



Dear UBC Colleagues,

I would like to invite you to the UBC Planning Cities Commission Seminar titled "NEW LIFE OF OLD PLACES – HISTORIC MARKETPLACE IN THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF RIGA", which will take place from 30th September to 3rd October 2025, in Riga, Latvia.

We have prepared an exciting four-day programme for you to experience the enjoyment of being in the very centre of Riga!

In the spotlight this time will be the unique area of **Riga Central Market**. The main question of the seminar - **how to develop its social and economic potentials, as well as synergies and reciprocal influences on the development of the surrounding areas**. This is relevant as the market is located in the Historic Centre of Riga, UNESCO World Heritage site, which is better known worldwide for its outstanding quality and amount of Art Nouveau architecture, the largest in the world, and a collection of 19th century wooden buildings.

At the seminar experts from the city of Riga will introduce you to Riga's values, planning issues and challenges, as well as provide insight into the strategic ideas of the historic centre of Riga, the Central Market development concept and the most significant related projects. Together we will explore the workshop topics through intensive, creative discussions to create solutions useful for the development of the new Spatial plan of the Historic centre of Riga and its protection zone and further projects, thus "melting" this unique place into the fabric of the centre of Riga.

There are several outstanding lecturers invited to the seminar. The representative of the City of Vienna Mr. Rudolf Zunke, Site Manager of the Historic Centre of Vienna, UNESCO World Heritage site will give an inspiring lecture about current urban planning and development challenges in the city centre of Vienna and relevant examples of where an urban renewal approach and the needs of a modern city centre were successfully solved while meeting the essence of heritage preservation. In turn, Kārlis Lakševics, an urban and environmental anthropologist at the University of Latvia, will present a picture of the diverse Central Market users and their manifold needs, expectations and relationships across times and surrounding areas, based on multiple research projects in the Central and other Riga markets.

To make your visit to Riga memorable, we want to give you the opportunity to get acquainted with our cultural traditions and values.

I look forward to meeting you and I am sure you will enjoy this upcoming event!

Sincerely,

Ilze Purmale

Director of Riga Local Government
City Development Department





RIGA CENTRAL MARKET AND SURROUNDING AREAS

The site has a strategic location and very high social and economic potential as it is situated in the focal point of the capital city next to the Old Town (Vecrīga), International Coach Terminal, Central Railway Station, in future – also Rail Baltica Riga Central Railway Station, and the River Daugava.

The Riga Central market is the largest in Europe, 10 hectares in area with 30,000 square metres of covered space, which consists of five impressive pavilions with semicircular arched roofs. The long-span arched constructions covering pavilions initially were used for Zeppelin (military airship) hangars during the First World War.

Now the synergy between the Riga Central Market and the rest of the city needs to be enhanced. The city of Riga invites colleagues – interested and experienced professionals from the UBC Planning Cities Commission's member cities – to gain a fresh perspective and friendly advice. Addressing common challenges, all of us in Baltic Sea region cities are dealing with similar problems of transforming historical sites and finding new functions for them. Together, through discussions and an exchange of knowledge, we can achieve better results.



UBC WORKSHOP AREAS

The UBC workshop invites participants to engage in a collaborative urban design and problem-solving session focused on enhancing the **synergy** between **Riga's Central Market** (part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site) **and its surrounding urban areas**. The workshop will address challenges and opportunities in the urban environment through a multidisciplinary and participatory approach.

