

ALT/BAU

TRANSFER NETWORK

ALT/BAU
ALTERNATIVE BUILDING
ACTIVATION UNITS



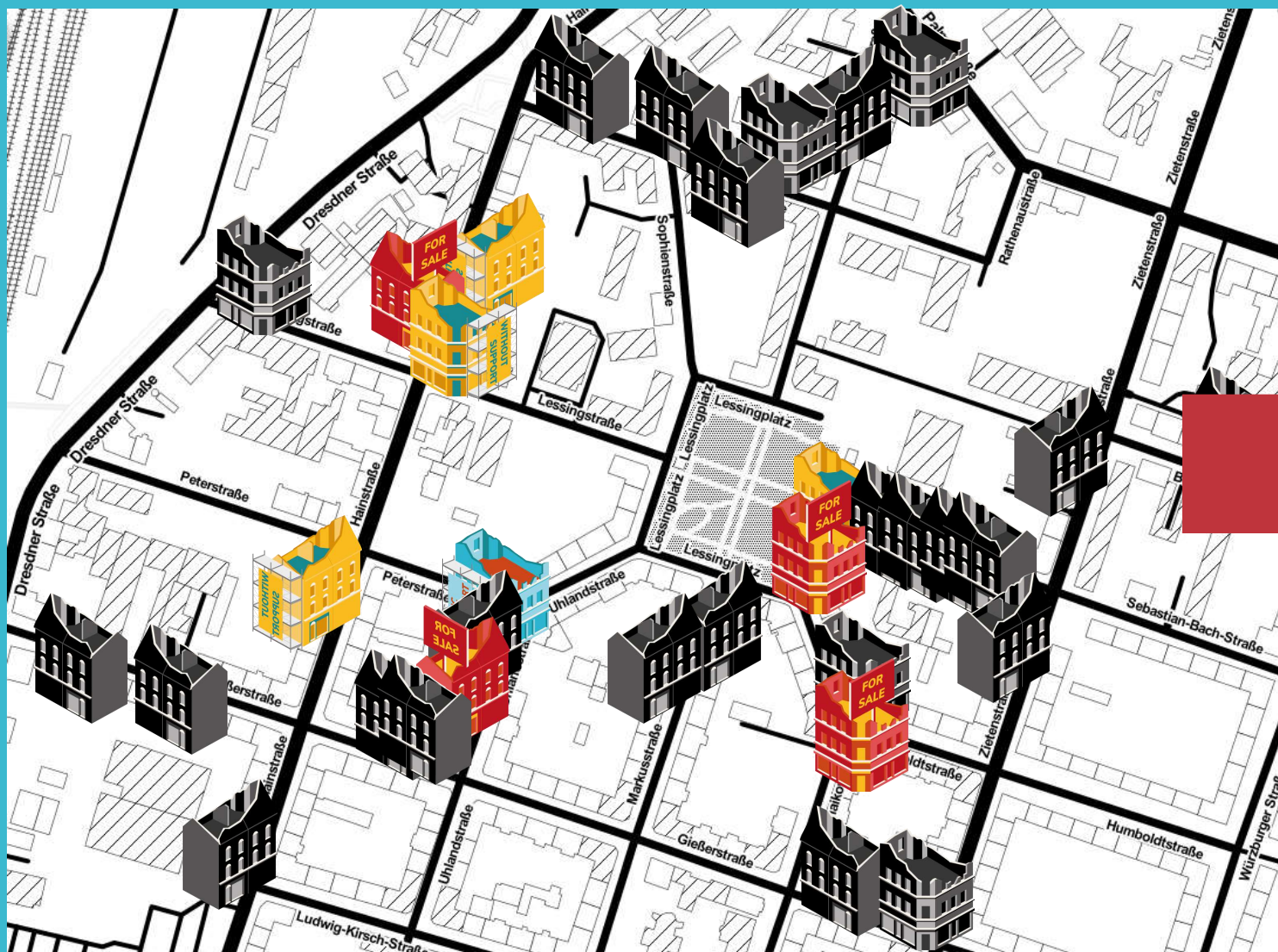
A THREE-YEAR JOURNEY
- HOW TO REACTIVATE VACANT RESIDENTIAL
BUILDINGS IN NEED OF REFURBISHMENT

CHEMNITZ

THE GOOD PRACTICE ‘HOUSING AGENCY’

