The Velenje “Promenada” is an important city space and a vital city thoroughfare. It is one of the central axes of the centre of Velenje, a young town designed in the 1950s, based on the Modernist ideal of the town-in-a-park; as such, it is unique in the Slovene space. The existing pedestrian walkway was created by closing the erstwhile traffic road almost thirty years ago. Even though it was re-paved, a sufficiently thorough transformation never took place and the promenade has retained the character of a road, remaining too wide and rather dull due to the lack of content. It has been a kind of hybrid space between the road and the surface intended for pedestrians - chiefly a straight path quickly leading the users of the secondary-school complex and the community health centre to the inner centre without providing any animation for those out for a walk.

The renovation of the Promenada represents the first step towards the gradual revitalisation of the city centre. Its tasks are to supply the city with the missing programmes and to help it reclaim its original character of a town-in-a-park. A successful renovation, informed by the awareness of the excessive surfaces designated for traffic, must bring together two requirements seemingly at odds with each other: “More greenery and more programme.”

With the transformation, the Promenada is turning into a main event axis of the city, its centre being placed into the new amphitheatre along the river. The river Paka is a torrential river, which means that its watercourse swells up significantly a few times a year. As a consequence, the river, which is an attractive element of any city, flowed out of sight somewhere down below.

By narrowing the bridge and placing it off the former axis, the space for the construction of an amphitheatre is recovered. The attractive amphitheatre by the river, with the new bridge serving as its backdrop, becomes the centre of the activity in the city, and the river may once again claim an important spot in the townpeople’s consciousness. Through renovation, the wide straight connection underwent a transformation into a kind of sequence of micro-ambients, of locally wided surfaces connected by a slightly twisting narrower path. These instances of widening feature attractive concrete urban elements, whose careful arrangement slows down the users and is framing the space for the additional programme content to take place over time. A number of small squares is formed enabling different events to take place in the city. The two bigger event places being the river amphitheatre and the roof of the public programme building which doubles as a concert stage.

A new walkway ends with a parking facility that was also intended to expand to the surrounding green surfaces due to insufficient capacity. Instead we chose to partially dig in and cover the car park, doubling the capacity. The slight branching out in the floor area design reflects the sitting of the building among the existing trees, which had all been left intact. The front facade features a very restrained design and references the original towns architecture. The remaining circumference of the car park seeks the connection with surrounding nature instead.

Promenada Velenje is an accomplished project which brought life back in to once sleepy part of city center. Regular events are taking place at the site and also commercial program has already started to emerge in neighboring buildings following the increased number of users of the space.

Promenada project shows that starting maxima with two requirements seemingly at odds with each other: “More greenery and more programme.” can be achieved on site so, following a successful renovation, Municipality is also considering extending the programmatic renovation to the other free areas of the city centre and gradually revitalizing the whole area of modernist town of Velenje.