Participants will be divided into **four working groups**, each dedicated to exploring the **interaction between the Central Market** and specific adjacent areas:

Old Town,

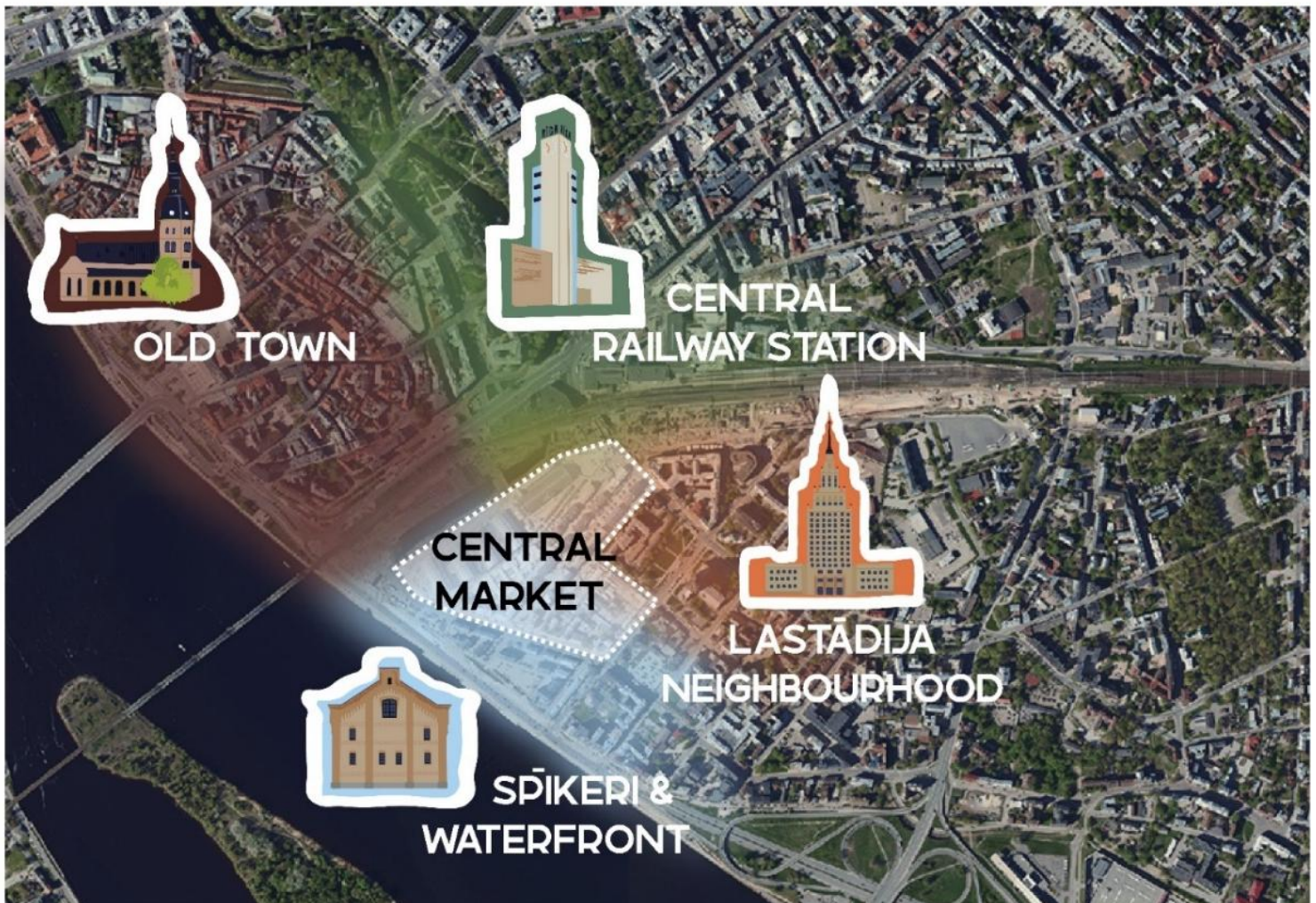
Central Railway Station,

Lastādiņa neighbourhood,

Spīķeri & waterfront.

Please choose one of the workshop topics that you would like to address in the working group:
<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/5qEekGdYLq>.

Each group will **identify spatial, social, economic, and cultural linkages**, and **propose strategies for improving integration, accessibility, and vibrancy in their assigned area**. The goal is to generate actionable ideas and visions that strengthen the Central Market's role as a vital, inclusive, and dynamic urban hub, while respecting the unique character of each workshop area.