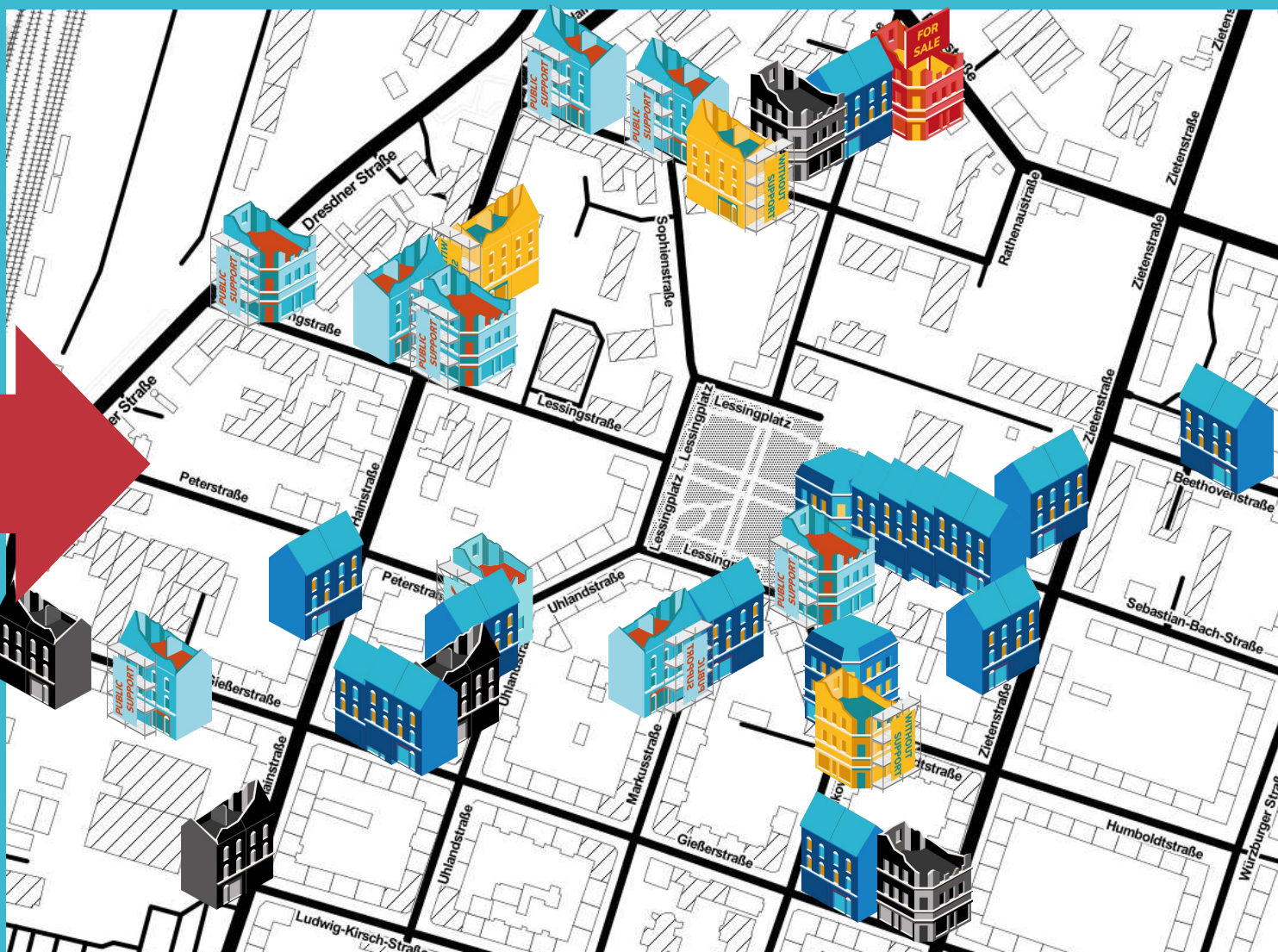
BEFORE

- FOCUS AREA SONNENBERG IN 2012

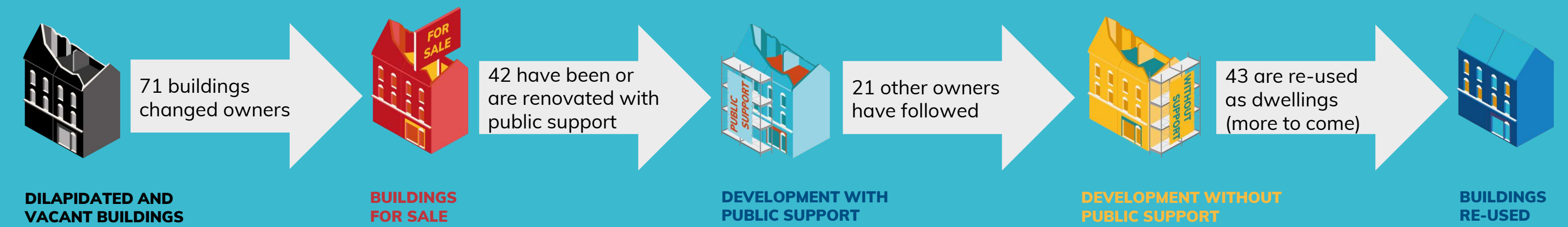


NOW

- FOCUS AREA SONNENBERG IN 2020



Of the 100 vacant/dilapidated buildings that the agency has started with in three focus areas in 2012, by 2020 through the agency...



STRATEGY

- AGENTUR STADTWOHNEN CHEMNITZ AS INFORMATION AND COORDINATION HUB

The ‘Housing agency’ (Agentur StadtWohnen Chemnitz) is a consulting service (project) of the City of Chemnitz. It aims at interested owners of dilapidated and/or vacant properties, future investors and users with an interest in common forms of living and creative ideas for the subsequent use of buildings. Its services are 100 % publicly funded, carried out by a local private urban development company with specific know-how and work capacities. The ‘Housing agency’ fulfils tasks that are not foreseen within the city administration and is continuously monitored.

The ‘Housing agency’ has become the central collector and distributor of information on the buildings in need of rehabilitation in the City of Chemnitz. It functions as a coordination body, which proactively connects owners, potential users, investors and local authorities and provides them with free-of-charge consulting services for the reactivation of the vacant apartment buildings in the extended inner city where the normal real estate market had failed. This task is implemented through seven typical key activities:

1. Identification and monitoring of buildings
2. Data collection
3. Owner contact
4. Online publication
5. Visit of buildings with interested people
6. Connecting owners and potential buyers
7. Liaison of stakeholders



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PARTNERS

- SEVEN EUROPEAN CITIES



Lead Partner:

CHEMNITZ, Germany
population: 250 000 ➡, economy: ➡

Project Partners:

CONSTANȚA, Romania
population: 320 000 ➡
economy: ➡

Eriges **SERAING**, Belgium
population: 65 000 ➡
economy: ➡

RĪGA, Latvia
population: 640 000 ➡
economy: ➡

Urban Lab **TORINO**, Italy
population: 890 000 ➡
economy: ➡

RYBNIK, Poland
Spain
population: 140 000 ➡
economy: ➡

VILAFRANCA DEL PENEDES,
population: 10 000 ➡
economy: ➡

OUR ACTIVITIES

- TRANSFER AND ADAPTATION 2018-2021

In six transnational thematic meetings and four intense online meetings, the partners worked together to understand, adapt and re-use Chemnitz's Good Practice. Fresh approaches were found and applied on the local level through each partner's URBACT Local Group (ULG) through an cooperative working process. The findings and practice-oriented assistance are summarised in the ALT/BAU Guidebook, the ALT/BAU Good Practice Compilation and GIS Report for Inventory and Monitoring. They can be downloaded at www.alt-bau.eu.

