



LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY  
THE RETAIL INSTITUTE

## **CITY AND TOWN CENTRE INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES**

The Future of our City and Town Centres  
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**KEY  
CITIES**  
UNLOCKING  
POTENTIAL

### **The Retail Institute**

The Retail Institute is the UK's leading university institute for retail, food and packaging innovation. We have built our reputation as experts in our field during the last 20 years. By working throughout the supply chain, we lead the consumer experience of the future through retail and product and packaging innovation. Our institute is built upon the expertise of our own skilled academic and commercial professionals devoted to finding new ideas relevant to industry.

Our practical approach strengthens commercial decisions through science, knowledge and insight. By working closely with industry, our research provides an invaluable perspective. Our global partners know that through having the support of The Retail Institute, they can make strategic decisions based on expert advice.

## Introduction

Global economic and cultural trends continue to have an impact on city and town centres around the world. In many places, rapid urbanisation is creating new demands on local infrastructure. In others, industrial transition and natural disaster require considerable resilience and innovation. The shift to out of town shopping centres, along with fundamental changes in consumer purchasing behaviour, has weakened the power of city and town centre retailers to attract visitors. Online retail and social media gave consumers the power to demand more choice and influence markets. The impact of this has been strongly evident in the UK during 2018 as many retail chains have either gone into administration or issued profit warnings, leading to the closure of hundreds of stores. There is also continuing pressure on remaining shops to provide a retail experience that is both distinct from, and complementary to, the online offer. Similarly, cities and towns have to attract people to their centres by creating and communicating a positive experience for all.

The international case studies presented here show how local governments have responded to these challenges with initiatives that range from small events to large infrastructure projects. They demonstrate how urban festivals can be significant drivers of urban regeneration while investment in smart technologies can help to meet the challenges of local businesses and tackle specific social and public health issues. The case studies resonate with the themes of the Grimsey review of town centres<sup>1</sup>. By finding a new purpose for neglected buildings and areas, cities and towns have created a new focal point for **community** events. Revitalizing shopping areas and other public spaces has helped to re-emphasise the unique **identity** of cities and towns. All the case studies have benefited from strong **leadership**, either from designated urban development agencies or through the collaboration of all local stakeholders. Groups such as Key Cities and Urbact's [RetailLink](#) programme (two members of which are described below) are helping cities to **share innovation** that will inform the future planning of city and town centre revitalization.

## **Bologna:** Synergy between Cultural Heritage and Urban Development

### **Background and approach**

Strategic alliances and citizen engagement are behind the successful revitalization of Bologna. The capital of the Emilia-Romagna region in Northern Italy, with a population of 375,000<sup>ii</sup>, had to meet the challenge common to other historic city centres. This was to integrate new technologies successfully while meeting the demands of contemporary socio-economic dynamics. Bologna's historic district of Via Zamboni is home to both cultural and commercial venues and is heavily patronised by all types of user. It suffers with problems of urban liveability such as public nuisance and environmental degradation.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Schemes**

A partnership between the Municipality, the University and Aster, a regional consortium for innovation and technology transfer, aimed to pool resources and talent into Bologna's Smart City project. Key fields of joint action included enhancement of the historic centre, redesign of the *Iperbole* Civic Network, based on cloud technologies and an integrated digital identity, and intelligent networks using Smart grid, Ultra-Broadband Fibre to the Home and Smart Lighting<sup>iv</sup>. The overall vision involved co-designed cultural and sustainable initiatives to increase pedestrian flows, to slow mobility and enhance porticoes as a unique spatial experience of the city.

