



Detailed Planning in Helsinki





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Introduction: Development Planning

Land-use zoning remains the principle means of regulating land use in Finland. The Land Use and Building Act, which came into force in 2000, shows three types of development plan: the regional plan (maakuntakaava), the master plan (yleiskaava) at the city-wide or district level, and the detailed plan (asemakaava) for sites. The process is strictly hierarchical in nature. In practice, this translates into each of the higher levels needing to govern the next planning stage, as well as the lower plan having to be in agreement with the higher plan.

The regional plan (maakuntakaava) is prepared by Uusimaa Regional Council which has 24 municipalities including the capital, Helsinki. The regional plan is a set of structural guidelines that are legally binding. The Ministry of the Environment has to ratify the Plan. The Ministry expects that the City of Helsinki's development strategy should broadly compliment the regional plan.

The City of Helsinki's 2002 master

plan (yleiskaava) covers the entire city. It is essentially a land-use zoning map designating areas of land in terms of five broad categories (mixed metropolitan uses, housing, public utilities and technical services, commercial and recreation and parks). The main traffic network and future plans form a material part of the master plan. The provisions contained within the city-wide plan are legally binding. The Land Use Act has given planning authorities delegated powers to decide whether or not their plan will be a statutory or non-statutory plan.

In Helsinki, City Planning may also prepare a local plan (osayleiskaava), which bridges the gap between the master plan and the detailed plan. The local plan outlines a development area's land uses and overall character, primary road network and transport connections, green areas, together with essential local services such as schools, nurseries, library and local shopping facilities. The overall scale of development, maximum permitted floorspace capaci-



