

Helsinki News

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a blue sleeveless top and dark jeans, is riding a black bicycle. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The bicycle has a large white cargo box attached to the front. The box has the word "KIRJASTO" in large blue letters and "iden ja ajatusten rikastamo" in smaller blue letters below it. There is also a logo on the side of the box. The background is a colorful mural with a building, a person sitting on a bench, and abstract shapes. The overall scene is bright and urban.

City of Design

Helsinki commits to design
in city development

Open City

How Helsinki builds a better city

3/2015

Building better society with design

Finland's design tradition enters a new era; Helsinki develops towards a smart city

Finland is famous for design. The country has produced a long list of magnificent objects and structures created by some of the world's foremost names in design and architecture. However, the challenges of society today and tomorrow require not only better products but better solutions. New social challenges can only be solved by creating completely new ways to meet citizen needs.

The next big stride in Finland's design story is the integration of design into public administration to reform public services. Design thinking, applied at the highest levels of decision-making, can provide true answers. When creating something new to meet still unknown challenges, designers can lead the way, as they are trained to work under conditions of uncertainty.

Helsinki has set out to develop the city embracing these principles. Design thinking is helping the city's youth, social and cultural services. On a larger scale, the same principles apply in Helsinki's smart city thinking – how digital technology turns Helsinki into a smart and clean city. Smart and Clean are two intertwined concepts in Helsinki that together enable new ways of doing things, as well as a new quality of life.

Helsinki has embraced a comprehensive form of smart city thinking, where different functions of the city are intelligent in different ways. These include the environment, economy, transportation, administration, urban citizens and living in general.

Helsinki's public transport services offer a good example of the city's smart city thinking. Helsinki designs the services on the principle that public transport of the future should be so smooth and flexible that residents might never need to own a car. For example, plans for Helsinki's smart city district, Kalasatama, include a sharing service for electric cars and bicycles.

Source: Designstoriesfromhelsinki.fi

COVER:
HELSINKI CITY LIBRARY'S
"BICYCLE LIBRARY".
ALEKSI POUTANEN /
DESIGN STORIES
FROM HELSINKI

Helsinki uses design: case studies

Helsinki Art Museum reopens with new user experience

The City of Helsinki's own art museum, Helsinki Art Museum HAM, opened doors in September 2015 after a yearlong renovation and renewal process. The museum doubled its exhibition space and revamped its identity. The rebuilt museum is marked by openness, light and inviting spaces.

The new museum identity enhances user-friendliness in ways that appeal to non-traditional museumgoers. The museum seeks to be a space where all citizens can enjoy spending time and interact socially.

Professional designers and students played active roles in the creation of the user experience. They helped the staff to rethink the experience from the visitor point of view, using visitor profiles and role-play as tools.

Public library services envisioned with customers

Helsinki is developing a flagship new public library, Helsinki Central Library, with the principle of co-design: customers are integrated into the process to ensure that the new services will meet the needs and wishes of library-goers.

Central Library pals was a project in which 28 potential customers actively planned library services in workshops over an intensive work period.

Helsinki Central Library will open doors in 2018.

Housing for homeless youth

Helsinki has turned to a typical method used by designers to solve the problem of youth homelessness: prototyping.



MAIJA TOIVANEN / HAM

Helsinki Art Museum HAM

The City of Helsinki Youth Department has set out to find solutions with the help of fast-paced youth housings experiments, used to explore ideas and to test concepts. The key to success is young people's involvement in planning and implementation.

In the first experiment, a group of vocational students shared a house and worked on a recreational island over their summer break, testing communal living. The second experiment is built into a former youth home to test unsupervised communal living on a permanent basis.



The main venue of Helsinki Design Week 2015 was in an old harbour warehouse in the developing Helsinki city district of Jätkäsaari.

City driven by design

Design thinking assumes permanent role in Helsinki's development

Over the past two years, a city development project titled Design Driven City has actively incorporated design thinking into city development programmes in Helsinki. The goal is to make Helsinki a better place for citizens and a more competitive city with the help of design. The work has ranged from improving street construction sites to educating city staff in the methods used by designers.

Design Driven City communications director **Laura Aalto** explains what design thinking means in the Helsinki city organisation: "First, design thinking means that all city officers share the customer – the city resident – and they seek to understand the customer's needs and wishes. Second, citizens are included in

the planning of services on the principle of co-design, as the Helsinki Central Library project has done. Third, the city adopts an experimentation culture, as the Youth Department has done in seeking a solution to youth homelessness. Fourth, the city applies visualisation to tackle complex issues."

"All four of the approaches are united by one factor: human orientation. Design thinking makes people's voices heard in the city administration," Aalto says.

UNESCO City of Design for good of other cities

Impressed with Helsinki's commitment to design, UNESCO encouraged Helsinki to apply

for a City of Design status as part of the global UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Helsinki earned the status in late 2014, to become the world's 16th City of Design.

The City of Design status means that Helsinki can share its best practices with other members of the network. This work has already started.

"Other cities have praised Helsinki for explaining what design means in various aspects of city development. Helsinki has created a productive dialogue among cities," Aalto affirms.

Decade of active commitment to design

Design Driven City continues the work started in 2012, when Helsinki celebrated the year as World Design Capital. Helsinki was so named by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (Icsid) for the city's vision in the use of design for social, economic and environmental betterment. The year was an astounding undertaking with hundreds of projects and thousands of events.