At the same time as this move towards a new urban sustainability, Bologna has been revitalizing public spaces through new regulations allowing residents to partner with the city. District laboratories bring together city staff and residents to develop citizen initiatives such as cleaning of city walls and the renovation of city benches. The scheme has also created new services for small businesses and the conversion of public spaces, for example, a former market turned into a concert hall used by hundreds of local musicians. As well as making physical improvements to the city, this has also helped to re-engage citizens, earning Bologna an *Engaged Cities* Award in 2018.<sup>v</sup>

### **Desired outcomes**

- Integrating new technologies in the historic city centre
- Increasing pedestrian flows and enhancing spatial experiences
- Re-engaging citizens

## Sunshine Rising

### Background and approach

An integrated, whole-of-local-government strategy has helped a West Melbourne suburb to shake off an unwanted reputation<sup>vi</sup> following a period of industrial decline. Formerly a separate town located around 11km from the centre of Melbourne, Sunshine effectively became a suburb as Australia's second most populous city grew during the latter half of the twentieth century. Brimbank city council, which governs Sunshine, set up *Sunshine Rising* in 2010,<sup>vii</sup> with the vision of being "one of Melbourne's great centres"<sup>viii</sup>.

### Schemes

The five-year revitalisation programme used a centre management model in which operation, events, communications and capital improvements are centrally integrated and coordinated. It also addressed the complex nature of ownership, occupation and use of the Sunshine Town Centre by developing partnerships with private-sector businesses and property owners. This has required a strong emphasis on stakeholder communication and engagement<sup>ix</sup>.

Numerous place-making initiatives, created by Sunshine Rising, have enhanced activity and safety in the town centre. The programme's achievements have attracted visitors, media coverage and further investment into the area. This is partly the impact of events such as the Sunshine Short-Film Festival and the Sunshine Lantern Festival, a free community event run annually. Public art installations and cleaning initiatives have made the town centre a more appealing place to visit. Upgrades to the lighting has also been significant for encouraging evening activity and enhancing the perception of safety.

In one scheme, Brimbank council and the Sunshine Business Association helped 11 businesses replace or improve their external lighting by combining their grant funding, amounting to \$26,000<sup>x</sup>. Much of this involved upgrades to under-awning lighting in existing shopping strips. This has had positive effects with greater community use of the area in the evenings and twilight community events, such as a rock concert hosted by the Sunshine Business Association. Additionally, the process has contributed to wider efforts to improve the streetscape, including rapid graffiti removal and tackling rubbish dumping.

### Desired outcomes

- Being one of Melbourne's great centres
- Enhancing activity and safety in the town centre
- Attracting visitors and investment into the area

## Christchurch: A Smart Recovery

### Background and approach

The tragedy of Christchurch's 2010 and 2011 earthquakes generated lessons about urban transformation that are valuable to cities around the World. Christchurch is the New Zealand's second largest city with a population of around 370,000. Twelve thousand houses and 1500 commercial buildings were demolished following a series of earthquakes and aftershocks with 185 people killed when a 6.3 magnitude earthquake caused two buildings to collapse on 22 February 2011<sup>xi</sup>. Public participation, re-use of public spaces and smart city learning are all notable outcomes from the rebuilding process.

### Schemes

*Share an Idea* was the extensive post-earthquake public consultation that helped to shape the recovery plan. More than 100,000 ideas were generated relating to transportation, business, public place and recreation among others. Community driven installations and transitional spaces helped the city to explore new opportunities for urban development. For example, an open-air dance floor, using a coin operated lighting and sound system (Dance-O-Mat) that dancers can plug their phones into, re-activated at least three vacant sites. Other transitional solutions used artworks, temporary furniture, public toilets and information signs to re-engage people with their public spaces.<sup>xii</sup> The more fluid and temporary urban spaces means that users can modify them with support from public and private funders.

The recovery process also activated Christchurch's move towards becoming a smart city. Funding opportunities to aid the economic development of Christchurch came from both the city council and corporations such as IBM.<sup>xiii</sup> One project involved cyclists and commuters generating precise data on routes, facilities and general experiences to inform infrastructure improvements. Another project, managed by the University of Canterbury<sup>xiv</sup>, focused on measuring air pollution with reference to tackling respiratory disease. Health devices, smartphones and IoT sensors contribute to a health data ecosystem, which provides information about high-risk health hotspots. It is hoped that, in the long-term, this could lead to improvement in the quality of life for patients with conditions such as COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease). Further smart city projects are underway providing data platforms for transport, monitoring waste bins for usage and fire and shock detection<sup>xv</sup>. Along with citizen-led innovations, these projects have aided Christchurch's recovery from catastrophe.