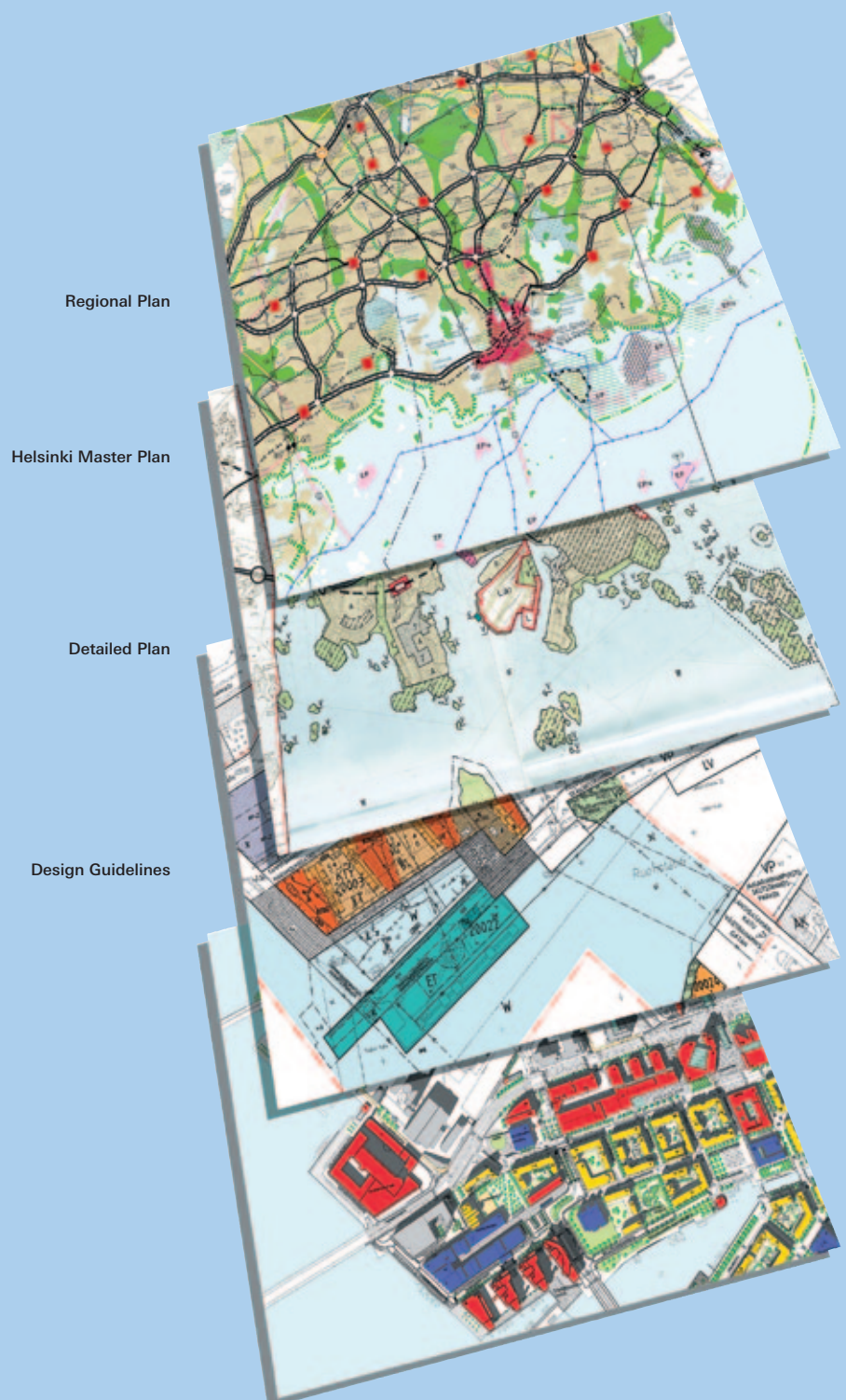


ty, block plan layouts and parking requirements form the central core of each local plan. This local plan is often used with the case of planning new neighbourhood areas owned by the City.

The detailed plan level, in Finnish, termed the *asemakaava*, varies from a broad zoning document to outline planning permission. Within Finnish planning this is deemed to be the development control level. It is only a detailed plan that has the legal sanction to establish development on a site or to change the land-use designation, although the master plan can determine land-use changes for larger areas.

A detailed plan must broadly conform to the aims and policies contained within the city-wide master plan. The statutory master plan guides the detailed planning stage. In practice, since the City is the local planning authority making the decisions at the detailed plan level, the City has the right to make exemptions where there are exceptional reasons.

It is the City Planning Department which oversees the preparation of the city-wide master plan and all local and detailed plans.



Land-use planning tiers: from the general to the detailed level.



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What is a detailed plan

The detailed plan (asemakaava) is an official document that sets out the prescribed land-use rights for a specific plot of land or area and contains the building rights as directed by the local planning authority. The detailed plan can either relate to a small development site or to an entire district. The detailed plan takes the form of an official titled survey map. The scale of the map varies from 1:500 to 1:2000 depending on the size of the site. The plan contains the basic design layout and building lines, planning conditions (määräykset), together with a written statement (selostus) outlining the development proposal.

However, it should be noted that the specific details of a development, such as the architectural design of a facade, the fenestration, materials, colours and such like do not normally form part of the detailed plan. In particular, developments for large new housing areas on City-owned land (referred to as 'Project Areas') generally require to have a set of environmental design guidelines for overseeing the implementation of the project area, more of which later.

The aesthetic aspects of the plan process are carried out by the Building Control Department (Rakennusvalvontavirasto), which will be explained towards the end of this document. Nowadays, close cooperation between Building Control and City Planning takes place at each stage of the planning process.



Draft detailed plan preparation

The following pages describe the planning process, together with the public consultation exercise, that takes place prior to the detailed plan being presented to the City Planning Committee before it is finally sent to the City Board (the Council's executive committee) and the City Council for approval.

It is the legal duty of the City of Helsinki to prepare all detailed plans. It is the City Planning Department which carries out this duty.

The City of Helsinki owns some 66% of land within its boundary and the State approximately 13%, so that in total, public authorities own nearly 80% of land collectively. Since the City owns most of the land, this obviously has significant implications for spatial planning. It means that the City Council has a near monopoly in controlling development and explains the reasoning why the responsibility for planning all new development areas sits with the City Planning department.

The majority of Helsinki is covered by detailed plans. Landowners may submit

a proposal to either make a new plan or alter an existing approved detailed plan at any time. The proposal must be submitted formally in writing to the City Board. The process of alteration is identical to the process of making a detailed plan for the first time.

The time taken in the making of a detailed plan with all its various stages will depend upon the actual task. A detailed plan for a whole district, from initial sketches to actual implementation when building works commence on site, may take as long as from three to five years, and sometimes ten years for very large areas such as Vuosaari, with a projected population of 40,000. An approval for a simple residential house would be quicker, but on average, takes from around nine to eighteen months.

In the case where a developer or land owner has submitted an application for a detailed plan or a material alteration thereto, the City has the right to charge the applicants for all costs incurred in the drawing up of the plan and also associated costs with public consultation, such as advertisements in newspapers.