OLD TOWN AND CENTRAL MARKET

Riga Old Town is the historical and cultural heart of the Latvian capital, celebrated for its well-preserved medieval street network, rich architectural heritage, and vibrant atmosphere. Recognised as part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Old Town is home to some of the city's most iconic landmarks, including St. Peter's Church, Riga Dome Cathedral, the Three Brothers (the oldest residential buildings in the city), and the remaining parts of the medieval city wall. Its compact layout, vital public spaces, and architectural diversity make it a major destination for both locals and tourists.

While the Old Town is located near the Daugava River, access to the waterfront is limited due to infrastructure barriers and fragmented pedestrian routes. Although the Central Market is located within walking distance of the Old Town, their interaction is hindered by a major multi-lane traffic corridor and underdeveloped public infrastructure, including the City Canal. This creates a physical and visual disconnection, limiting the potential for synergy between these vital city zones.

Improving the spatial and functional integration between the Old Town and the Central Market would unlock new opportunities for urban activities and community engagement. It would also help reconnect Riga's historical centre with the riverfront, restoring continuity in the urban fabric and creating a more inclusive and accessible city core.

CENTRAL RAILWAY STATION AND CENTRAL MARKET

The area surrounding Riga Central Railway Station serves as one of the city's most important transit nodes, connecting local, regional, and international transport networks. Open space adjacent to the Central Station, while spacious, is undefined, offering little in terms of function, comfort, or public life. Rather than serving as a welcoming gateway to the city, it often feels disconnected from its surroundings. Currently, the area operates primarily as a transit zone, where people move quickly through without stopping, lacking reasons to linger, engage, or interact with the space.

Pedestrian access between the station and Central Market is primarily routed through a dark, noisy, and uninviting tunnel. For many residents and visitors, this passage feels unsafe and unpleasant. Heavy traffic on nearby roads further divides the area, making it difficult to navigate on foot or by bicycle.

In recent years, large-scale plans tied to the Rail Baltica project promised to transform the station area into a modern, multimodal transport hub, improving regional connectivity and reshaping public space. However, the implementation of Rail Baltica in Riga has been paused, leaving parts of the area in a state of uncertainty and partial construction. As a result, the surrounding environment continues to lack coherence and fails to meet the needs of a dynamic and inclusive city centre.

Unlocking the full potential of the Central Railway Station area will require rethinking its public spaces, strengthening pedestrian and visual connections, and integrating future mobility plans with the everyday life of the city. As the major long-term construction works of the station are still under way, realistic ideas for temporary solutions to improve public spaces today/tomorrow would be especially valuable.



LASTĀDIJA NEIGHBORHOOD AND CENTRAL MARKET



Lastādija is a relatively calm and peaceful district, known primarily as a residential neighbourhood with a distinct local atmosphere. Unlike the bustling city centre nearby, Lastādija offers a quieter environment where many people live, blending urban life with a sense of community.



The area is home to several interesting architectural landmarks, cultural and institutional sites, like the notable Church of Jesus (Jēzus baznīca), the Latvian Academy of Sciences (Zinātņu akadēmija), and the City Development Department. In recent years, some outstanding and beloved urban art objects have appeared in the neighbourhood that contribute to the district's unique identity. The Lastādija Fox is the most popular one. The local streetscape features a mix of historic buildings and modern developments, reflecting its evolving character.



While quieter than other workshop areas, Lastādija has great potential for stronger connections with nearby vibrant urban zones such as the Central Market, Old Town and the waterfront. Improving these connections could enhance residents' access to services, public spaces, and cultural activities, enriching the everyday life of the neighbourhood.



SPIĶERI & WATERFRONT AND CENTRAL MARKET

The ensemble of historic warehouse buildings, often called the Spīķeri Quarter, was an important hub of commercial activity in this area before the Central Market took over the main role. It consists of two distinct parts. The one next to the Central Market needs extensive urban renewal, as only a few of its buildings fit into the Central Market development plans. The other part of the Spīķeri Quarter, located by the waterfront with coastal promenade and Lastādija's street, is a part of the city's recently revitalised areas that continue to improve. It has been transformed into a cultural and public space featuring creative industries, exhibition venues, and open-air events.