STRATEGY

- SIX KEY TRANSFER TOPICS



1. Setting up a body/institution responsible to support the reactivation of vacant/derelict buildings and flats



2. Inventory and monitoring of vacant/derelict buildings and flats



3. Publication and marketing of vacant/derelict buildings and flats



4. Contacting, activating and supporting owners



5. Identifying, contacting and supporting potential buyers and investors



6. Connecting and coordinating public and private stakeholders



CHEMNITZ

STAYING GOOD PRACTICE



NOW

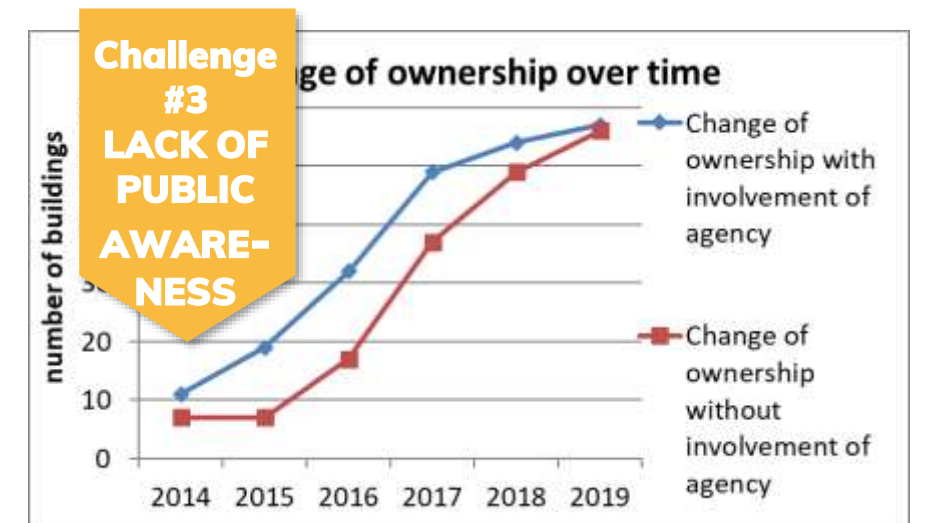
- THE CHALLENGES WE WANT TO WORK ON



The knowledge about the building situation outside the urban redevelopment areas in Chemnitz is fragmented and disconnected among the public and private stakeholders. The information flow is limited and buildings are outside the radar of the administration which could lead to the future loss of housing stock.



Chemnitz has become interesting to investors and developers from outside the city. Investments in the housing market or the field of rehabilitation of historic buildings and flats from local companies and citizens are still rare and the owner-occupier ratio is comparatively low. Thus, there is only limited involvement in the cultural and social aspects of housing and neighbourhood development.



The city of Chemnitz has improved a lot in the past decade in the field of building reactivation. Still, there is a lack of awareness among the stakeholders and the society concerning the impact of the agency and the city administration's activities. After all, the reactivation of Chemnitz's built heritage and unused flats for a sustainable urban renewal of the city remains to be a mutual responsibility.

VISION

- WE HAVE A PLAN



Use GIS in combination with other digital tools for a consistent inventory and monitoring of vacant and dilapidated buildings throughout the city and for better cooperation within the administration.



The share of local investors and users from Chemnitz is increased. Their investments in the rehabilitation of Chemnitz's historic building stock has safeguarded important cultural heritage and attractive living space. Their engagement has promoted activities for the benefit of the neighbourhoods in a more sustainable way.



Improved public relations serve to raise awareness and communicate the tasks, strategies and services of the agency to stakeholders (owners, investors, administration) and the public. This generates a better understanding and cooperation among the stakeholders. Tasks and opportunities are clarified and procedures are more effective.

STRATEGY

- THAT IS HOW WE WILL DO IT

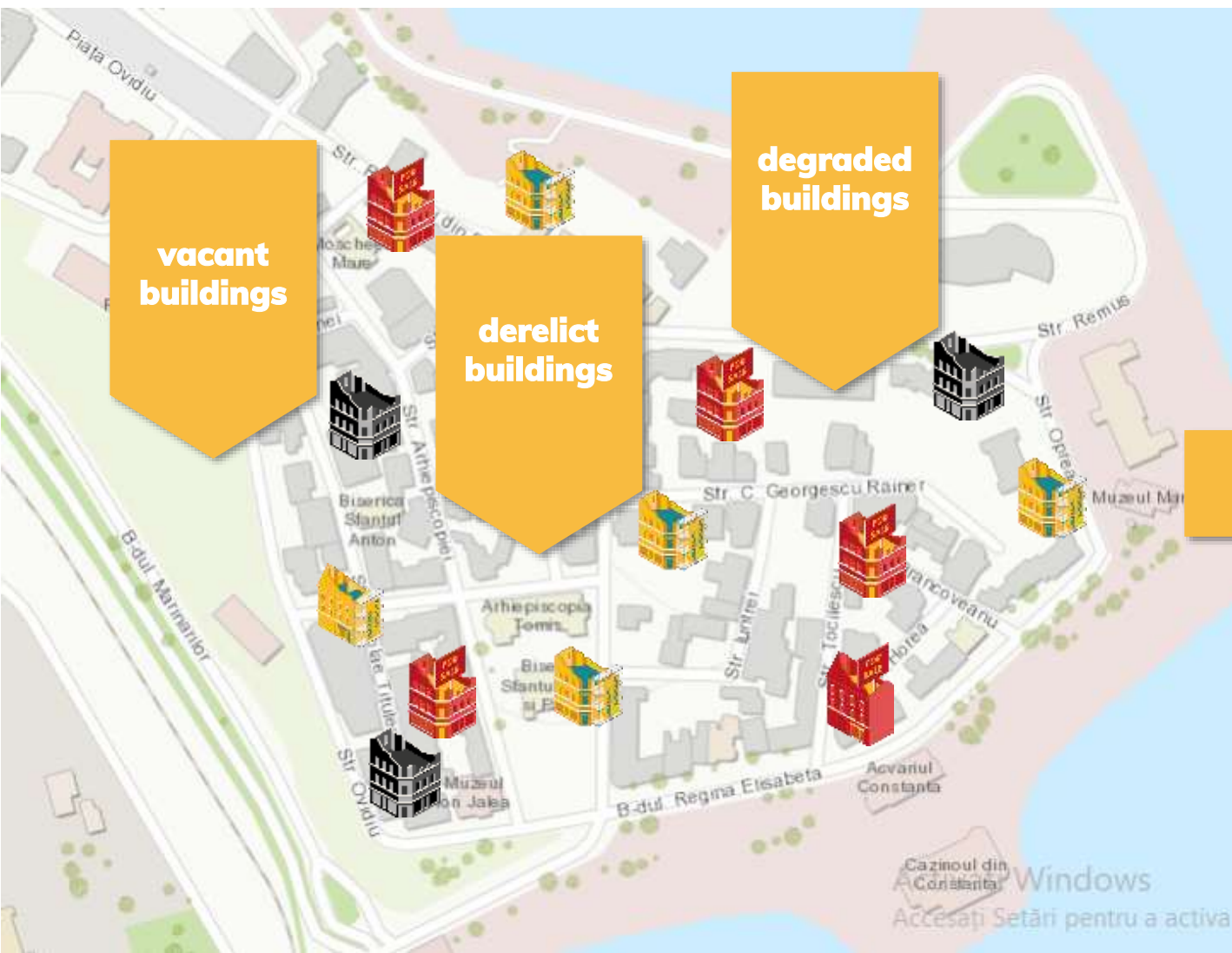
Continuing with the redevelopment of the historic housing stock is achieved despite changing market conditions through new public outreach initiatives by the 'housing agency' and new strategic partnerships with local stakeholders, cooperative housing initiatives and the local homeowners association. This will further contribute to the grown cooperation between the city and private investors.