### Desired outcomes

- Recovering from catastrophe
- Public participation and re-use of public spaces
- Quality of life improvements for residents

## **Tulsa: Fostering an Identity as an Arts and Entertainment Destination**

### **Background and approach**

A centre for cultural and arts activities is a major component of Tulsa's economic transition. The Tulsa Arts District is a diverse, culturally robust area serving the former oil-rich city's 400,000 population. The district has a long cultural history, based on institutions such as the Brady Theater and Cain's Ballroom.

### **Schemes**

Around ten years ago neighbourhood, philanthropic, business and city leadership came together around a vision "to develop and foster an active, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use neighbourhood boasting a historic feel and identity as an arts and entertainment destination".<sup>xvi</sup> Public-private initiatives, community outreach, and investments formed a framework for the Brady Arts District revitalization (it changed name to the Tulsa Arts District in 2017).

Over the years, the district has evolved into a mixed area of hospitality, housing, retail and businesses, along with museums and arts establishments.<sup>xvii</sup> A key development is Guthrie Green<sup>xviii</sup>, a vibrant community space named after folk music icon Woodie Guthrie<sup>xix</sup>. The former industrial site is a demonstration project for green technology as well as a location for concerts, fitness groups, children's activities, and festivals. Solar panels and bioswales are among the environmental features helping to limit costs. Intensive programming ensures that there are events to attract people to the area every day<sup>xx</sup>. The impact of Guthrie Green has been further redevelopment and reuse of former industrial buildings within the Tulsa Arts District. The district is now a creative, community-driven engine of the Tulsa economy, meeting the original vision by becoming a major asset in attracting human capital to the city.

### **Desired outcomes**

- Developing an active, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use neighbourhood boasting a historic feel and identity as an arts and entertainment destination
- Redevelopment and reuse of former industrial buildings
- Attracting human capital to the city

## Bat-Yam: Tackling Stigma Creatively

### Background and approach

A negative image, poor living standards and a lack of identity were the challenges faced by Bat-Yam's municipality as it began a culture-led reconstruction. The Israeli coastal city of approximately 130,000 population has struggled with the stigma of crime and general 'ugliness' that comes partly from its high population density and lack of a discernible 'downtown'<sup>xxi</sup>.

### Schemes

Bat-Yam's urban development strategy brought together multiple solutions centred on culture. These included the establishment and support of cultural and educational institutions and improvements to public areas. The city opened an art and design museum in the old town hall building and opened up access to the university campus, including the arts high school. Further developments include a 'downtown in a park' providing prestigious office and residential properties and modifications to the street network using evidence-based pedestrian movement models.

However, the main approach to reconstructing Bat-Yam's urban image has been the strategic role of festivals. Two main principles guided the approach: attracting fringe and pioneering artists to work and reside in the city and organising multiple large events to transform spaces into more inviting arenas for creativity. In return for community engagement in local projects, artists gained access to free galleries and studio spaces. The city-sponsored International *Biennale* of Landscape Urbanism is the centerpiece of the cultural events and consists of multiple creative experiments centering on green urban spaces. For example, local people used neglected spaces in residential areas to create meaningful encounters between residents. The projects helped locals to imagine a better use of their neighbourhoods while providing a positive vision for around 100,000 visitors drawn to Bat-Yam by the Biennale<sup>xxii</sup>. These developments are helping to transform the city's 'tough' image with an enlightened planning approach that has benefits for all residents<sup>xxiii</sup>.