However, despite these improvements, the waterfront remains difficult to access. It is physically separated from the rest of the city by a busy traffic artery, which limits pedestrian connectivity and discourages spontaneous visits. Continuous and inviting pedestrian routes are essential to encourage movement between neighbourhoods, enhance the public experience, and ensure that the waterfront becomes an integral part of the daily life of residents and visitors alike.



Currently, use of the Daugava River itself remains minimal. Water-based public transport is underdeveloped. The waterfront as a public space lacks intensity of use, especially in the water zone. To fully unlock the potential of Spīķeri and the broader riverfront, future planning should focus on improving accessibility and activating both the river and canal spaces. With better integration, the Daugava and City Canal could become not just scenic backdrops, but vibrant, accessible elements of everyday city life.



Please choose one of the workshop topics that you would like to address in the working group: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/5qEekGdYLq>.



PLANNING CITIES COMMISSION SEMINAR

**NEW LIFE OF OLD PLACES -
HISTORIC MARKETPLACE IN THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF RIGA**

30th September – 3rd October 2025

TUESDAY, September 30 | Arrivals and get-together

VENUE: Department store Galerija Centrs, 4th floor, Audēju Street 16, Old Town

19:00 Informal get-together and networking dinner at "BURZMA"

WEDNESDAY, October 1 | Opening day

VENUE: Startup House, Lastādijas Street 12 k-3, Latgale neighbourhood

8:30 Registration and coffee

9:00 Opening by Paulina Szewczyk, Chairperson of the UBC Planning Cities Commission and Riga city representatives:

- Edgars Bergholcs, Head of the Riga City Council City Development Committee
- Linda Ozola, Member of the UBC Executive Board and Riga City Council

9:20 **Introduction to Riga, planning actualities and challenges**

- Riga Historical Centre Strategy 2025, Elīna Lībiete, Strategic Planning Board, City Development Department
- Reviving the Heart of the City, Pēteris Ratas, Riga City Architect, City Development Department
- World Heritage values of the Historic Centre of Riga and Urban Planning as the basis for their preservation and development, Aigars Kušķis, Expert of UNESCO Historic Centre of Riga, City Development Department

10:30 Coffee break

10:45 **Lecture by UNESCO World Heritage Site manager for the Historic Centre of Vienna - Rudolf Zunke**

Vienna's heritage preservation and management experience, its success stories, development synergies and challenges

11:30 **Introduction to project territories**

- Riga Central Market Spatial Development Concept, Representative of Rīgas Nami Dita Vīndedze (company in charge of its management of Riga Central Market)
- Introduction to the workshop areas and tasks, Lolita Čače and Aigars Kušķis, Urban Development Board, City Development Department

12:30 Lunch at Fish pavilion, Riga Central Market, Nēģu Street 3

13:30 **Guided tour to the workshop area**

Riga Central Market and its surrounding areas – Latgale neighbourhood, City Canal, Old Town, Central Station and Daugava riverfront

16:00 Coffee break and meeting in groups, Startup House

19:00 Formal dinner (restaurant "Kaļķu vārti", Jauniela 20, Old Town)



THURSDAY, October 2 | Workshops

VENUE: Startup House, Lastādijas Street 12 k-3, Latgale neighbourhood

8:30 Morning coffee

9:00 **Mutual learning from Riga's best practices**

- What makes your city liveable to you? Anita Amālija Olava, Strategic Planning Board, City Development Department
- Visioning new future for old places in Minecraft and with youth, Mārtiņš Eņģelis, deputy of Riga city council
- Riga city Greening plan, Jānis Ušča, Strategic Planning Board, City Development Department
- The best way to move, Agris Jakubovskis, Mobility Planning Board, City Development Department

10:00 **Lecture by urban and environmental anthropologist Kārlis Lakševics, University of Latvia**