LISTENING TO THE HEART OF THE CITY

NOW

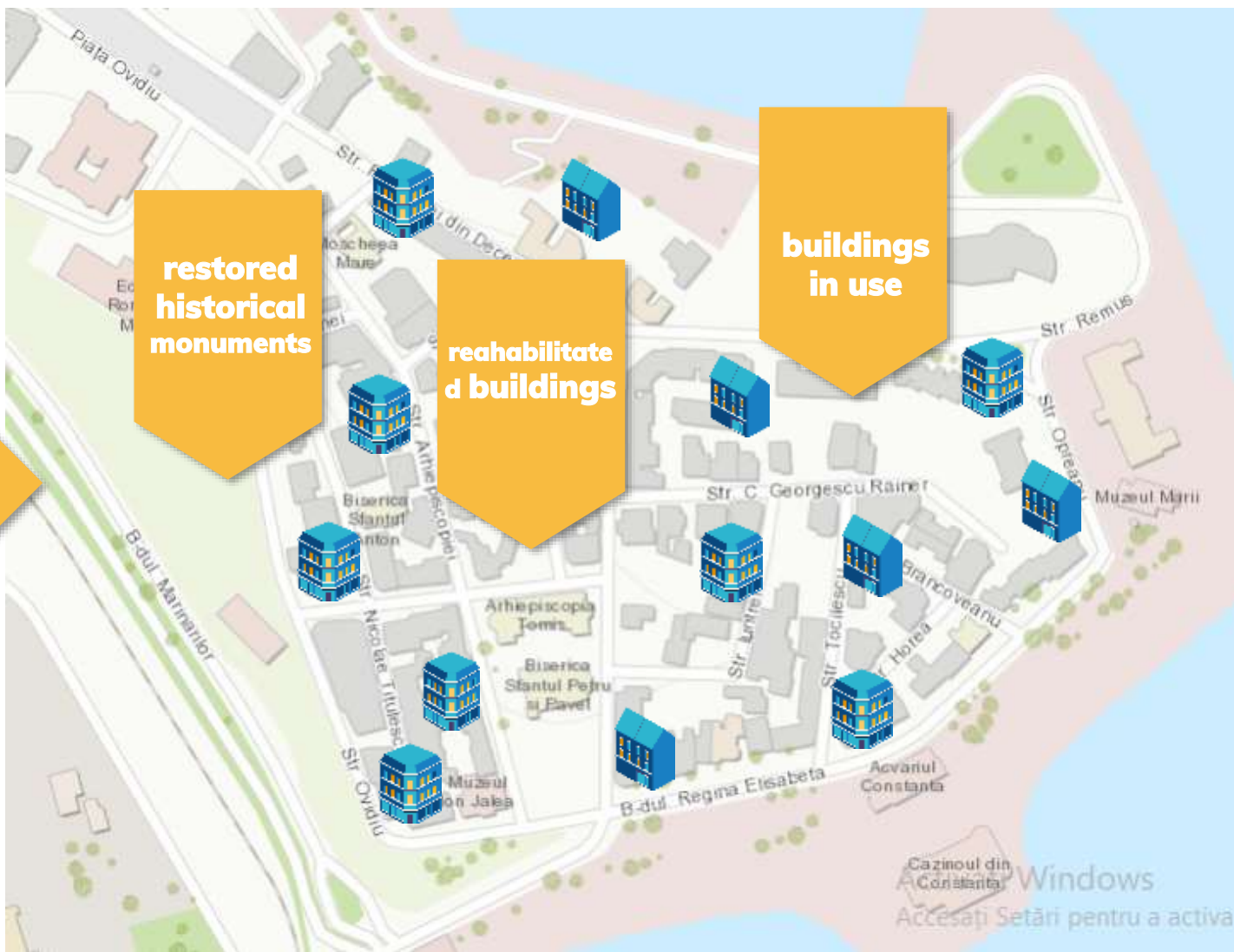
- LITTLE SOCIAL ACTIVITY
- SEVERAL DEGRADED AND VACANT BUILDINGS
- GREATER SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING



- A large part, 40%, of the buildings in the old center is vacant, derelict, in moderate or advanced conditions of degradation.
- Uninviting area for investments, living and leisure
- Absence of means to solve the problems

VISION

- A VIBRANT HISTORICAL CENTRE
- REFURBISHED, REPURPOSED BUILDINGS
- SIMPLER REHABILITATION PROCESS



Following the support for the reactivation of the buildings, the rehabilitation process will be easier, the old city will become more dynamic and the commercial, cultural and tourist activities will flourish.

