



Thriving STREETS



Designing mobility for attractive cities

Mobility is at the crossroads of various urban policy: Thriving Streets is connecting mobility with economic prosperity, accessibility, inclusion, participation and health to encourage a change towards more resilient and attractive cities. As an URBACT Action Planning Network, this project aims to improve sustainable local policies through integrated action planning and an organised process of exchange and learning among cities across Europe. It is a network of ten cities working together to improve sustainable mobility in urban areas from an economic and social perspective.



PARMA

RESTORING THE OLD CHARM OF OLTRETORRENTE

City context

- Parma is a medium-sized city of 198.236 inhabitants that covers an area of 260 km². It is located in one of the most polluted areas in Europe, the Po Valley, a densely populated and industrialized region.
- It is UNESCO Creative City for Gastronomy and Italian Capital of Culture in 2020+2021.
- The city has designed its policies for the transition to become climate-neutral: the coordination of Thriving Streets as lead partner responds to this aim and integrates the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), the Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP), the Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP), the urban regeneration strategy “Parma 2030. The city of ideas” and the new urban plan “Parma 2050”.

Challenge

In recent years, improvements have been made in mobility, however the use of private cars is still high in Parma, resulting in regular congestions and air pollution. Thriving Streets is focusing on the historic neighbourhood of 'Oltretorrente', it is one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods of the city. The specific challenges include:

- Parking in general is a problem: too many parking cars occupy valuable public space, creating conflict between different users.
- There is a wide range of traffic related problems: people still predominantly use cars to get to work, school and even to university – this creates congestions in rush hours; transit of buses causes noise pollutions and threatens the safety of cyclists and pedestrians; street users do often not respect traffic rules.
- Active mobility infrastructure needs improvement: sidewalks are irregular and often very narrow; bike paths are rare and not interconnected, bike parking facilities are lacking, theft is a significant risk.
- Public spaces are not inviting, the area lost its identity: many places are unsafe; green areas are limited, increasing summer temperature makes outdoor living unbearable at times; playing areas for children and community spaces for teenagers are lacking; the touristic potentials of the neighbourhood do not benefit the local community and economy.
- Declining economy, small businesses and local shops struggle to survive; there are many vacant venues.



Ambition

Turning Oltretorrente into a thriving and sustainable hub for the entire city and for non-residents by leveraging on mobility solutions and on its heritage and its various public areas (squares, streets, community house).





Small scale actions

Parma has implemented 2 small-scale actions:

A gamification for active mobility in primary schools

School traffic is a major challenge of Oltretorrente. Therefore, in Autumn 2021, we implemented a gamification experiment in two primary schools to increase the awareness of children and their families on the impacts of cars and encourage them to try and test different mobility options to school. It proved to be an effective tool to engage with children, teachers, and families on sustainable mobility.

Survey to assess accessibility and effectiveness of public transport

We investigated the accessibility to public transport in Oltretorrente and the perceptions on the efficiency and quality of public transport in the area for commercial activities and for elderly and people with reduced mobility. This was a necessary preliminary step to assess the need and the feasibility of setting up a new bus line connecting the inner part of the neighbourhood with the city and identify possible alternatives, such as a redesign of existing bus routes and on demand, individual services.

Action plan

Our objectives:

1. Better sense of identity and placemaking

Improving mobility and public spaces, placemaking interventions in Oltretorrente: helping shops to thrive, making the area more kid-friendly by creating small play areas and “play routes” using street art and graffiti, delivering actions to engage teenagers,

2. Reduce car dominance

Implementing interventions to make alternative mobility options more attractive: collecting data and evidence on traffic flows, expanding the network of low-speed streets, assessing

and revising parking regulation, reorganizing parking places, improving cycling infrastructure – dedicated lanes and secure bike parking facilities, improve public transport, implement school streets and alternative mobility solutions for students.

3. Oltretorrente as a destination

Designing thematic routes, guided tours, improving waste collection and general cleanliness of streets, creating green “heat shields”, implementing a promotional and commercialization strategy for tourism and attractiveness.

Lessons learnt

- **Small is beautiful:** consider smaller interventions, not just big, expensive projects. Small solutions can be implemented in a shorter time, with less resources, are less risky and can address the requests of citizens in a shorter time.
- **You can't do it alone:** Your potential allies are out there - be creative and innovative in engaging stakeholders, to encourage participation and the design of innovative solutions. Don't forget: participation is a matter of trust between citizens and local government (and building trust takes time)! Draw on the wealth of experience, knowledge and tools of URBACT cities.
- **Evidence is king:** do not take anything for granted, don't work based on assumptions. You can never know enough about your city challenges and dynamics. Engage with stakeholders, collect data and evidence relentlessly. (However, be careful to avoid analysis-paralysis!)
- **There is no simple solution:** the physical and social complexity of an urban neighbourhood always requires an integrated approach and multi-sectorial competences.

The City of **Parma**
is a partner of the
Thriving Streets network