### Desired outcomes

- Improving Bat-Yam's image and sense of identity
- Attracting artists to work and reside in the city
- Helping local people to imagine a better use of their neighbourhoods



## Roosendaal: Smart Retail City

### Background and approach

Roosendaal is using a smart retail approach to tackle town centre decline. The Dutch town of 77,000 inhabitants aims to become more 'compact, green and connected' with heavy investment going into a partnership approach to regeneration<sup>xxiv</sup>. The plans come from a recognition that by 2020 more than half of all purchases will be online and that local retailers need support to retain customers by offering a personalised experience. Roosendaal's vision is to become a testing ground for digital technology applied to the integration of online and offline retail. The new, compact city centre is becoming a 'Smart Retail City'<sup>xxv</sup> by building the capacity of local businesses to become 'omni-channel' retailers. As shoppers use multiple channels, often simultaneously, physical stores have a key role in facilitating that process. The Roosendaal approach brought different parties in the city centre together to bring in customers.

### Schemes

The local authority will implement several initiatives within the next three years, including a loyalty program, online platforms and the rollout of free Wi-Fi in the city centre<sup>xxvi</sup>. The loyalty system, led by businesses and facilitated by the municipality, will reward customers for shopping in Roosendaal centre by giving them bonuses valid at multiple locations in the city. The online platforms – Roosendaal24 and Chainels – provide updates to consumers on news and offers. They also aid information sharing between local businesses. Wi-Fi provision strengthens the bond between visitors and enterprises, attracts customers to the area and encourages them to stay longer. It also generates data for businesses on visitor numbers and movement and purchase patterns. A further platform – Living Lab Roosendaal – uses sensors, links and applications to test and develop ideas relating to smart street lighting, trash bins and air quality.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Improved technological capacity meets the challenges of sustainability and consumer responsiveness. Online platforms aid (two-way) communication to visitors on sustainability and shops are more able to deliver flexibly, quickly and at the desired location. Roosendaal will bring retailers together to develop joint stock centres and/or pick-up points. Overall, the city is preparing for the digital retail future and helping its resident retailers to be flexible and ready for whatever their customers demand.

### Desired outcomes

- For Roosendaal to become more 'compact, green and connected'
- To become a testing ground for digital technology applied to the integration of online and offline retail
- Becoming a 'Smart Retail City'

## **Guelph: Growth Plans a Catalyst for Change**

### **Background and approach**

A series of urban renewal projects in Guelph, Ontario were enabled by the province's growth plan, which was launched in the mid-2000s. The *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* included Ontario's mid-sized cities that had a history of downtown decline. It altered the planning paradigm in those cities, creating a predictable environment for investors and setting a goal of growing Guelph's population from 130,000 to 175,000, which also meant expanding the number of jobs. Locally led community planning and site-specific incentives helped to revitalize Guelph's downtown and other areas<sup>xxviii</sup>.

### **Schemes**

The planning regime generated multiple large projects. Municipal staff created incentives reflecting community needs following consultations with local businesses, citizens and developers. A feature of Guelph's approach has been to put sustainability at the centre of each endeavour. One example, the Baker District Development, consists of transforming an existing parking lot and neighbouring properties into a unique mixed-use development, following principles of 'One Planet Living' – a sustainability framework that tries to limit the impact of the way people live, build and consume<sup>xxix</sup>.

The city has also received praise for its plan for a Guelph Innovation District, a 1,000 acre parcel of land which will be converted into a new 'compact urban village'. This will embody the municipality's core environmental, economic and cultural development objectives. The aim is to provide carbon neutral space for 'people to live, work, shop, play and learn'<sup>xxx</sup>. Buildings will maximise the use of solar energy, limiting costs to residents and environmental impacts. The design of the area emphasizes public access to the river and other green spaces while making it easy to move around by walking, cycling or public transport<sup>xxxi</sup>.