Helsinki's vision has been manifested in a number of other projects that ushered in and have followed the World Design Capital year. Helsinki instituted an open data policy as early as 2005. Helsinki's public transport authority, City Library and energy company have been pioneers among city players in utilising design. Today Design Driven City is accompanied by a smart-city living lab in Kalasatama.

The Design Driven City project will close at the end of 2015. "But design continues in Helsinki stronger than ever," Aalto assures. From here on, design processes will play a permanent, established role in Helsinki city operations to make sure that Helsinki will continue to become a better city with the help of design.

Milestones in design

**Kalasatama
Smart City
Living Lab**
2013-

**Design
Driven City**
2014-2015

**UNESCO
City of Design**
2014

**National
design policy
programme**
2013

**World
Design Capital
Helsinki**
2012

**Helsinki
open data
policy**
2005

Helsinki builds and strengthens an open city

“Helsinki sets an example in openness and in strengthening citizen participation,” says Helsinki Mayor **Jussi Pajunen**. He explains that Helsinki’s World Design Capital programme set in motion an Open Helsinki policy that has aroused interest worldwide. Democratic values including participation, citizen orientation and transparent decision-making are embedded in the city’s strategy.

The principles of openness and citizen participation are applied in an ongoing process to reform the City of Helsinki governance system. The reform will ensure that municipal election results are directly reflected in the highest city offices.

The reform relies on citizen input. The city has invited citizen feedback through online brainstorming on the questions how the city should be governed, how citizens should participate in decision-making and how services should be organised. A similar citizen feedback system has been applied by a number of city departments.

Free access to public records has for long been the standard in Finnish municipal administration. Today citizens can monitor the city decision-making with increased ease. The city’s Open Ahjo web service gives the public access to the City of Helsinki electronic decision-making system used by the city’s highest decision-making bodies. The records are available as open data through an open user interface.

Public access to Helsinki city records

extends to procurement data. Anyone can check online the purchases of any city department and public enterprise.

The City of Helsinki operates its own web channel, Helsinkikanava.fi, which webcasts all City Council meetings and makes them available on demand. The channel also webcasts the Mayor’s resident meetings and other events related to local democracy.

Participatory budgeting is the most powerful form of direct democracy. It is increasingly used in the Helsinki city administration to empower citizens.

Participatory budgeting was applied by Helsinki’s city library authority in the development of Helsinki Central Library. Citizens were asked how the Central Library project should use a 100,000-euro library development fund. They chose four out of eight pilot projects created on the basis of citizen-generated ideas for future library services.

The City of Helsinki Youth Department has applied participatory budgeting at youth centres, which have allowed the young users to decide on the allocation of youth centre budgets for activities.

Helsinki invites citizen feedback on any matter related to the city and its services on one feedback webpage. The feedback is forwarded to relevant city authorities, whose answers together with the original questions are posted online. The system allows the city to monitor the themes of questions and the length of time taken by city officers to reply.



Suburbs developed with citizen input

Students of the Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences joined residents of the eastern Helsinki suburb of Myllypuro for neighbourhood walks in September, collecting from them dozens of stories about Myllypuro's history and transition. The walks were part of a special Myllypuro Day organised by the local residents' association. In addition to Metropolia, the day was joined by the Neighbourhood Project, a strategic programme of the City of Helsinki aimed at developing Helsinki suburbs into vigorous urban areas.

A new campus for 6,000 Metropolia students will go under construction in Myllypuro in 2016. The campus will form the nucleus of extensive development in Myllypuro around the local metro stop. This mature suburb will have grown with new housing for thousands by 2017, including an urban village developed with wooden houses and buildings.

The Neighbourhood Project relies on resident participation and partnerships to make

suburban living in Helsinki increasingly appealing. Residents are actively engaged in programmes used to develop their suburbs. Various activities are organised for different age and resident groups to strengthen communities.

Last winter the Neighbourhood Project held a suburban photo competition, inviting residents to share photos on Instagram of what's best in their suburbs. The suburb of Roihuvuori is the testing ground for voluntary-based activities that bring together different generations. *Operation Pulse* has inspired 12- to 18-year-olds to try out new cultural and sports activities with their peers. *Stories and Fairytales* was a project in which city library and day care workers held reading and theatre sessions for children under school age and their parents. *You Are a Media Guru* targeted untrained and unemployed 18- to 30-year-olds, developing occupational means to prevent social exclusion.



Slush highlights Helsinki's ecosystem of startups

When Helsinki nears winter with darkening skies in November, the city lights up with an energy-laden meeting that brings together tech talent and investors. In a partying spirit and an atmosphere that resembles a rock concert, the two-day Slush conference spurs on the next generation of enterprises that will help to redefine the world. Slush gives startups access to the ecosystem that they need to succeed on global level.

Slush is one of the world's largest events of its kind, expected to attract 15,000 participants this year. It is in itself an example of the spirit that it fosters, started by a team of creative individuals and run by a non-profit community.

The event programme includes a pitching competition, investor matchmaking and founder events. Startups showcase their innovations at demo booths and in presentations. Companies that have partnered with Slush over the years include Google, Alibaba Group, Samsung and Microsoft. www.slush.org

Wired: Helsinki is 3rd best tech city

The UK edition of Wired magazine puts Helsinki in third place among the world's top tech cities, after New York and London and before Barcelona and Amsterdam. The research team from UK innovation charity Nesta analysed 40 city governments to create the top-five list. Helsinki's particular strengths were in leadership and infrastructure.



Helsinki News is an international bulletin published by the City of Helsinki Executive Office's Communications Unit three times a year.

www.hel.fi

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