STRATEGY

- HOW TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

Setting up a unit to support the reactivation of degraded or unused buildings located in the historical centre with the following objectives:



Creating and continually updating “[The Urban Peninsula Site](#)” application, an interactive building database of the historical centre. It is public and includes historical information, the current state of the buildings and proposals from the owners. The application is based on a geographic information system (GIS) for the monitoring of the buildings.



Developing and launching a [website](#) dedicated to support the stakeholders with continually updated useful information, as: legislation, financial support, city hall projects, examples of good practices, articles, events, history, frequently asked questions, etc.



Conducting and supporting educational, cultural and social events in and about the historical centre to promote the old city and its reactivation, in continuation of events from the past two years: “[Photographers of History](#)”, “[World Day of Cities](#)”, Exhibition “[Interwar Modernism in the Peninsula](#)”, Youth Capital with the event “[Come To Upgrade your City](#)”, “[Annual Competition of Student Architects CASA](#)”.



Providing [questionnaires](#) for the owners of the buildings located in the old centre and other stakeholders for the creation and improvement of the database to be used to elaborate supporting urban projects

Connecting stakeholders and developing and implementing strategies, policies and programmes to prevent the deterioration of the buildings and to support the reactivation of degraded or unused buildings located in the old centre.





RIGA

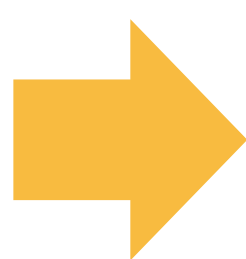
SOCIAL TEMPORARY USE

NOW

- UNUSED POTENTIAL



Vacancy is one of the first reasons why buildings and their surroundings are degrading. **Riga has a high vacancy rate of buildings** which results in environmentally degrading buildings and many unused opportunities!



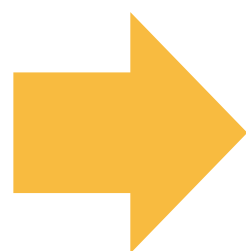
VISION

- OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities that the empty buildings provide for social (temporary) purposes are used. For this, empty buildings ready to use for social temporary uses are inventoried and monitored.



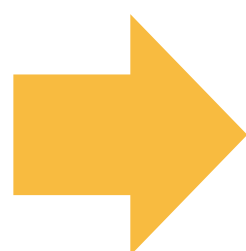
On the other hand, cultural and social life in Riga is very active. There is the high need for free spaces, territories or buildings, but the current property market cannot provide this need.



To kill two birds with one stone, also a database has been set up that helps NGOs with their needs for space to match with the vacant buildings. This has decreased the number of vacant and degraded buildings in the city and provided space for new social purposes.



There is a property tax reduction, when vacant buildings are (temporarily) socially reused for NGOs and other social institutions. But the mechanism is not well-known and not many owners make use of it.



The property tax reduction mechanism is improved to work as a tool in favour of the NGOs and the building owners, creating mutual benefits - access to spaces for NGO's and property tax reduction for the owner.



STRATEGY

- OUR PLAN

- Owner survey of vacant properties based on Chemnitz's StadtWohnen model to understand better the reasons and problems why the properties are empty.
- Results of the survey will provide content for planning a web platform to function as brokering space, connecting owners with support mechanisms, including temporary users as potential co-developers of the problematic properties.
- Creating showcase "profiles" to attract users for the selected vacant properties considered for social temporary use in partnership with the owners.
- Explaining to interested owners and NGOs how the property tax reduction mechanism works, how to apply and how they can benefit.
- Provision of consultation services on various legal and technical matters.
- Creating visuals to promote reactivation of vacant properties with social temporary use or co-development approach.
- Organizing consultations of problematic vacant properties deemed strategically important to be reactivated.



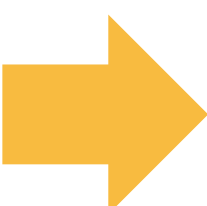
RYBNIK

MAKE THE CITY CENTRE LIVE AGAIN

NOW

- DOZENS OF VACANTS BUILDINGS,
BUT NO PLACE TO LIVE

- Large number of vacant buildings and flats in the city centre
- Significant population decline in the city centre
- Damaged image of the city – dilapidated and ugly buildings and facades

