

## Revitalise vacant spaces in the city centre - Pori, Finland 3/4



©Petri Haavisto



©Petri Haavisto

The City of Pori aims to revitalize vacant spaces in the city center through this pilot project. Former retail spaces, currently unused, are being transformed into new areas for living and working. These spaces will host a variety of events, which are excellent for bringing people together and encouraging them to become active participants in their city. Co-creating in these spaces will foster a sense of belonging and contribute to a vibrant city center for everyone

### WHY | Purpose

The main goal of the Liveability pilots in Pori is to bring life back to the city centre and revitalise vacant spaces. The city's attractiveness has gradually diminished and has yet to fully recover since the COVID crisis.

The Pori city centre consists of public and private buildings and spaces that have potential to enhance the city's vibrancy and attractiveness.

The project offers a user-friendly space for citizens to organise their own events in city-owned properties, alleviating concerns about rent and electricity expenses. Organizing long-term events in privately owned properties can be challenging, but having a culture-friendly entrepreneur is crucial for effectively utilizing these business spaces.

### HOW | Field of Action

A business space in a shopping mall – a privately-owned property

### 2. Pori Business Space in Shopping Mall

The initial step involves meeting with the property owner to understand the entrepreneur's requirements, establish mutual agreement, and define contract terms.

- Inform citizens creatively and inspiringly through the city and various media about the opportunity to use the vacant commercial space, TGT, for their events.
- Host a communal art project and event on May Day Eve where residents jointly revitalize an empty commercial space with a balloon installation.
- In Pori, the focus is on finding new property owners willing to open their spaces for agile events. The goal is to establish a network of vacant business spaces for events of various sizes, aligned with property owner conditions.

### WHO | Actors

- Public administration
- Citizens of Pori
- Private sector: shopping mall commercial space owners

## Revitalise vacant spaces in the city centre - Pori, Finland 4/4

### Lessons learned

#### No hand out—just a handshake

When approaching private property owners, it's essential to communicate that temporary cultural use is not a request for charity, but a mutually beneficial partnership. The aim is not to "take over" the space, but to activate it in a way that increases its visibility, value, and potential. A previously empty space, when lit up and full of people, becomes more than just real estate—it becomes part of the city's living fabric. For property owners, this increased activity can be a strategic advantage: it helps showcase the space, attract interest, and ultimately secure a sale or a long-term lease. Importantly, temporary cultural use should be framed as a \*positive interlude\*, not a disruption. Even when the cultural activities must end to make room for a new tenant, the temporary use is still a success story—one that brought visibility, vibrancy, and value. With clear communication and mutual respect, temporary users and property owners can part ways on good terms, paving the way for future collaborations or new space activations elsewhere.

#### Every Space Has Different Rules

Privately owned spaces come with unique terms and expectations, requiring a flexible, case-by-case approach. A clear and adaptable agreement model would streamline cooperation, clarify responsibilities, and support the confident scaling of temporary use across multiple locations.

#### Trust unlocks potential

A flexible, dialogue-based approach between the city, citizens, and private owners enabled spontaneous and productive use of underutilised space. Trust, rather than bureaucracy, proved to be a key enabler.

### Potential follow up activities

#### From a Single Sprout to a Thriving Grove Scaling the TGT Model Across the Shopping Centre

The initial success of the TGT pilot has opened the door to broader use of the same shopping centre. Additional vacant retail units in the building may now be made available for temporary events and community-driven activities. This creates an opportunity to scale the model, activating a cluster of underused spaces to foster creativity, engagement, and renewed vibrancy in the city centre.

#### Every Space Has Different Rules

Privately owned properties often come with case-specific expectations and conditions. To enable smoother collaboration and wider adoption of the model, it would be beneficial to develop a clear and adaptable agreement template. This would help streamline the negotiation process, clarify roles and responsibilities, and make it easier to activate multiple locations in partnership with different property owners.

### Contact

**PORI**

Sanna Aaltonen | Change Agent |  
[sanna.aaltonen@pori.fi](mailto:sanna.aaltonen@pori.fi)  
Petri Haavisto | Change Implementer |  
[petri.haavisto@pori.fi](mailto:petri.haavisto@pori.fi)



*"Our goal is to create a more liveable and inhabitable city centre by developing a routine of creativity and encouraging the city residents themselves to produce a liveable city centre" - Petri Haavisto, Change Implementer*



2. Pori Business Space in Shopping Mall - TGT





2. Pori Business Space in Shopping Mall - TGT