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Helsinki – approved detailed plan

HELSINKI

20. KAUPUNGINOSA LÄNSISATAMA, MUNKKISAARI
PUISTOALUE
ASEMAKAAVA

KORTTELI 20178
KATU-, PUISTO-, PYSÄKOINTI- JA RAUTATIEALUEET
ASEMAKAAVAN MUUTOS

6. KAUPUNGINOSA EIRA
KATU-, PUISTO-, PYSÄKOINTI-, RAUTATIE- JA VESIALUEET
ASEMAKAAVAN MUUTOS

1:1000

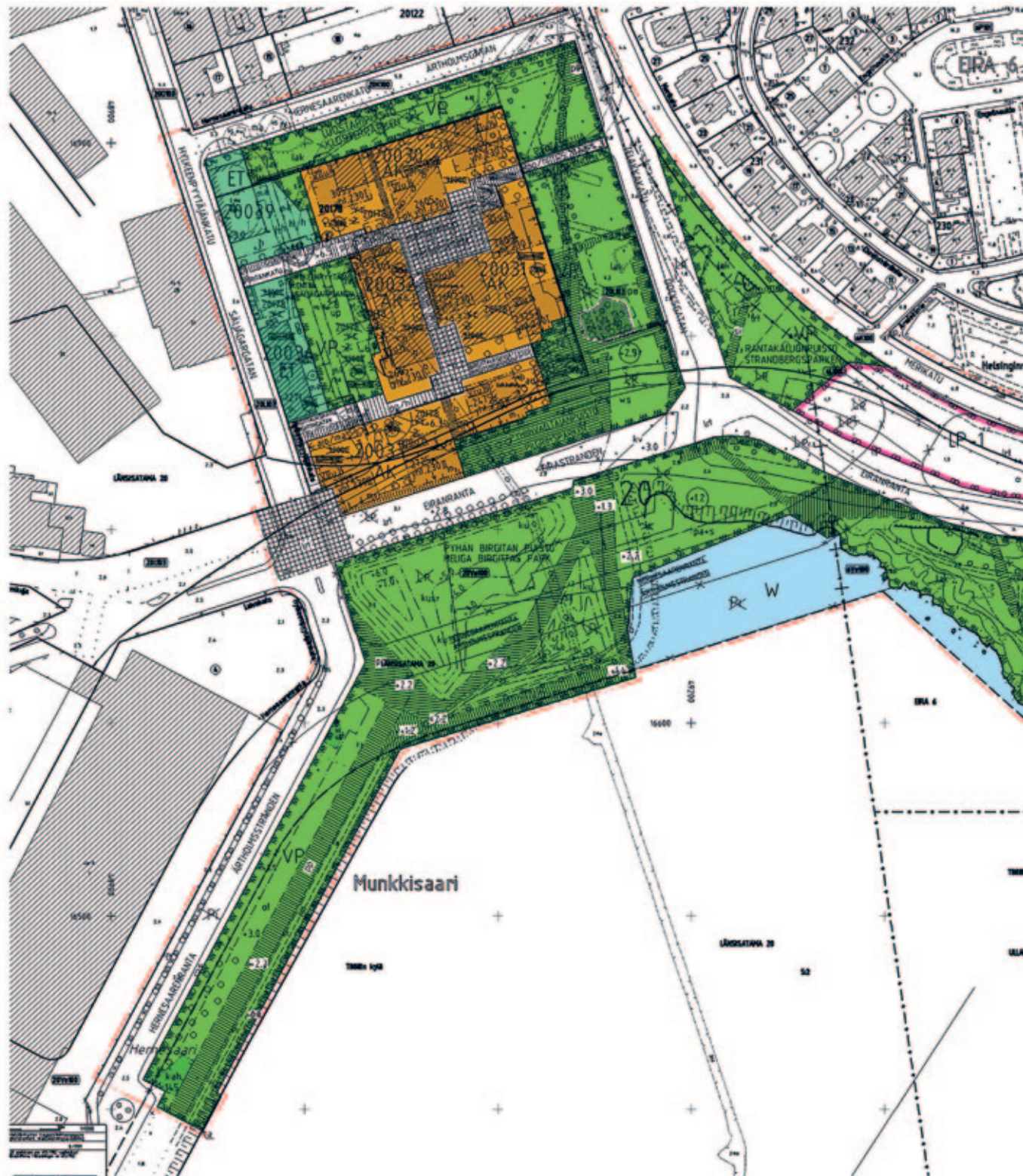
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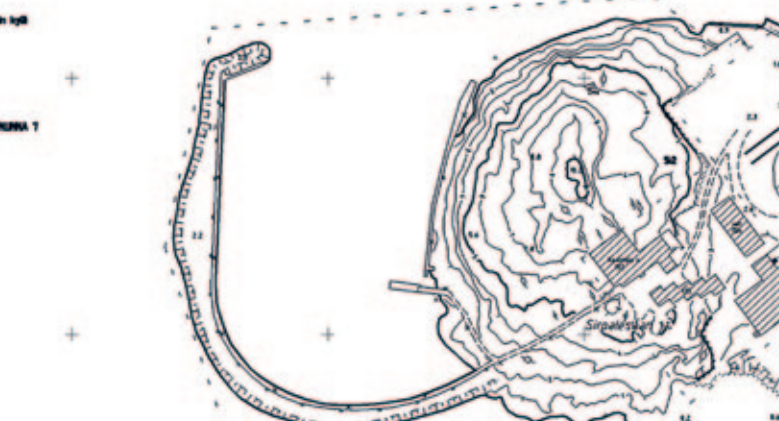
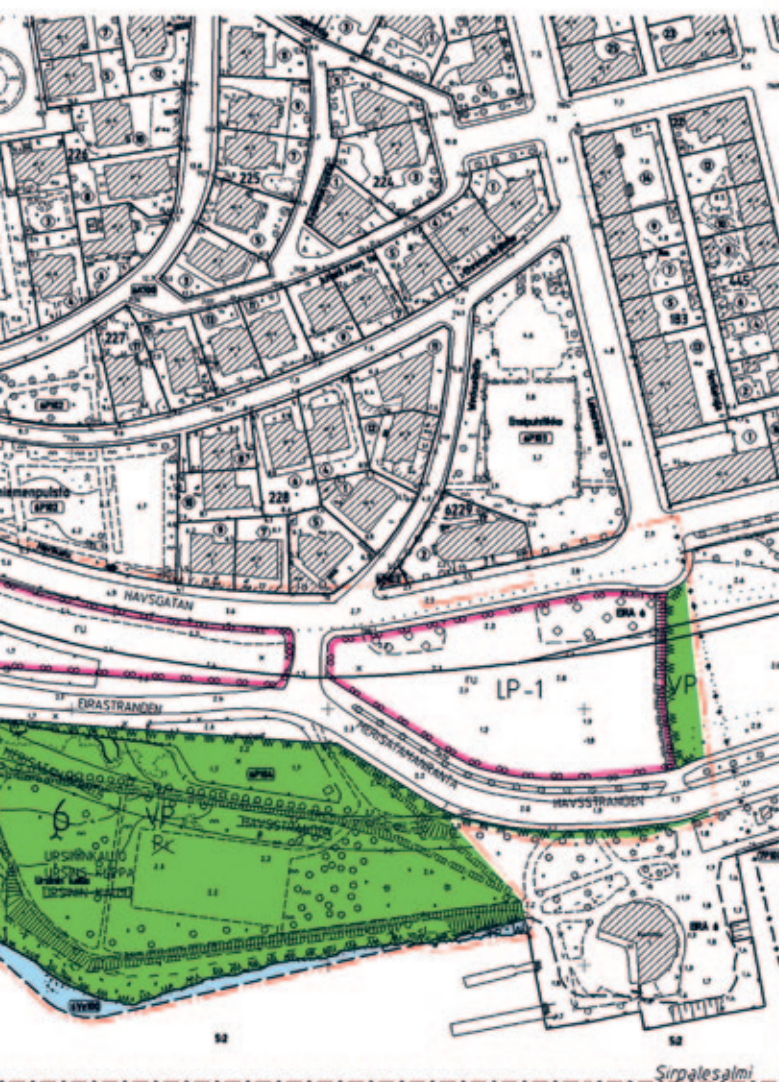
20. CITY DISTRICT WEST HARBOUR AND
MUNKKISAARI PARK
DETAILED PLAN