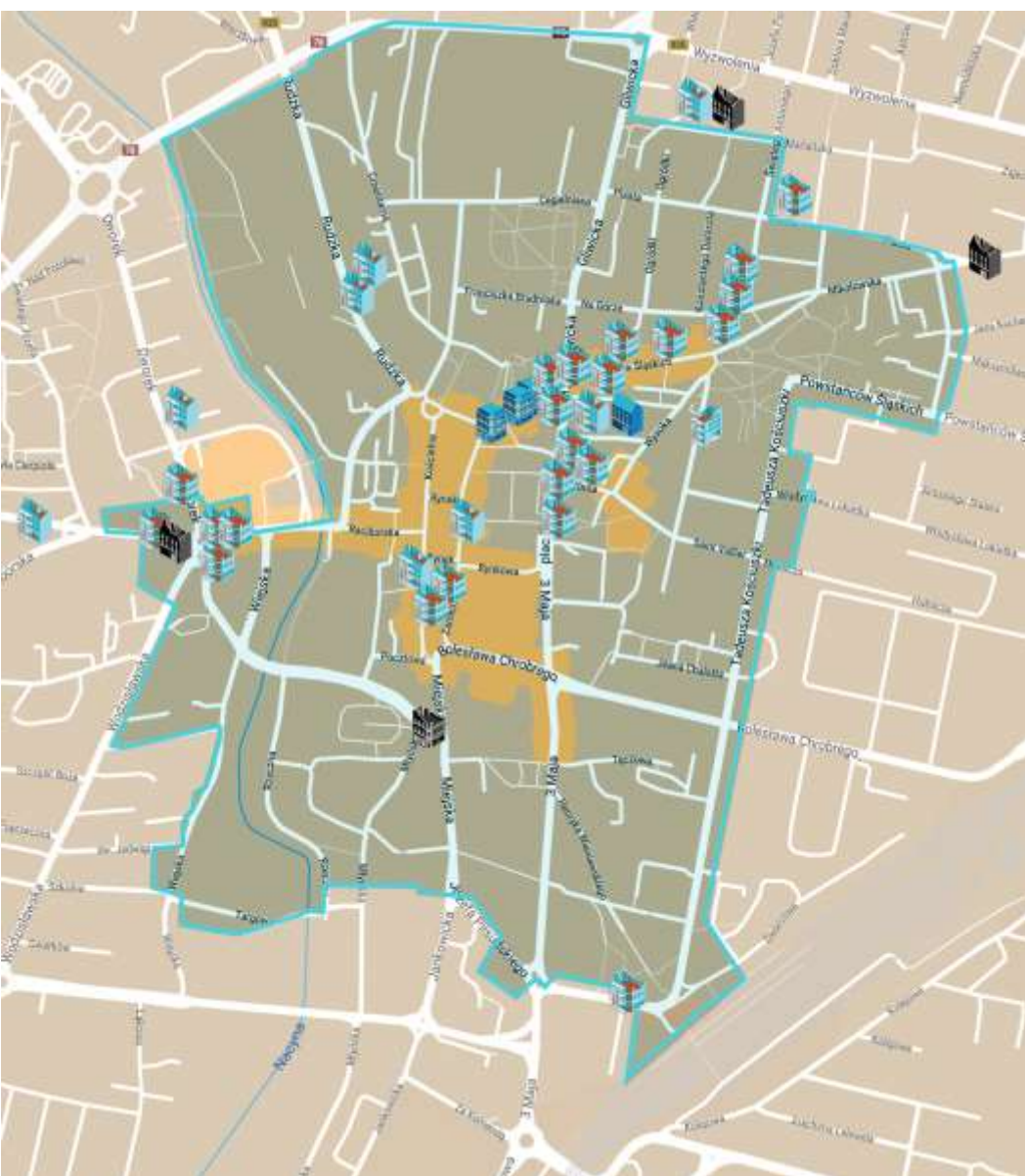


VISION

- NO VACANT BUILDINGS,
BUT ATTRACTIVE SPACES TO LIVE

- Aesthetically renovated buildings and flats in the city centre
- Return of residents to the city centre leading to a social revival in Rybnik's inner city

The central area of the city is the place, where a significant number of vacant buildings and flats has been identified. The problem of vacancies is one of the major challenges for the development of the city. Vacant buildings significantly limit the number of flats available for residents. Moreover, they generate social problems and dramatically affect the image of the city.



New entity/agency launched to support reactivation of empty buildings and flats will commence its operation. They will develop and up-date the database of empty buildings with online access. The agency will analyse the problems and identify the best possible support for the owners..



It's very important to engage local stakeholders of the project (owners, investors, administration) for the reactivation of the decaying vacant buildings. We want to use the potential of cultural and social activities in revitalisation processes. We are going to take steps to connect public-private initiatives with the owners and offer them legal and organisational support.



It is in the city's best interest to take action towards reducing the number of vacant flats and buildings, regardless of whether they are private or belong to the municipal resources. Owing to the importance of this problem, it is essential to involve all available tools, combined with relevant civic initiatives, NGOs and private sector.



Promotion and dissemination of activities towards reactivation of empty buildings and flats. Media advertising, publication of success studies, i.e. the history of reactivated buildings.

STRATEGY

- THAT IS HOW WE WILL DO IT

We plan to achieve our goals through the operation of an entity/agency launched to support reactivation of vacant buildings and flats in our city. In order for the agency to achieve its goals, it is necessary to:

- identify and indicate activities enabling the restoration of residential function of the building
- identify and support the owners of empty buildings and potential investors
- strengthen cooperation between private and public stakeholders.