Beyond the stalls: The Riga Central Market and the public. Central Market as a socio-ecological node, with the focus on evaluating the reconstruction of various other markets in Riga and the changes in attendance and perception of the market caused by them

10:40 Discussions

11:00 Coffee break – time to take a coffee and find your group

11:10 **Workshop in groups (including lunch and coffee break)**

12:30-13.30 Lunch

15:45 – 16.00 Coffee break

17:30 Time to relax and get ready for dinner

19:00 Dinner with an insight into Latvian culture, Small Guild, Amatu Street 5, Old Town (be ready to try new dance moves)

22:30 Time to rest before presentation day

FRIDAY, October 3 | Presentation of results open for wider audience

VENUE: Riga Town Hall, Town Hall square 1 (Rātslaukums 1)

8:30 Workshop – final touch

9:10 Results of UBC Joint Commissions Seminar 2024 in Gdańsk, Piotr Lorens, Gdańsk City Architect, City of Gdańsk

9:30 **Group presentations**

11:30 Conclusion and summary

11:45 Invitation to the next UBC seminar

12:00 Lunch

13:00 Organised excursion to Art Nouveau (Jugendstil) district

MAIN LECTORS PARTICIPATING IN THE UBC PCC SEMINAR RIGA 2025

PĒTERIS RATAS - RIGA CITY ARCHITECT



His role is to promote quality of built environment and architecture in the city by advising projects and design competitions, fostering cooperation, and promoting understanding about the subject. He is also leading planning board to decide on many important planning issues. Pēteris Ratas advocates ideas or projects that improve our public spaces and revitalize our neighborhoods, positive developments in Riga. He believes that architects and urban designers have an important role in creating a bold and inspiring vision for the city that balances economic growth, human development, and quality of urban life. It is especially important now as our cities face many challenges.

RUDOLF ZUNKE - SITE MANAGER OF THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF VIENNA



Rudolf Zunke graduated from a Federal Upper Secondary School of Engineering at Erdberg, Vienna, specializing in public works and civil engineering. After gaining business experience in his first job with an international construction company, he joined the Vienna City Administration, where he was in charge of coordinating of major technical infrastructure projects for several years.

At the same time, Zunke studied history, political science and journalism at the University of Vienna. His graduation thesis focused on Vienna's urban planning strategy in the reconstruction years after World War II. Zunke also holds a degree as an academically trained PR consultant, having successfully completed a university course in public relations at the University of Vienna. An internship with the European Commission in Brussels allowed him to gather extensive international experience. After his university graduation, Rudolf Zunke became a strategic planner in the City of Vienna's Chief Executive Office for Urban Planning, Development and Construction. As Vienna's official Coordinator for the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Historic Centre of Vienna", he represents the city's interests towards UNESCO and similar international institutions.

KĀRLIS LAKŠEVICS - URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ANTHROPOLOGIST



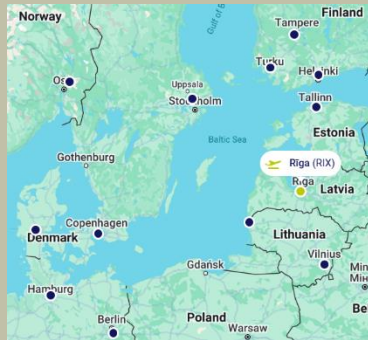
Kārlis Lakševics is an urban and environmental anthropologist using immersive and collaborative methodologies in his work. His recent work covers housing justice, the green transition and sustainable consumption across a variety of urban areas and cities. Lakševics teaches urban ethnography at the University of Latvia and has led several research projects exploring the outdoor and indoor markets of Riga.

