



*The City of Oulu Architectural Policy*

## background

At a national level, The Finnish Government's Architectural Policy was approved by the Council of State on 17.12.1998. This sparked initiatives to produce regional architectural policies; for example the joint programme of the regions of Northern Karelia, Southern Savo and Northern Savo, the Architectural Policy of Eastern Finland, was published on 20.11.2000.

A proposal for the writing of The City of Oulu Architectural Policy was handled by the city council in summer 2001. Included in the proposal are the following points:

Every citizen has the constitutional right to enjoy a good environment and high quality architecture. Building always has a long-term effect on the environment, and thus architecture creates lasting values. This fast-growing city faces new challenges, and new architectural solutions are needed. The making and the implementation of the architectural policy programme would raise the image of the city of Oulu in Europe as well as in Finland.



The technical committee's decision of 25.9.2001 confirmed that the architectural policy would be written by the technical centre in collaboration with partner organisations. The city planning section of the technical centre led the formation of a working group, which had the following members:

<i>Eija Salmi</i>	Council of Oulu Region
<i>Olli Eskelinen</i>	Council of Oulu Region
<i>Britta Passoja</i>	North Ostrobothnia Regional Environment Centre
<i>Jukka Laaksonen</i>	Northern Finland Architects SAFA
<i>Pekka Laatio</i>	Northern Finland Architects SAFA
<i>Teiju Autio</i>	Northern Finland Architects SAFA
<i>Matti Heikkinen</i>	Oulu Chamber of Commerce/Building Committee
<i>Marketta Karhu</i>	City of Oulu, Environmental Office
<i>Kustaa Salmi</i>	City of Oulu, Conservation Working Group
<i>Risto Nummi</i>	City of Oulu, Building Supervision Office
<i>Matti Karhula</i>	City of Oulu, Technical Centre, City Planning, Chair
<i>Paula Vellonen</i>	City of Oulu, Technical Centre, City Planning, Secretary
<i>Pekka Luoto</i>	Real Estate Federation of Oulu Province
<i>Saila Palviainen</i>	Oulu University, Department of Architecture
<i>Ritva Kuusisto</i>	The Association for Community Planning
<i>Kalle Reinikainen</i>	The Association for Community Planning

The working group met 11 times and produced the core content of the policy document.

Comments on the draft text were invited, and valuable feedback was received from the Museum of North Ostrobothnia, as well as from the Culture Committee, the Building Supervision Committee, and the Environmental Committee.

**The policy has been accepted on 29.10.2002 by the City Board as a guiding document to be followed.**

FOREWORD

4

IDENTITY

6

ARCHITECTURE

8

BUILDING HERITAGE

10

BUILDING QUALITY

12

THE CHOICE OF PLANNER

14

GUIDANCE AND SUPERVISION

16

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

18

COMMUNICATIONS AND INTERACTION

20

FOLLOW-UP

22



Extract from a map dated 1829.  
The Provincial Archives of Oulu.



Kari Nenonen  
Mayor of Oulu

## *Architecture's Northern Dimension*

The City of Oulu and the Oulu Region compete with other urban regions in Finland, in Europe, and in the world for success and well-being. The achievements of the last decade really put our city on the map, and created a firm basis for success in the future. Our foundation is strong, then, and would even stand up to a few knocks.

Success in Oulu will continue to be based on know-how, and we need new experts. What do these people expect of their living and working environment? Research shows that a winning city attracts flows of information, technology, capital, culture, people and organisations. Alongside accommodation options, important factors are pleasant city centres and diverse cultural events.

The built environment is a recognised and central part of a well and cultured community. Our challenge is to create in Oulu, our home, a living environment which nurtures wide cultural diversity, a bright atmosphere, and a creative urban spirit.

