

Užupis Art Incubator (UMI) Challenge Brief

Introduction

The Užupis Art Incubator (UMI) invites you to participate in a unique challenge: to transform the UMI courtyard into a thriving cultural haven that respects its bohemian spirit while ensuring safety, comfort, and inclusivity.

This brief outlines the context, challenge, and expected outcomes of this exciting endeavour. Join us in shaping the future of this iconic space!

Challenge Overview

The UMI courtyard at Užupio g. 2A and the surrounding area by the Vilnelė River have a unique atmosphere and strong potential as a public cultural space.

However, in practice, the area is sometimes used in ways that create discomfort for residents, visitors, and employees, including informal gatherings involving alcohol consumption and unsupervised youth activity.

This is a sensitive challenge because it is important to preserve the spirit of openness and bohemian freedom while also ensuring order, safety, and respect for the space.

Challenge Title: How can the UMI courtyard by the Vilnelė River become a safe, vibrant, and attractive cultural space while preserving its bohemian freedom?

The Challenge

The core challenge is to create a cultural and community-based solution for activating and managing the UMI courtyard.

The aim is not to develop a restrictive or repressive solution, but to help the space function as a recognisable “art zone” rather than an undefined public area or casual park-like space.

The solution should strengthen the cultural identity of the courtyard, improve safety and comfort, and make the space more attractive for residents, visitors, artists, and the wider community.

Target Audience

The proposed solution should serve a broad urban and cultural community, including:

- Vilnius residents and visitors engaging with public cultural spaces;
- Local Užupis residents and the surrounding community;
- UMI residents, employees, artists, and creative professionals.

More broadly, the challenge is relevant to anyone interested in how public urban spaces can remain open, creative, and culturally alive while also being safe, welcoming, and respectful.

Team Task

The team is invited to create a space activation and management solution for the UMI courtyard that:

1. Increases safety and comfort.
2. Preserves the bohemian character of the place;
3. Strengthens the courtyard's identity as a cultural and artistic space.
4. Creates additional social value for the city.

Your solution may include:

- Concept/idea
- Prototype or demo
- Service model
- Campaign
- Spatial or physical solution
- Communication strategy
- Other relevant format.

Constraints & Requirements

Keep the following in mind:

- The space must remain open and welcoming;
- The solution should not feel overly restrictive, controlling, or punitive;
- The bohemian and informal character of Užupis should be preserved;
- The intervention should be realistic to implement with limited resources;
- The proposal should respect residents, artists, visitors, and the surrounding community;
- The solution should be feasible within a short implementation timeframe.

A key requirement is that the proposed solution should be cultural and community-based, rather than purely security-focused.

Possible Directions

The team may consider the following directions:

- Lighting design and signage communicating that this is a cultural space;
- Small-scale spatial interventions;
- A micro-programme of events, such as performances, open mic sessions, artist presentations, workshops, or informal cultural gatherings;
- Community-based programming;
- Cooperation with the Vilnius municipality;
- Cooperation with youth organisations;
- Artist-led activation of the courtyard;
- Visual identity or communication campaign for the space;
- Behavioural design solutions that naturally encourage respectful use of the area.

Expected Outcomes

A successful outcome would be a clear and realistic concept for activating the UMI courtyard as a safe, vibrant, and attractive cultural space while preserving its bohemian character.

By the end of the hackathon, the team should present one or more of the following:

- A courtyard activation concept, including programme ideas, design elements, and communication;
- A prototype of the space, such as a model, visualisation, UX scheme, or event plan;
- A clear implementation plan showing what could be done within two months using minimal resources.

The best solution should help the courtyard function more clearly as an art and culture zone, increase comfort and safety, and create additional social value for Vilnius.