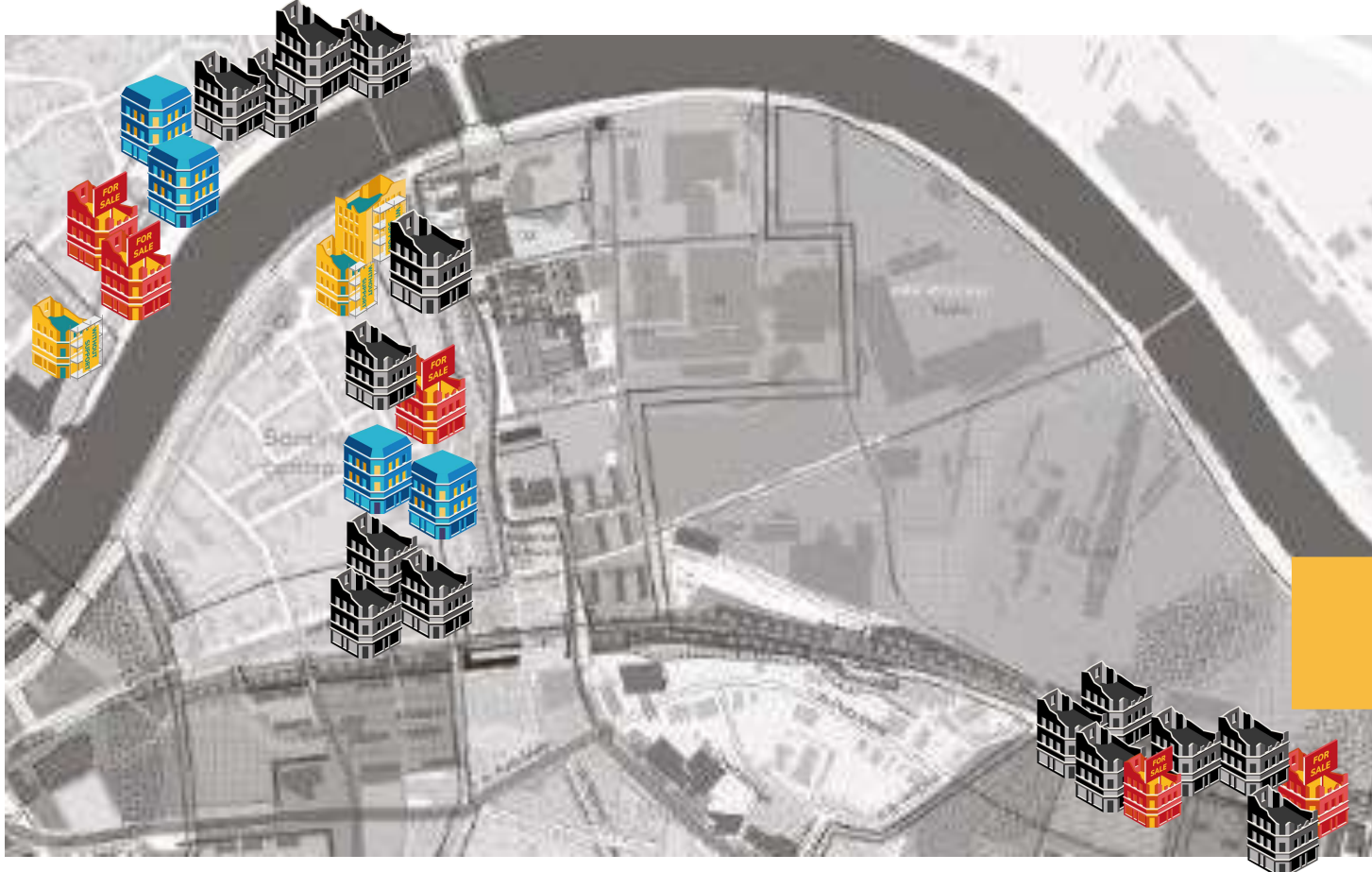
SERAING

CITY IN MOTION



NOW

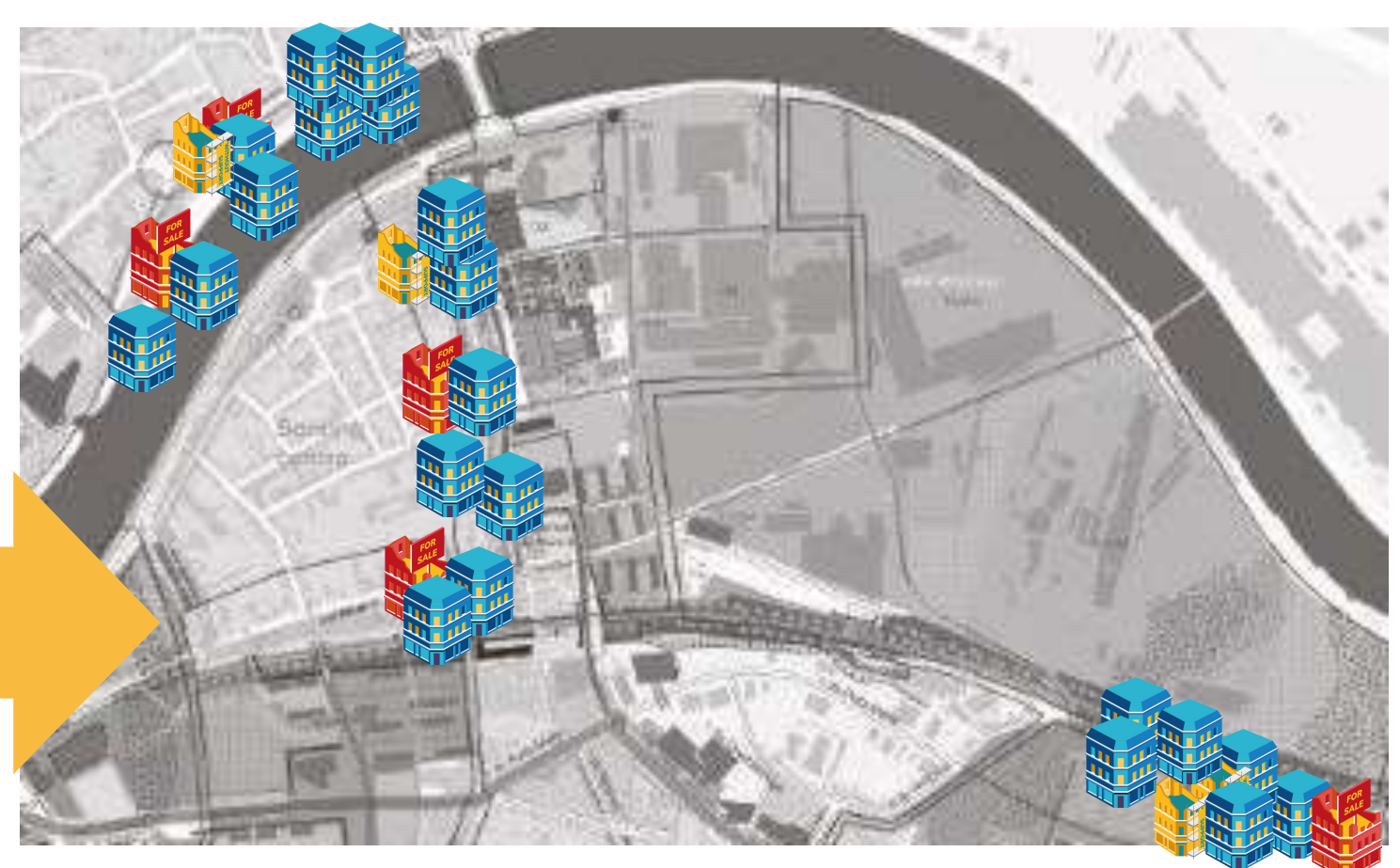
- Hundreds vacant housing and businesses



Some 350 vacant buildings have been listed in the city center. This affects the image of the neighborhoods and their development, despite the numerous reconstruction and renovation efforts undertaken by the public authorities. Most of these buildings have an empty commercial ground floor. They present real estate opportunities for families or young people, which have not been recognized by them so far.

VISION

- Public-private collaboration



The reconstruction of the old industrial districts requires collaboration between the public and the private sector. Thanks to this joint effort, these neighborhoods will be attractive again to new inhabitants and private investors.

STRATEGY

- Support private owners and investors...