To meet the growth targets, the city understands that creating a sense of place attracts people to Guelph<sup>xxxii</sup> and an economic strategy focused on the green economy and innovation will help to achieve this<sup>xxxiii</sup>. Renewed places and spaces in the downtown area have already attracted new businesses, residents, and innovative projects. It has become a vibrant urban neighbourhood with unique shops and restaurants and award-winning community spaces<sup>xxxiv</sup>.

### **Desired outcomes**

- Revitalizing the downtown and other areas
- Sustainable growth
- Creating a sense of place

## Golden Urban Renewal Authority

### Background and approach

The City of Golden, Colorado, established the Golden Urban Renewal Authority (GURA) in 1989 to transform the city's downtown into a cultural and business destination. Although it is a small town (population of around 20,000), it is located just 12 miles West of Denver, has historical importance to Colorado as former mining town and is home to numerous museums. When GURA was formed in the late 1980s, Golden's downtown was run-down with vacant buildings, crumbling infrastructure and poor street appeal<sup>xxxv</sup>.

### Schemes

The authority's first major project was the supervision of Washington Avenue, the city's main street. This project consisted of upgraded water systems, rearranged parking spaces (from angled to parallel), wider sidewalks and more attractive lighting. The City has continued to make plans for urban renewal with a Golden Vision 2030, a 2011 Comprehensive Plan, and a Central Neighborhoods Plan. These have laid the framework for the Central Neighborhood Urban Renewal Plan in 2013, which provides guidance to GURA as it facilitates each project.

GURA has supported and financed projects including redevelopment of land for commercial and residential use and enabling successful businesses to expand while remaining in the city. One example is mountaineering retailer, *Bent Gate*, whose supported move into larger accommodation has helped it to become nationally known while continuing to take advantage of the need for climbing equipment in the local area. GURA's financing also enables smaller scale improvements such as photo banners, web-integrated business directory displays, public art and recycling bins that direct people to shops. GURA sees arts and cultural activities as vital to the success of a destination town and supports regional, national and international events to bring people to the city. It continues to support businesses to upgrade facades and improve their online capacity as part of its role of ensuring that Golden does not return to its 1980s decline.

### Desired outcomes

- To be a prosperous, sustainable community generating the best possible quality of life for its citizens<sup>xxxvi</sup>
- Transforming the city's downtown into a cultural and business destination
- Supporting businesses to set up, build capacity and upgrade facades

## Romans-sur-Isère: Strategy of Attractiveness

### Background and approach

The French town of Romans-sur-Isère (population: 33,000) is currently in the process of diversifying and strengthening its economic resilience. Located in the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes region of South East France, it was previously a mono-industrial town dedicated to leather and footwear manufacturing but has had to recover from the decline of that industry by becoming a multi-sectoral economy. Nuclear power, Agribusiness and Construction are among those industries that are new to the area.<sup>xxxvii</sup> However, Romans has also had to address the 'devitalizing' of the city centre, which meant shrinking retail capacity and footfall and a continual increase in vacant commercial premises.

### Schemes

In 2015, the municipality decided to tackle the problem with a focus on the Marques Avenue shopping mall as a principal axis of the city's revitalization plan. The mall opened thirteen additional stores during 2017 with further expansion planned for 2019. The local authority recently signed an "Action heart of city" framework in September 2018, which will further the strategy of attractiveness by consulting on the possible re-designation and revitalization of targeted public squares, the installation of market halls and commissioning a new 130-space car park. It is also operating a trade charter that sets out planning and renovation rules and supports local merchants to maintain the appearance of commercial terraces. An architect-consultant is available to shopkeepers developing commercial front projects to ensure consistent management of the architectural and aesthetic quality of the City. This support is conditional to the filing of planning permission.

