the city centre. The team is, still today, responsible for developing and implementing the Integral Action Plan for the Inner City, based on previous plans and strategies.

In parallel to the planning process, the City Management Organisation and the Council led the initiative towards the approval of the

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The Council approved the first strategy for the city centre and retail revitalisation in 2008 and it is presently working in the development of a comprehensive city centre vision and strategy for the following years where retail plays a central role.

The initiative to revitalise the city centre and the retail sector has been build 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.

Two key governing bodies oversee the initiative:

- The Municipal inner city initiator, the local government administrator responsible for the city centre development. The inner city initiator works in close cooperation with the City Centre Management Foundation
- The City Centre Management Foundation (Stichting Centrum management Hoogeveen) is dedicated to the city centre management and economic development, is one of the most relevant outputs of the initial collaboration work towards the city centre

Business Improvement Zone (2010), the 5-year project set up to improve spatial quality of the inner city and make it more attractive so as to pull people to the area.

Besides working together in the implementation of the Vision and the Inner City Action Plan, the BIZ is instrumental in collecting and managing funds coming from taxes that are then matched by the local government.

The revenues support projects to improve attractiveness of the city centre, i.e street decoration and lighting. The initiatives are jointly agreed and managed by the City Management Organisation.



strategy. It is 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.

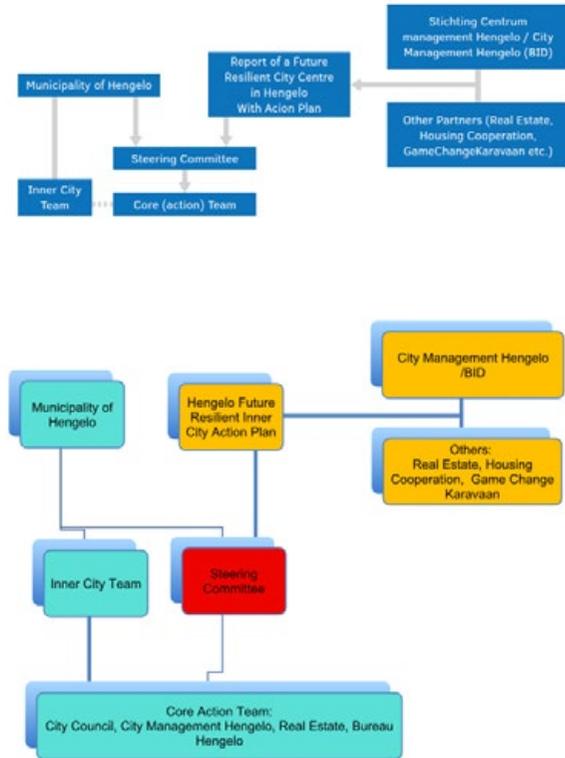
The Foundation was also a key actor leading to the creation of a Business Improvement Zone project for the city centre in Hoogeveen, the first one to be approved in the Netherlands (2009). The BIZ aims at improving the quality and liveliness of the designated BIZ area thanks to the funds collected and the shared objectives set by the private business sector and the Council.

Under the BIZ scheme, the economic contributions are collected by the local government through the Centre Management Hoogeveen. The Council contributes with an additional sum and supervises that the implementation is according to law. The type of projects range from enhancing street attractiveness with flower pots, to security measures or a year-long agenda of events.

# City centre management structure

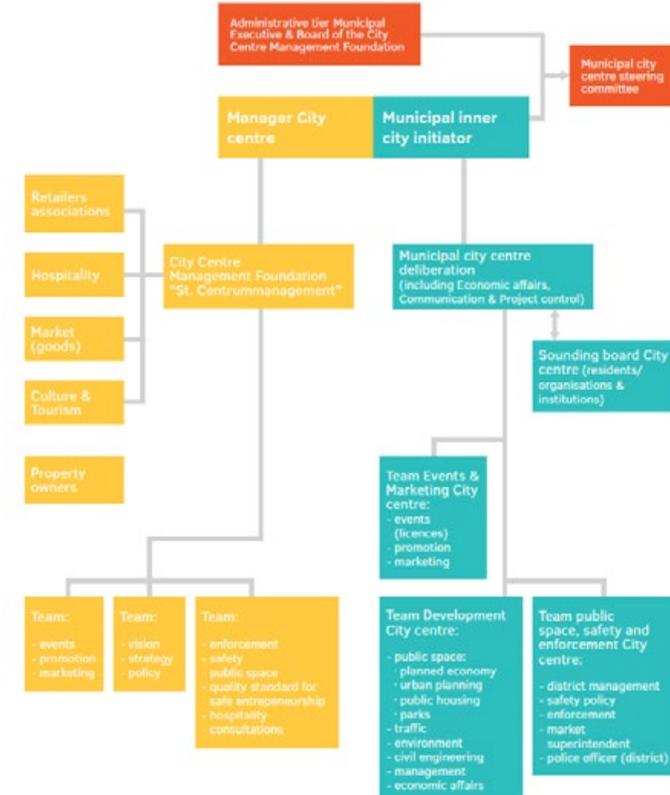
## HENGELO

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## Key components of the retail vision

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#### VISION OF A "FUTURE RESILIENT CITY" AND SHARED DNA IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

Key elements of Hengelo's Vision include:

- Make the city more attractive.
- Revitalise the city centre economy, in particular retail.
- Reshape the urban space and the building uses.