BLOCK LOCATION 20178
STREETS, OPEN SPACES, CAR PARKING AND RAILWAY
DETAILED PLAN - AMENDMENT

6. CITY DISTRICT EIRA
STREETS, OPEN SPACES, CAR PARKING, RAILWAY LINES,
DETAILED PLAN - AMENDMENT

1:1000



[illegible]



The draft detailed plan

It is the owner of land that usually makes an application for a detailed plan. The City, however, can also initiate a development for land not in its ownership, for instance, where a collective decision is required, such as declaring a Conservation area, or making a new plan for a neighbourhood that requires regeneration, or to renew an old or lapsed detailed plan. The application is normally in letter form addressed to the City Board (Kaupunginhallitus). The City Board then requests the City Planning Committee to undertake the making of a new detailed plan, which is carried out in practice by City Planning.

The first stage of the plan making process is usually termed the draft detailed plan (asemakaavaluonnos) which consists of a plan and draft conditions, together with reasons supporting the draft plan.

In very simple cases this draft phase is usually omitted and the architect/planner will go straight to the proposed detailed plan stage (see 'proposed' detailed plan).



City Planning prepares a draft detailed plan in cooperation with other administrative bodies, local people and interested parties. At the same time, local public consultation procedures will be initiated.

A draft detailed plan is prepared from a site survey and includes the quality of the soil, an environmental assessment and other local factors to ensure that the development conforms to the surrounding buildings and improves the overall townscape. The plan needs to comply with health regulations, fire safety, traffic policies, and meet the necessary conditions for creating a comfortable and pleasant environment. It also makes land reservations within a plan which the local authority considers necessary for an area to function properly, such as schools, nurseries, health centres and shopping facilities. The detailed plan may also feature historic buildings of interest, scenic views, skylines, and other architectural or cultural aspects that are to be protected or conserved in the plan. Additionally, in the making of the detailed plan, account has to be taken of existing land ownership and their legal boundaries so that the plan does not impinge upon adjoining owners or impose extra costs or otherwise undermine their interest in the land.

It is also considered important that local parks, recreation areas, trees and the local environment are adequately protected within a plan. There must be sufficient Parks or other areas suitable for local recreation covered by the Plan.

All of the above background information, together with any previous decisions affecting the site, is contained in the supporting reasons (perustelut).

Public Consultation

The Land Use and Building Act widened the level of public participation that takes place during the planning process. In this respect, the architect-planner must draw up a public participation and impact assessment scheme (osallistumis- ja arviointisuunnitelma) at the outset of the draft planning stage.

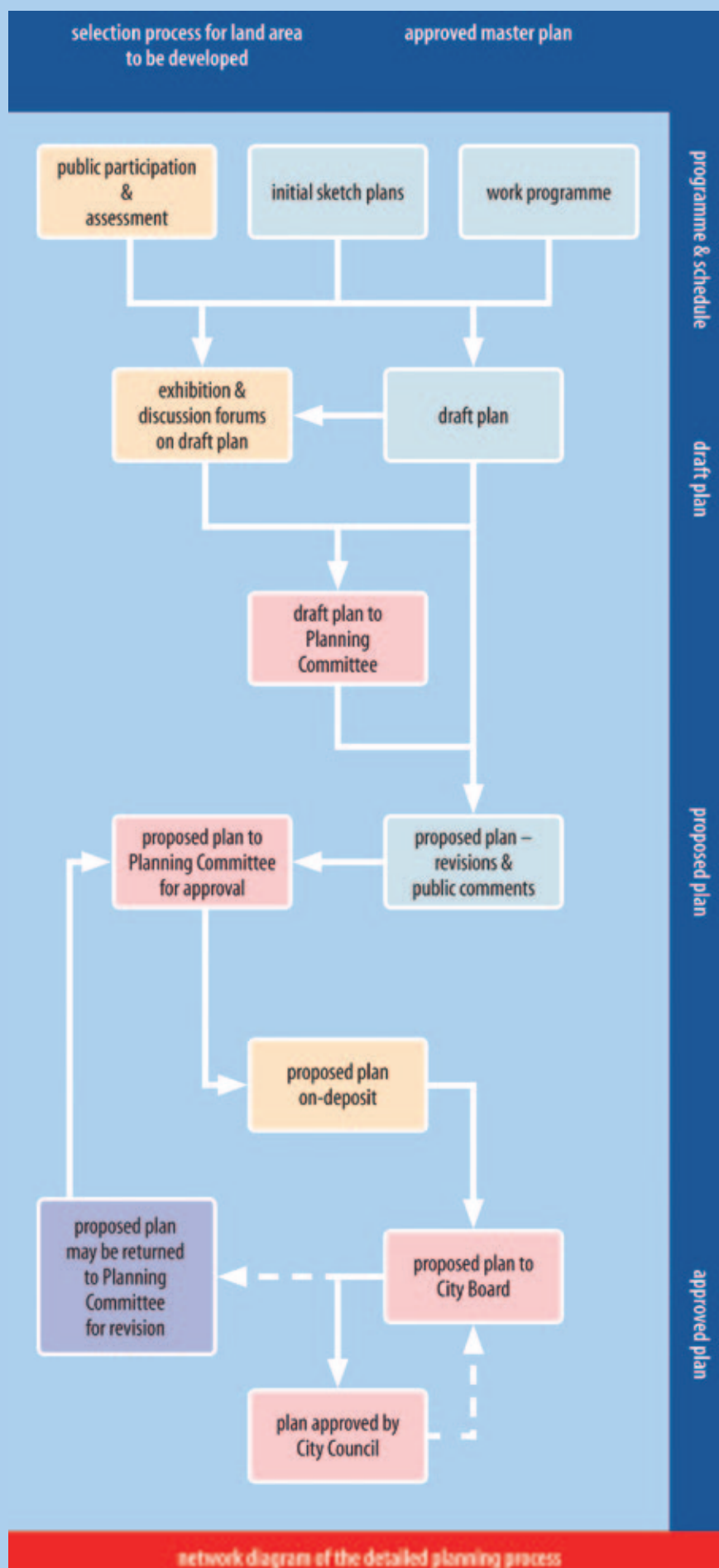
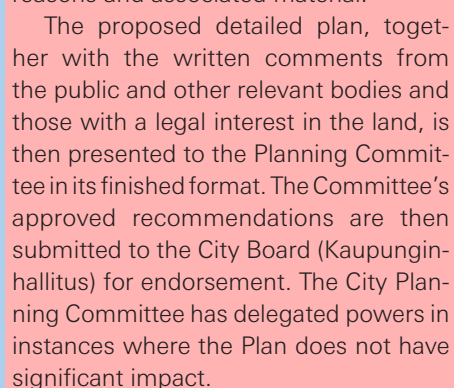
Notification of the draft detailed plan is sent to those who have a legal interest in the property or site, and also to adjacent occupiers (neighbours) and local groups. Depending upon the significance of the planning proposal an advertisement will be placed in the local or national press. All draft detailed plans are then normally placed on public view within the City Planning Department, the City Registry and on the internet for further comment. Important plans may also be available to view in local neighbourhood centres.