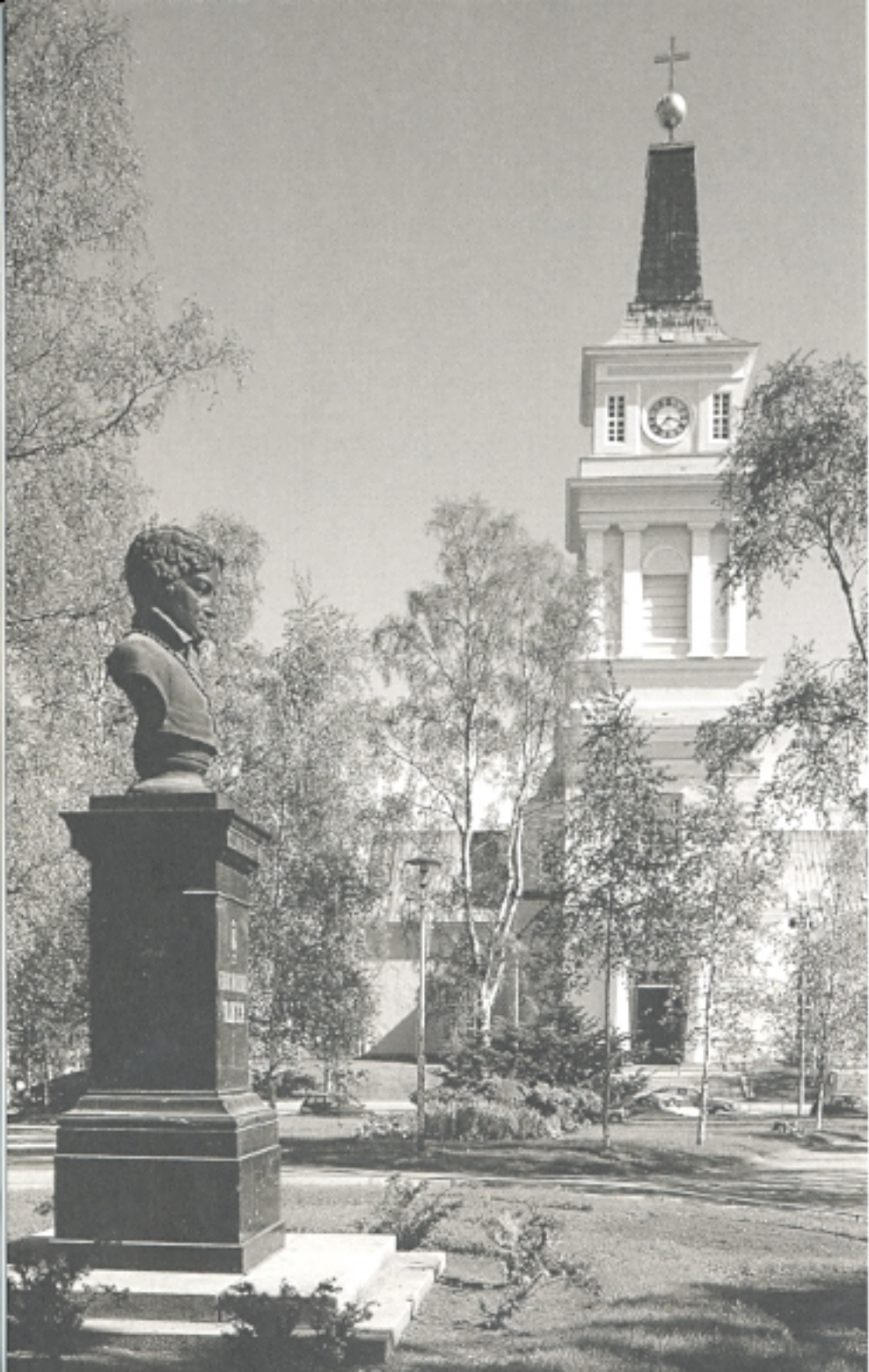
The City of Oulu Architectural Policy describes how the people of Oulu believe our communal living environment should be planned and built. It gives our planners, builders and decision-makers guidelines and principles in accordance with which to develop our future.

The City of Oulu Architectural Policy is the result of over a year's intensive work by numerous participants. They represent a wide range of expertise drawn from the business world, the university sphere, the authorities, interest groups and personnel departments, as well as the City of Oulu's own staff. The City of Oulu's elected bodies have read the draft versions, given their input, and finally approved the policy we now hold in our hands. The media have followed the progress of the project commendably and reported on it in an enlightened manner.

In view of the widespread commitment which supports the City of Oulu Architectural Policy, it seems natural that building financiers, builders, planners and the authorities too will commit themselves to following the Policy.

Can we afford a good environment and high quality architecture? These days the question has to be turned around into a statement: we cannot afford to be without a high quality environment and architecture. The City of Oulu Architectural Policy describes the people of Oulu's vision for the promotion of the northern dimension in architecture.





*Architecture is  
social art*



# 2 ARCHITECTURE

## *architecture*

*noun* building art, -skill

*Standard Finnish language dictionary*

Quality architecture is practical, beautiful and long-lasting. It is also economical because its maintenance is not costly and it has a perpetual life-cycle. Good architecture offers experiences and alternatives. It reflects its public's multiplicity of values and its variety of taste.

History and the present show that good architectural sights can, in the best case, attract visitors from afar. Architecture also unifies people, by being public property of which to be proud.