As far as retail revitalisation is concerned, Hengelo's Retail Vision lays out the local retail agenda and public policy for the upcoming years according to retail needs. In support of this measures, a classification defines different retail areas according to visitor's motivations and type of shopping activity:

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Hoogeveens' strategic Vision aims at:

- Strengthening store offer with national brands.
- Avoid increasing retail floor space inside and outside the centre.
- Appointing a core shopping area and define entrance areas streets.
- Clustering per type of activity: culture, hospitality, retail...
- Keeping supermarkets in the city centre.
- Mixing retail with day-hospitality.

Three working groups are responsible of addressing aspects related to:

- Strategy and policy.
- Events and city centre promotion.
- Security.

## Lines of action for Vision implementation: a locally tailored combination of RetailLink building blocks

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After a first phase of implementation, the City Management Organisation issued an evaluation report of the Future Resilient City Centre. The report presented a broad analysis of the actions undertaken in the past period as well as current trends in the city, the document outlined a number of core priorities in a 2-years Action Plan (2013-2014). Some of the actions included in the Plan are:

To make the city more attractive:

- Renovating the appearance of the city centre.
- Refurbishing building fronts.
- Enhancing entry streets' appearance.
- Enabling extra cleaning of streets, particularly on market days.
- New ambient lighting.

To revitalise the economy in the inner city, including retail sector:

- Collecting data on visitor's motivations and shopping trends.
- Fostering networking and collaboration among local businesses and with other city stakeholders.
- Encouraging and supporting entrepreneurs to set up new business in the city centre, i.e. the Safe Enterprise Award.

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One of the most ambitious projects contained in the new vision and the core of the City Centre Strategy consists of reducing and compacting the city centre, this is concentrating economic and professional activity in the centre and preventing fragmentation that a wide spacious inner city can lead to. At the same time clustering retail closer together and easing access to the area.

The idea of reducing and compacting the city centre is expected to help concentrate retail activity in an area that combines professional and leisure activities, attractive and convenient retail shops, plus homes.

Accompanying measures and specific actions include:

- Research and study of the local consumer.
- Investing in upgrading the city centre area.
- Enhancing residential environments.
- Placing green areas, particularly in the high street.
- Bringing in new brands to attract young people's shopping interests.

- Organising and financially supporting a programme of events and activities.
- Start an initiative for the re-use of vacant retail units.

To reshape the inner city and its uses:

- Reducing the size of the commercial area, turning it into a more compact, walkable area with little or no vacant units and an attractive environment.
- Defining uses for the inner city area: retail, arts and crafts, hospitality...
- Transforming empty spaces and some retail units into housing.
- Improving mobility in entry streets - the entrance points to the city centre- where the number of visitors is lower.
- Defining the local retail areas and uses according to the different types of purchase: daily needs, recreation and special purchases (see above).

The City has already initiated negotiations with retailers and property owners in order to bring to the city centre the shops that fall out of the compact area, offering support and compensations to reallocation.

There is also an ambitious project of enabling a municipal car park area near the city centre that will facilitate access to it.

Hoogeveen recently joined the cities' platform 'The New High Street' ('De nieuwe winkelstraat) based on the Retail Agenda of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (March 2015). The New High Street' is a nationwide government strategy supporting cities' vitality and retail. This Platform brings together stakeholders at the local level to draw up an action plan for future-oriented high streets in close cooperation with the local Rabobank. In practical terms, a Retail Deal is drawn up with each of the participating municipalities. Hoogeveen will therefore receive support to jointly produce a retail policy featuring clear choices, less regulatory pressure and public-private partnership where necessary.

The national government provides a professional consultant to advise and guide the process of the action plan.

## Tangible results of the Vision so far

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In Hengelo, the renewed visioning exercise to define the city DNA will be accompanied by a set of measurement indicators that will assess the expected results of the mid-term strategy.

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As a result of the first phase of the revitalisation strategy, Hoogeveen's city centre was singled out as "The best inner city in the Netherlands 2011-2013" for medium-sized municipalities, based on achieved results in terms of consumer flows (increase of 72%), turnover figures (40% increase of non-food turnover) and reduction of vacancy units (from 23% to 0,5%).

Relevant impact achieved includes:

- Stronger varied retail mix (2006-2009).
- Creation of the City Centre Management Foundation (2008).
- 1st BID of the Netherlands (2009).
- Implemented revitalisation projects in public space.
- New events and more activities.

## What's next

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Hengelo's vision has currently entered a new phase, coinciding with the final phase of the 5-year Business Improvement Zone and the newly approved BIZ project as of December 2015.

In parallel, there is a consultancy process with the local stakeholders to develop a renewed vision of the city centre that incorporates the latest learning from the RetailLink exchange and learning project. The process aims at identifying the city DNA as well as residents and visitors expectations and preferences.

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The Retail Plan in Hoogeveen is expected to continue developing a vision of the retail sector and the inner city in close consultation with the principle stakeholders (retail, property, catering, art and culture) as well as a local policy organising and implementing the vision.

Beyond the local level, the Council intends to synchronise the vision, the policy and the action plan within the regional context.