AIGARS KUŠĶIS - URBAN PLANNER, EXPERT OF UNESCO HISTORIC CENTRE OF RIGA



Graduated as an architect from Riga Polytechnic Institute, he turned the career in urban planning and in 2002 joined the team established to develop a special plan for the Historic center of Riga. Since that, except 5-year practice in private development company, Aigars Kušķis works in City Development Department of Riga and in 2018 was appointed as an Expert in heritage management planning questions of UNESCO World Heritage Site "Historic Centre of Riga". His main duties are to ensure preservation of Outstanding Universal and other heritage values in development planning process of the Historic Centre and its protection zone, as well as in different planning and construction projects and councils regarding this area. Also, the representation of Riga city in relations with UNESCO World Heritage Centre and international organizations of World Heritage cities.

Kušķis confidence regarding development of historic urban environment is that approaches to conventional protection must be improved with better adaptation of historic city areas to modern society needs, such as true liveability, improved accessibility and attractiveness for every part of society, greening and landscaping, adaptation to changing climate etc.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

HOW TO GET TO RIGA

- **BY PLANE**

Riga International Airport (RIX) offers direct connections operated by Latvian national airline **AirBaltic** (www.airbaltic.com) to/from Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, Tallin, Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Berlin, Warsaw, Gdansk, Vilnius and 60 more directions.

Other airlines and directions: to/from Helsinki operated by Finnair (www.finnair.com), Warsaw operated by LOT Polish Airlines (www.lot.com), Frankfurt operated by Lufthansa (www.lufthansa.com), Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, Trondheim, Tivat, Corfu, Alicante, London, Burgas and Split, operated by Norwegian (www.norwegian.com).

Riga International Airport is located 11 km from the city centre. **Bus stop (Route 22, direction "Abrenes iela")** is located right outside the terminal, in the front of the airport. Bus runs to and from the airport every 10–20 minutes starting from 5:25 in the morning till 00:40 in the night. It takes 30-45 minutes to reach Old Town, with the "Grēcinieku iela" stop located directly across from it. The "Autoosta" stop is near suggested hotels area. A bus ticket costs €1.50 if purchased in advance at ticket machines located at bus stop 22 "Riga Airport". Timetables, fares and purchase information are available in Latvian and English at www.rigassatiksmel.lv.

A **taxi** ride from the airport to Riga city centre takes about 15 to 25 minutes, depending on traffic, and costs approximately €18–35. You can use **Red Cab** taxis or the Bolt app for taxi services.

- **BY INTERNATIONAL BUS**

Lux express <https://luxexpress.eu/en/> from/to Tallin, Tartu, Pärnu, Vilnius, Warsaw

Flixbus <https://www.flixbus.lv/> from/to many cities in Europe

- **BY TRAIN**

LTG Link <https://ltglink.lt/en/vilnius-riga-en> route Vilnius - Riga

ACCOMMODATION

We kindly suggest staying in **Wellton Riga Hotel & SPA** on Valņu Street 49 due to its location next to the workshop area and reviews. We have pre-booked rooms at the following price:

Single room, at 79.00 EUR per room/night;

Double room, at 84.00 EUR per room/night.