Residents and other stakeholders are then normally given 2 to 3 weeks to submit their opinions, by email or by letter or telephone, to the planning department. In addition, depending upon the importance of the development proposal, meetings and workshops with local groups will also be arranged.

An initial round of written representations from other departments, adjoining municipal authorities, State departments and other agencies are sometimes requested at this stage.

The Committee Procedure

The detailed plan in its draft form will usually be presented to the City Planning Committee at this point in the proceedings in order to gain an initial reaction to the aims and principles of the development proposal. The content of the draft plan may include alternative options. The Committee's task is to decide during the





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On deposit

Prior to submission to the City Board, statements (lausunto) from other municipal committees are requested.

The detailed plan is then placed on deposit, a legal requirement, for a period of usually 30 days. It is once again available for inspection at the information desk within the Planning Department and the City Registry to enable local people, owners, other bodies and local Councillors to comment on the proposal as agreed at the Planning Committee. Occasionally, an exhibition may be mounted depending upon the significance and strategic importance attached to the area in question.

If any objections (muistutus) are formally submitted during this period of the process in respect of the detailed plan, the plan will be sent back to the City Planning Committee to ascertain their views (vastine) to the objections and notifications.

City Board

Together with the statements from the public consultation exercise and statements from the other municipal committees, the Planning Committee's recommendations are then considered in full by the City Board, which is the executive to the City Council. The City Board normally assesses recommendations before submitting them to the City Council, and may, for example, endorse the recommendations or refer the issue back to the Planning Committee for revision.

City Council

The proposed detailed plan is eventually put before a meeting of the City Council for an ultimate decision to be made. It is of course still possible for the City Council at its meeting to consider objections and they may elect to send back

the detailed plan with suggested amendments to the City Board. Normally, the City Council approves the plan. However, the planning process allows at this stage for appeals to be made against the decision of the City.

The formally approved detailed plan is legally binding upon the land.

Administrative Court

The City approved detailed plan can be challenged in the Administrative court. Appellants have 30 days to challenge the decision on matters of legality and not on policy grounds. After this the appellants may also challenge a decision in the Supreme Administrative Court. Restrictions exist as to the right of appeal.

Ministry of the Environment

The functions of the ministry include the preparation of legislation as well as overseeing general development and guidance of land use planning and building activities. The ministry promotes, steers, monitors as well as ratifies regional plans and joint municipal master plans.

Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment

The Uusimaa Centre promotes and steers the organization of land use planning and building activity within the areas covered by a local authority. The Centre must especially exercise control to ensure that national land use objectives, other goals pertaining to land use and building, and provisions concerning the management of planning matters and building activities are taken into account in planning, building and other land use. The Centre also has the powers to intervene where a plan does not respect national guidelines.



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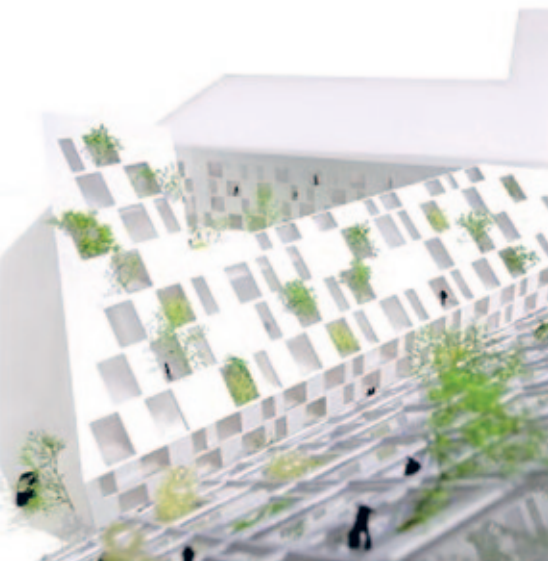
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Building Permit

Once a detailed plan has been finally approved by the City the next step required for a developer is to apply for a building permit from the Building Control Department. This is explained in more detail below.