Oulu's architecture can be safe, tried and trusted, but it can also be innovative and surprising. It must be researched, highly developed and carefully finished. It trusts the traditional values of architecture, which are symmetry, harmony, intensity, beauty and spirituality.

Spaces, structures, materials and forms are arranged in architecture according to functional, technical and aesthetic considerations, in order to achieve a symmetrical, balanced and complete whole, a synthesis.

Competent land use and building planning create the prerequisites for the making of a good environment. The land use plan defines the area structure, the planned use of the areas, the density and type of built structures, as well as the principles of the cityscape. City planning and building supervision together define the minimum building quality. They steer planning in the direction considered to be the right one, and at the same time create opportunities for the implementation of new and better ideas. Prerequisites for success here are the sufficient clarification of the natural surroundings, the landscape, the cultural environment, the previous use of the area and the infrastructure, as well as of the city inhabitants' expectations and future needs.

Architectural and building quality are one of a city's success factors. A pleasant and safe living environment is evidence of enlightened building. A successful community has the wisdom and the presence of mind to build its environment with quality.





## Proposed measures

- *Outdated city plans and their protection orders should be assessed in order to establish priority for their renewal. (1)*
- *Oulu's modern building heritage should be inventoried, documented and listed. (2)*
- *Building heritage research should be supported. (3)*
- *A public database should be kept of valued and protected areas. (4)*
- *A cultural environment database should be maintained and made available to the public. (5)*
- *Protection goals should be verified at the different stages of planning. (6)*
- *Valuations and expert statements should be sought where necessary in the process of granting licenses. (7)*
- *Archaeological excavation should be required prior to building in areas possibly containing ancient remains. (8)*
- *The expertise and experience of the Building and Transport Unit of VTT, the Technical Research Centre of Finland should be called upon as necessary in the care and preservation of the city's building heritage. (9)*



# 3 BUILDING HERITAGE

## *Amount and monetary value of public buildings owned by the city*

- total square metres 550 000
- residential square metres 460 000
- total volume in cubic metres 2 400 000
- property value 400 million euro

## *Local building heritage – a city's built memory*

Work has long been done in Oulu to preserve its valuable building heritage. The fundamental aim of this work is to cherish and develop the individuality of the city's built environment and building heritage, and thus to support its cultural identity.

A built heritage cannot be replaced by building new. It is non-renewable treasure, the upkeep of which requires human and material resources. An authentic building culture rooted in its own times provides important historical evidence of our forefathers' lives, their ways, their skills and their values.

A valuable built heritage is characterised by exemplary pieces and layering in time. The aim of new building is likewise to create such a heritage for posterity.

Structures are not demolished or torn apart irresponsibly in Oulu, where the work, strivings, manual skills, ideas and values of our forefathers are respected. A repair or extension in Oulu is carried out skilfully and inconspicuously, respecting and making good use of the previously built structure. Oulu has the knowledge and skill needed for applying suitable methods.



## Proposed measures

- *Quality is to be emphasised in the choice of contractor. Long-term economic efficiency, including evaluation of the quality features of the building, should be used as a selection criterion alongside price. (10)*
- *Broad-scale training in questions of building quality should be organised for builders and constructors. (11)*
- *The materials used for building should be suited to the purpose, high quality, and as ecological as possible. (12)*
- *Enough time should be reserved for builders to plan in the case of single family houses too, with the allocation of city building sites being made in the autumn before the spring of the house construction. (13)*



# 4

## BUILDING QUALITY

# Good quality makes long-term financial sense

*All these should be built with attention to durability, convenience and beauty. Durability is ensured by building the foundations on firm ground and by choosing the materials wisely and without prejudice, and convenience by arranging the space in accordance with need and adapting the building's external appearance to its intended public or private use. Beauty is ensured by building with quality and in accordance with good taste, following the accepted principles of symmetry in the scale and proportions of the parts.*

*Vitruvius: The Ten Books on Architecture, approx. 25 B.C.*

The Oulu of the future will boast exemplary buildings. A good environment is born of thorough and professional planning as well as of practical building solutions which are technologically, functionally, ecologically and aesthetically durable. A good built environment must be healthy and accessible, tailored to all of Oulu's inhabitants, including those with restricted mobility or capabilities.

Our built environment constitutes two-thirds of our national wealth, so building and renovation practices in our country are not insignificant. Quality building has proved challenging. Anyone embarking on a building project must, for a successful outcome, allow enough time for planning and for building, and must respect professional expertise, long-term economic efficiency and the environment.

A good builder emphasises knowledge and skill, is proud of his or her profession, and is ready for personal development.