Romans-sur-Isère is also part of URBACT's RetailLink transnational program<sup>xxxviii</sup> in which ten medium-sized European cities co-develop their plans for urban retail enhancements. The Romans Integrated Action Plan (IAP) consists of three main objectives. First, to *define* the city centre area in consultation with users in order to design initiatives around a commonly understood location and purpose. Second, to make the city centre more *attractive* by continuing to reduce the number of vacant premises but specifically with activities that offer a strong identity, matching consumer expectations. Third, to *sustain* the improvements by monitoring key indicators. Initiatives that will help to meet these objectives include a dedicated street for aiding new start-up businesses and facilitating easier access and movement between Marques Avenue and the city centre for all users<sup>xxxix</sup>.

### Desired outcomes

- Becoming a multi-sectoral economy
- Making the city centre more attractive
- Developing a clear identity for the city centre, matching consumer expectations

## Šibenik: Tourism and Retail

### Background and approach

Addressing the drawbacks while maximising the benefits of seasonal tourism is Šibenik's main challenge. The city of 45,000 residents on the Croatian coast has converted from an industrial aluminium and steel town to a growing tourism location. Local retailers have struggled to deal with population decline due to residences converting into tourist apartments, the opening of brand-named shops outside the city centre and changing customer behaviour. Many are small family businesses who lack skills and capacity to match the competition. Business is also limited because of ageing city centre buildings and outdated supply infrastructures.

### Schemes

The city has previously prioritised actions aimed at improving the tourist economy and implemented development projects amounting to 29 million Euros between 2006 and 2014. These include the revitalization of the St. Michael Fortress to establish it as a major cultural destination and the reconstruction of the Banj beach and walking trail. Šibenik also created a Maritime Innovation Centre, a shared space for new and existing companies to expand and utilize their business networks, and made improvements to communal business infrastructure. A further project brought together the historic towns in Šibenik's region to tackle social desertification in the town centres by creating spaces where local communities can exchange information about urban and territorial changes and have a direct role in decision-making.<sup>xi</sup> In recent years, Šibenik's historic structures have transformed into cultural venues, hotels and other businesses. For example, the city's four underground water cisterns, built during the 15th century, are now a café, bar and performance venue and former underground reservoirs have transformed into an exhibition space, holding concerts throughout the year.<sup>xii</sup>

The city is involved in multiple European Union projects, supported by URBACT and Interreg. This includes RetailLink (along with Romans-sur-Isère) which is helping Šibenik to tackle its problem of becoming a quality retail destination while overcoming the large seasonality gap in demand between summer and winter months. The RetailLink Integrated Action Plan for Šibenik developed several objectives and actions including establishing a local action group to build capacity, set priorities and promote desirable business activities in the city centre. There are plans to create a calendar of events and thematic streets and quarters. There will also be a programme for improving the skills and competence of retailers. Sales fairs, improved signage and smart shopping applications will increase the old city centre's appeal and reduce the effects of seasonality. Marketing activities to raise awareness will include a website, creative marketing campaign using social networks and advertising training for the retailers.<sup>xiii</sup> These activities will make Šibenik's centre a more attractive place for doing business and shopping as well as a cultural destination.

### Desired outcomes

- Improving the tourist economy
- Overcoming the seasonality gap
- The old city centre becoming an attractive place for business, shopping and leisure

## Porto: Regenerating Old and New

### Background and approach

Reviving old buildings and using smart technology are approaches that are making Porto more attractive to visitors. Porto is Portugal's second largest city (240,000 inhabitants) and the significant urban centre of the Northern region. Its tourism industry is continuing to develop, with the airport recently modernised and expanded and the seaport the largest in the region. Porto's urban economy has also been improving after a few years of stagnation and decline. The city's historic centre has experienced many attempts at revitalization over several decades.

### Schemes

After many people left the centre to live in the suburbs, buildings in historic districts were in a serious state of disrepair – a 2005 survey found that only 4% of buildings were in reasonable condition. Since then, Porto Vivo – the urban revitalisation association – led a range of initiatives to bring life back to the historic centre. Public investment and easing of rent controls encouraged investment to the extent that almost 70% of buildings are now in a reasonable state of conservation.<sup>xliii</sup> In addition, public space interventions in parks and four main squares have tackled safety concerns and modernised the look. Pedestrianizing spaces between parks and squares has allowed the opening of outdoor cafes in the area<sup>xliv</sup> and retailers were encouraged to populate the renovated public spaces.