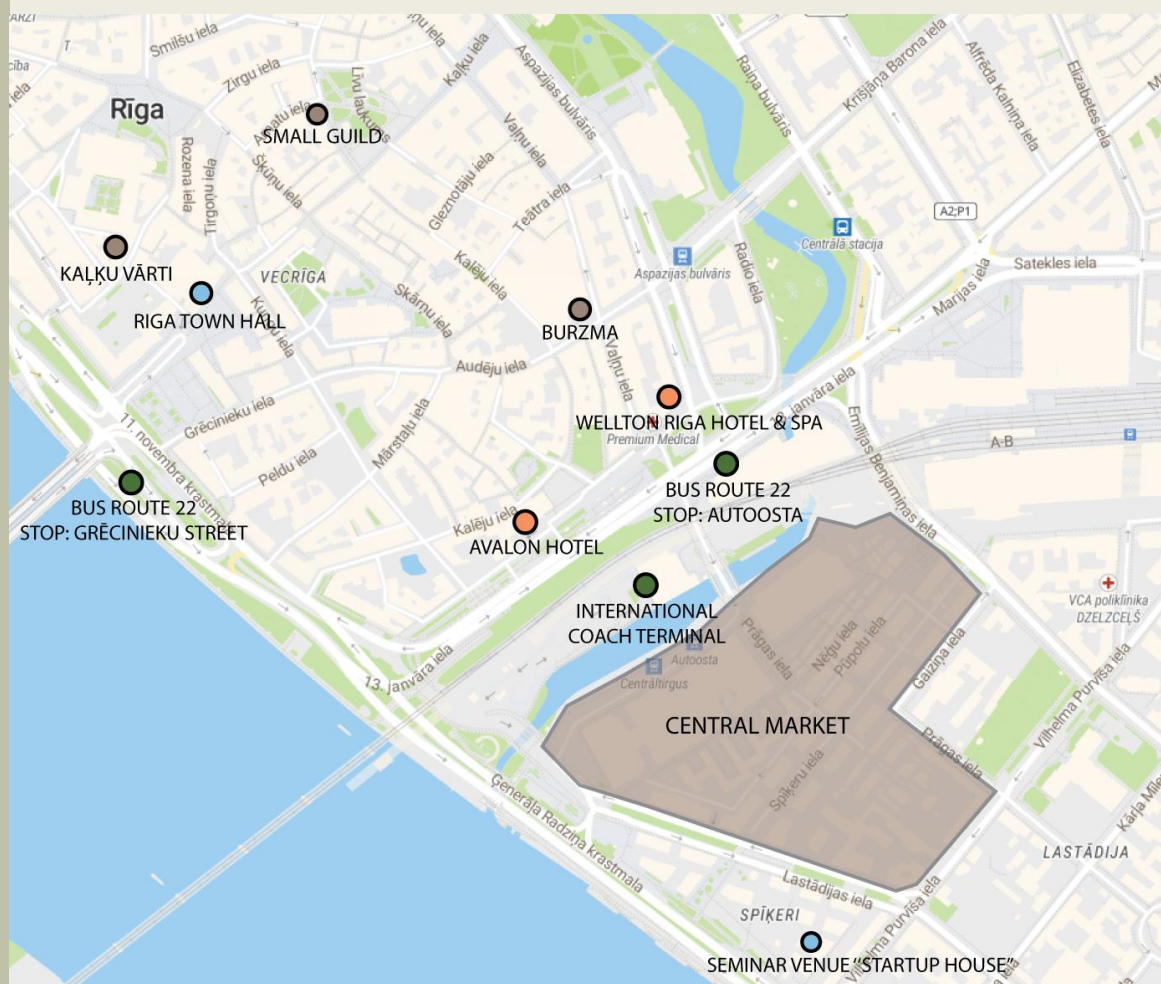
Room prices include: breakfast, WiFi, 12% VAT (fixed price, reservation must be made by 29.08.2025). **Promo code for Wellton Riga Hotel & SPA: UBCRiga2025**

Other option in close location to Wellton Riga Hotel & SPA – in the south-east part of Old Town, next to Riga Central market, is **Avalon Hotel** 13. janvāra Street 19. Or you can stay in one of many smaller hotels nearby.



MEETING VENUE

- **GET TOGETHER:** Food hall "BURZMA", Departamenta store Galerija Centrs, 4th floor, Audēju Street 16, Old Town <https://burzma.lv/en/>
- **MAIN SEMINAR VENUE:** "Startup House" <https://www.startuphouse.lv/> Lastādijas Street 12 k-3, Latgale neighbourhood
- **FORMAL DINNER:** restaurant "Kaļķu vārti" <https://kalkuvarti.lv/> Jauniela 20, Old Town
- **DINNER:** "Small Guild", Amatu Street 5, Old Town <https://mazagilde.lv/en/>
- **PRESENTATION DAY:** "Riga Town Hall", Town Hall square 1 (Rātslaukums 1)



REGISTRATION <https://forms.office.com/e/pzakypwkpq>

- **CONTACT PERSON**

With any practical question please contact:

Seminar coordinator **Solvita Kalvīte** +371 29397453, solvita.kalvite@riga.lv