Creation of a local working group including decision-makers in town planning and housing for main decisions to be taken concerning rehabilitation of vacant buildings.



Carrying out a field inventory of vacant buildings in the city center and definition of criteria to classify buildings according to their state of degradation. Results are digitized and geolocated via the ARCGIS system for easier updating and sharing of data with all stakeholders.



First contact with owners by sending a letter and questionnaire to understand their situation, potential projects and expectations.... Second personal contact is established with voluntary owners for personal follow up and support.



Creation of an all-in-one service to assist owners in their project to renovate and rehabilitate their vacant buildings.



Promotion of real estate opportunities to attract new investors and residents



NEXT

- Assistance and awareness raising

Keep on with assistance and support for owners and creation of a wider service to anyone (tenants, investors, ...) needing help and advice for any question related to housing, renovation, rental, purchase, sale, ...

Completion by an architect of three renovation diagnosis with voluntary owners of vacant buildings, including:

- a complete inventory, photos, measurements, ...
- urgent work to be carried out for the conservation of the building,
- 2 to 3 renovation scenarios and budgeting

Based on these diagnosis reports, drafting of a guide to renovation steps for owners of dilapidated buildings

Support for local businesses by encouraging local purchases for the renovation of housing

Raising public awareness to energy savings and energy efficiency of buildings by organizing information sessions and workshops



TORINO

AN INFORMATION HUB FOR URBAN REGENERATION

NOW

- AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEED, POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY AND EMPTY APARTMENTS



A peculiar, vacant building stock in the former Fiat town

Some fringe neighbourhoods in Torino, which originated from the massive immigration of workers from North-Eastern and Southern Italy from the 1950s and the 1970s and depended on the life of the manufacturing plants, are now suffering from **social and economic consequences** of the deep crisis and consequent transformation of the city:

- depopulation of houses and loss of tenants
- aging of the residential population (high percentage of elderly people with low income)
- crisis of local business activities
- growing number of abandoned properties



A growing demand of new forms of affordable housing has been observed: After the economic crisis, an increasing number of people is experiencing a transition or a vulnerability phase in their lives for economic, working or family reasons.



New stakeholders at play

Several associations/cooperatives from the third sector, together with the City of Torino and with the support of private bank foundations, are involved in the implementation of variegated regeneration programs at different levels. Private initiatives are also emerging as new private business initiatives fed by the request of new forms of housing/cohabitation.

VISION

- FILLING THE GAPS



An **information hub** provides maps, datasets, news and contents about housing and reactivation issues. It is a physical place for stakeholders and people interested in the topic to **gather, discuss and design initiatives**.



Implementation of datasets: use of GIS and other digital tools to feed a platform layering different typologies of information related to urban change. Possibility to customize maps, e.g. vacant ground floors+housing services+social housing. The interest in the platform shown by the stakeholders demonstrates the need of a better and deeper knowledge and understanding of the territory and its features, in order to design better policies and fact-based decisions.



A fostered stakeholders network sharing collaboration opportunities. Urban Lab is confirmed as neutral discussion arena **promoting information and collaboration among actors related to urban regeneration**. A center observing the dynamics and processes occurring in the city and highlighting questions and problems, opportunities and resources promoting collaboration among the stakeholders to figure out possible solutions.

STRATEGY

- HOW TO...

Torino has a number of local actors which already work on housing and reactivation issues. The objective is to foster the network of such actors, to disseminate information and collaboration opportunities and to offer a shared and neutral ground of discussion and knowledge. We intend to **highlight questions and push for discussion on possible**

regeneration issues based on datasets and concrete indicators.

To investigate on the needs expressed by the stakeholders working in the territory, pinpoint the presence and lack of features/opportunities, contributing in creating sets of tools to better design urban policies.



VILAFRANCA



SECOND CHANCE FOR EMPTY FLATS

NOW

- EMPTY FLATS VS. SOCIAL HOUSING NEED



The request of social and affordable housing has grown in Vilafranca as in the country in last years after the economic crisis and now during the pandemic situation. There is a long tradition of owning the house instead of renting it. This has led to a small rental market with little supply and rising rents.

At the same time, Vilafranca detected a **high number of vacant buildings and flats**, especially in the inner city. This affects negatively the image of the city. Thus, the town hall decided to act.



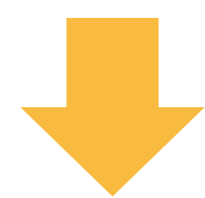
Some of the vacant buildings and flats in the inner city have heritage value. Often, they are owned by private owners who only own one apartment in addition to the house they live in. In many cases, these **owners do not have money** to finance the rehabilitation.

STRATEGY

- HOW TO PROCEED



The new housing agency has started the **inventory and monitoring of vacant flats and buildings** throughout the city, with priority on the inner city. Once we have updated the database, we are going to the next step.



The **agency will contact owners proactively** and will connect them with investors, explaining the advantages to participate in our public program "From empty buildings to social housing" that deals with the renovation and rehabilitation of vacant housing while reusing them for social purposes.



To achieve a better collaboration the town hall has created a round table about housing policies, bringing public and private stakeholders together

VISION

- GREATER SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING

Through the new housing agency and the grown cooperation among public and private stakeholders through the round table, we will decrease the number of empty flats and buildings and have new spaces for social purposes like affordable rental flats.

We expect: increase the number of rental flats in the city center, improve flats and buildings increasing their energy efficiency and reducing the CO2 footprint.





Check out the network's final products on the network's website www.alt-bau.eu:

- Guidebook highlighting how Chemnitz's Good Practice could be adapted in your city as well!
- Good Practice Compilation with good thematic solutions from the field of work

The network's dedicated website offers a wide range of material about the work and the individual results of the network partners. Including their transfer stories and Final Learning Logs.

Please add a QR Code to <https://alt-bau.eu>



URBACT - THE PROGRAMME

For over 15 years, URBACT has been the European Territorial Cooperation programme aiming to foster sustainable integrated urban development in cities across Europe. It is an instrument of the Cohesion Policy, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

URBACT's mission is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another's experiences, drawing lessons and identifying good practices to improve urban policies.