In the Land Use and Building Act, although the detailed plan is the actual outline development permission, it does not cover building permission nor does it normally include aesthetic control. The development system in the City of Helsinki separates out the detailed planning stage from the actual consent of full planning permission (aesthetic control) and the building permit process.

Once the detailed plan has been approved by the City the developer receives a copy of the site plan, the conditions attached, and the written report concerning the development from the Planning department.

Thereafter, in order for a developer to start construction it is necessary to apply for a building permit (rakennuslupa) from the Building Control Department (Rakennusvalvontavirasto). A building permit is obligatory for the construction, alteration, change of use or demolition and removal of a building.

The architects within Building Control have the duty to prepare the final assessment of any building permit by evaluating the developer's aesthetic designs for building approval set against the conditions contained in the detailed plan. This system is identical to the full planning permission process, in that the developer will submit a plan layout, sections and elevations, together with an explanation of the development. The developer's

submission will include colour coordination, samples of building materials, and landscaping. The Building Control Department presents the final proposal to the Building Committee for approval in the form of a building permit (rakennuslupa). This formally ratifies the detailed planning permission and building operations in accordance with the agreed detailed plan. Delegated powers exist for the Building Control department to make decisions where necessary that are not of major significance.

Power to restrict development

During the period that a detailed plan is being prepared and considered by City Planning, the City Board may prohibit the commencement of any building operations. At the same time, outstanding plans cannot be implemented.

Demolition of Buildings

It is forbidden to demolish a building without the necessary consent from the Building Committee (Rakennuslautakunta) or the Building Control department.

The Building Committee may, with the agreement of the relevant departments, grant the requisite building permit to demolish if it seems that such development will not materially affect the carrying out of the detailed plan. In any case, the demolition of buildings requires the requisite consent from the Building Committee.

For listed buildings that are identified by a detailed plan (i.e. protected buildings of architectural or historic merit) any demolition of such buildings will require the decision of the City.



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Exemptions (poikkeaminen)

In addition, changes in respect of building operations, or changes of use, or conditions attached to a plan, or any other type of restriction can be submitted for exemption.

The Exemption certificate must, by law, have a special reason in order to be approved.

The application for an Exemption certificate is made by the land owner. The Building Control Department (Rakennusvalvontavirasto), Building Committee or the City Planning Committee, as well as the City Board, together with Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, all tend to be involved at one stage or another in the process. The final decision rests generally with one of the named authorities. City Planning's role in such cases is to provide professional advice by way of a departmental statement and has the power to make the relevant decision in certain cases.

Development Powers

In respect of the Planning and Building laws, development cannot take place unless there is a detailed plan in force.

Material alteration to a detailed plan

The majority of Helsinki is covered by detailed plans and any material alteration to a plan requires approval. A landowner may submit a proposal to alter an approved detailed plan at any time. The proposal must be submitted formally in writing to the City Board. The process is identical to that outlined above for a detailed plan.

Building of new residential districts on City-owned land

In planning new residential districts on city-owned land the planning system proceeds in the same way as before, firstly, going through the 'draft' plan stage before proceeding to the 'proposed' detailed planning level. It is at this part of the process that specific planning conditions are assessed, such as the height of buildings, design, internal courtyards, housing layouts, internal arrangements, maximum permitted plot ratio, density and housing mix. In most of these cases the architect-planners have a varied range of planning instruments to control the surrounding environment.

During the making of the detailed plan on City-owned land the city planners may prepare a set of environmental design guidelines (Rakentamistapaohje tai, Katu ja puistoalueiden yleissuunnitelma) for the area. They provide additional technical support to the planning aims and conditions contained in the detailed plan. Additionally, the design guidelines may specify some key features that must be adhered to in respect of public areas and for the building plot overall. The programme will be made in the form of texts (descriptions, objectives) and illustrative drawings, specifying the individual details the developer has to adhere to in implementing the plan.

The environmental design guidelines require to be approved by the City Planning Committee and Building Committee, once the detailed plan has been approved.

In development circumstances, where new areas are being built under the control of the City of Helsinki, it is the responsibility of the City's Economic and Planning Centre (Talous-ja suunnittelukeskus) to oversee that an area is built



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in accordance with total costs and the agreed work programme.