More recently, the Municipality of Porto launched an urban planning strategy for the derelict district of Campanhã. This included significant tax incentives for investors, interventions in the transportation infrastructure (including a multimodal transport hub) and improvements in public space. The re-purposing of a former industrial slaughterhouse helped to attract creative industries (software, digital media, gaming) and other cultural activities.<sup>xlv</sup>

Finally, Porto has a broad and ambitious smart city strategy. The 'Future Cities' project brought together the local authority, universities, businesses and citizens. Digital projects, including S2MovingCity<sup>xlvi</sup>, will obtain information about location and mobility patterns of vehicles and people and environmental information relating to weather, noise, and pollution levels. Porto is also part of the EU's SynchroniCity IoT (Internet of Things) project to deliver a digital single market for IoT-enabled urban services (in Europe and beyond).<sup>xlvii</sup> These high impact citizen-driven services will increase the city's attractiveness for entrepreneurs, reduce social exclusion and enhance sustainability.<sup>xlviii</sup>

### Desired outcomes

- Revitalizing the buildings and structures of the city centre
- Supporting innovation and entrepreneurship
- Providing new and value-added services to citizens, visitors and tourists

## Rzeszów: Green Capital of Innovation

### Background and approach

Rzeszów is promoting its image as a 'capital of innovation' while giving considerable effort to care for the local environment.<sup>xlix</sup> Rzeszów is the largest city in South-Eastern Poland with a population of around 200,000. While its growth since the Second World War has always been steady, the city has seen particularly strong spatial expansion since 2006. Apart from the capital, Warsaw, it is currently one of only two growing Polish cities with 58 GDP growth over the last decade compared 34 per cent for the whole country. Despite the rapid urban growth, Rzeszów has tried to maintain a green aesthetic and the protection and management of assets and resources of the natural and cultural environment is an objective of the development strategy.

### Schemes

Improvements to the public transport system have been central to Rzeszów's recent development. Innovative information and communication technology has made transport attractive, accessible and safer. The modernisation of access to the city includes the introduction of eco-friendly (electric) buses to the city region and the installation of charging points for e-cars. In the absence of a metro/underground, it has been critical to look at new solutions to connect the growing municipal area. The development of fast-route connections has improved bus routes across the city. Citizens are also encouraged to use 4<sup>th</sup> generation electric bikes and electric scooters to reach the city centre. A pilot of this programme proved popular among both residents and students with bike and scooter rental enabled through mobile technology. Rzeszów is also working towards making the city centre completely free from all car traffic, which will have a positive impact on the quality of air and noise levels for residents.

Rzeszów integrates its enhancements to the visitor experience with eco-friendly innovations. For example, bus shelters use solar energy for warming passengers in the winter and cooling in the summer.<sup>l</sup> The recent modernisation of a local railway station has walls covered in solar panels for clean energy. An ongoing project is building 50 properties for residential, school and commercial purposes across the city that will be solely reliant on solar energy. Meanwhile, street greenery, municipal flowerbeds and 1,000 hectares of green areas, such as parks, pocket parks and allotments help to protect stated natural values. The city's policy of attracting and establishing high-tech industries including aviation, astronautics, chemicals and ICT has been implemented alongside building new roads, rail and air transport infrastructure as well as broadband and communications. Homes and businesses on the city outskirts have gained more than 500 Wi-Fi hotspots in Rzeszów's smart city network. The municipality seeks to expand the "Rzeszów capital of innovation"<sup>li</sup> brand in the coming years, which is a declaration of its commitment to a smart economy, smart mobility, smart environment and smart living.

### Desired outcomes

- Creating a positive and attractive environment for enterprise and innovation
- Ensuring a socially cohesive and integrated city
- Protection and preservation of natural resources

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