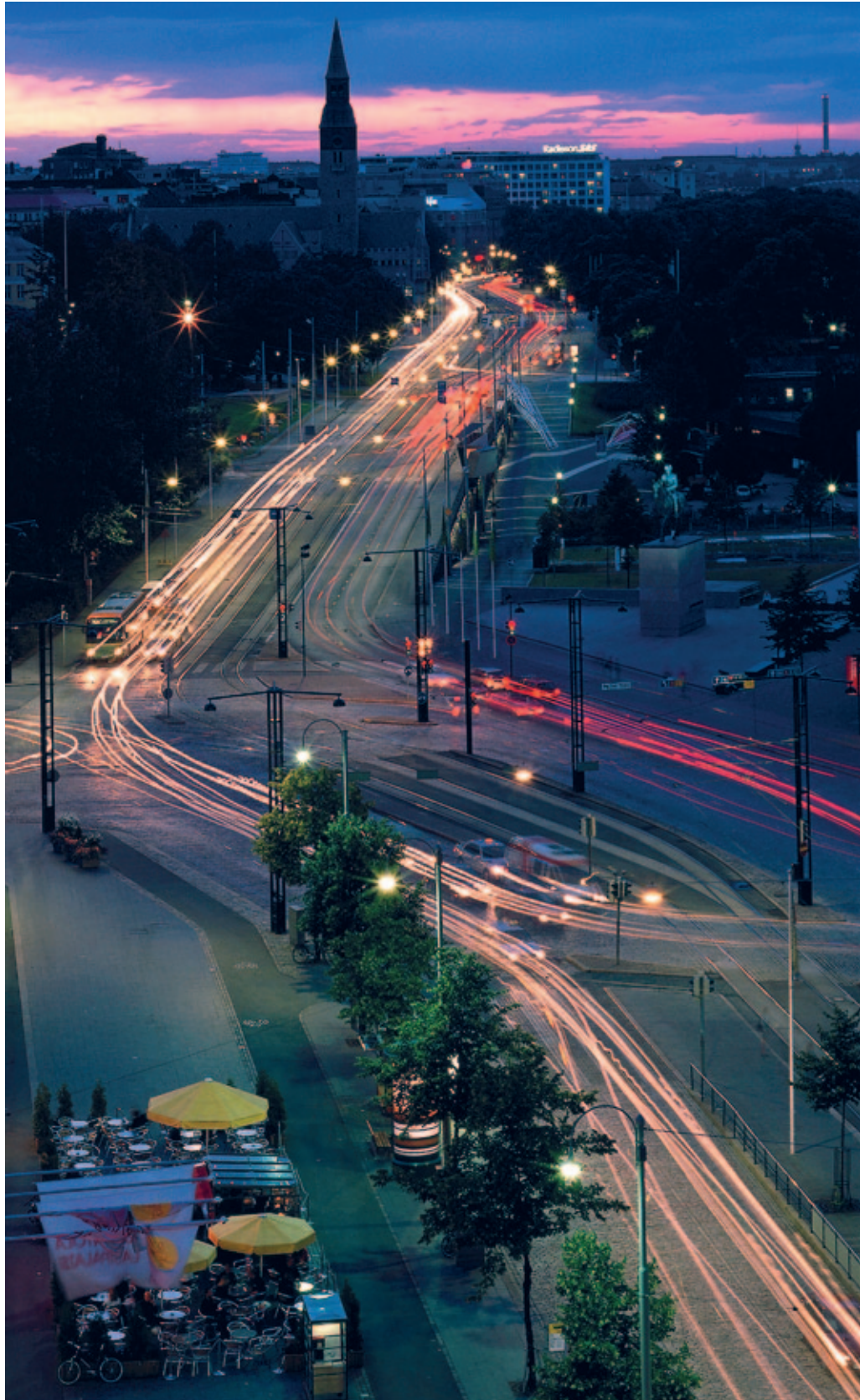
The coordination of the building process takes place between the City Planning Department, City's Economic and Planning Centre, the Real Estate Department (Kiinteistövirasto) and the Department of Public Works (Rakennusvirasto) and the Building Control Department.

It is the Real Estate Department which will sub-divide the building plots, all of which are owned by the City, and in general, tend to sub-let these plots to developers. At this stage qualitative competitions (competitive tendering) tend to be the norm. However, it should be noted that there are many different ways in which the City can allocate land, and there are many different forms of competition. Whether or not a competition will be held, and what type, will depend upon the varying circumstances of each case. The successful developer will be selected upon the basis of the architectural quality of the competition proposals and tendered price.

In all cases - both in competitions and in direct commissions - the designs of houses or residential blocks must be carried out in coordination with the special group of City officials who oversee the implementation of the developments. This group must agree the designs which have to be in accord with the detailed plan and the environmental design guidelines.

A further point to note is that if a developer's proposal for a residential block conforms to the approved planning conditions set out in the detailed plan and the environmental design guidelines in all aspects they may go straight to the next stage in the process, that of gaining a building permit from the Building Control Department.

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