## Proposed measures

- *The planner's competence should be verified according to a quality control standard, which is based on references and registers of planners. Overall responsibility must stay with the planner named in the planning proposal originally submitted. (14)*
- *When inviting a range of tenders for a planning task, it should be verified that the services offered are comparable in terms of the content covered. (15)*
- *Greater use should be made of architectural competitions in order to ascertain the range of possible alternative solutions and to ensure a successful end result. Architectural competitions are a method of choosing a competent planner and of supporting planners' professional development. Competitions also provide opportunities for gifted young planners to demonstrate their talent. (16)*
- *International networking should be developed: city networks, project and activity networks. (17)*
- *Procurement and guidance methods should be developed in collaboration with specialist organisations doing development work, such as The Finnish Association of Building Owners and Construction Clients. (18)*



# 5 THE CHOICE OF PLANNER

## architect

*noun, a university-qualified planner of buildings and city plans. Figurative use: planner, creative thinker, creator.*

*Standard Finnish language dictionary*

# Only the best is good enough for the people of oulu

Good architecture is not born without hard work and effort, without time and resources – without intellectual capacity.

An enlightened choice of planner is based on the planner's demonstrated skill, ability for collaboration and readiness for the task, and the one making the choice has a ready-defined planning task and knows what he wants. He chooses a capable and sure candidate, not reducing his selection to one based solely on price.

Planning and building economy in Oulu is based on long-term economic efficiency, which means durability in terms of construction technology, utility and aesthetics. It also means the ability and the wisdom to consistently and deliberately emphasise not only the critical phases of the building process, but also the most essential aspects of the work from the architectural standpoint.

For Oulu's people the most important is what and how we plan and build, not who does it. In Oulu we know how to plan and build, but where necessary, we also know how to pick the best ideas and workers from elsewhere.





## Proposed measures

- *There should be continuing development of interactive planning procedures in accordance with the law of land use and building. (19)*
- *At the start of a project's planning, a meeting should be arranged between the building supervision authority, the city planner, the project initiator and the project's chief planner. At the meeting the restrictions imposed by the city plan and by the site location will be checked through, as will the duties and responsibilities imposed on the chief planner by building law. (20)*



# 6 GUIDANCE AND SUPERVISION

*The local authority is responsible for area land use and building guidance. It must have sufficient resources and expertise at its disposal.*

*Land Use and Building Act, 205*

## *Guidance and supervision is leading and advising*

Building guidance and supervision fall into a hierarchy of decision-making levels. The master plan governs the city planning of individual areas, which it then lays down the framework for the planning and construction of streets, squares and buildings.

The task of the building supervision authority is to ensure that a building project is in keeping with the spirit of the city plan and fulfills the criteria of the law, statutes and regulations. Furthermore it acts to guide, advise and evaluate the work of builders. The city's Building Supervision Office distributes information about generally accepted cityscape aims to those embarking on building projects and to those working with them.

The initiator of a building project, the financier, the planner, the authority representative, the builder, the inspector and the user form a complex chain. Their successful collaboration requires a successful division of labour. When trained and professional people do their work with professional pride, it is possible to achieve set quality goals.

Building site sale or leasing contracts also serve a building guidance function: the making of a contract requires a commitment to prescribed cityscape goals, to a use which is in keeping with the city plan and further specified in the contract, and to quality in construction. The importance of competent planning is emphasised in contracts.





## Proposed measures

- *An active negotiation connection should be created between the City of Oulu and the Department of Architecture of Oulu University, and greater use should be made of student course-work projects in the planning and research activities of the City. (21)*
- *Study blocks should be developed to prepare students for the practicalities of working life. (22)*
- *The professional expertise of public sector employees should be maintained through training and through exposure to variety in their planning tasks. (23)*
- *The experience of the Northern Ostrobothnia Centre for Building Renovation and Refurbishment should be observed and supported, with the goal of making its functioning permanent. (24)*



*University-level training in architecture is offered in Finland at the Helsinki University of Technology, Tampere University of Technology and the Department of Architecture of Oulu University. On average there are 500 applicants per year, of whom about 100 are accepted into the training programmes.*

# Education and research – the cornerstone of quality building

The building profession expects graduates from Oulu's training institutes to have a suitable command of the basics of building, and to possess the necessary skills for working life. A good basic education lays the foundation for development within the profession.

The Department of Architecture of Oulu University is well placed to have a significant positive effect on the living conditions of the people of the north. The Department of Architecture is indeed expected to develop a planning culture which addresses the needs and expectations of the local people, and which is adapted to the conditions, landscape and building culture of the north. Northern builders expect the Department to make substantial contributions to research and development in all of the fields it teaches: area planning, architecture, construction engineering, renovation, history of architecture and design. Architecture is also a research topic in the fields of history, art history and cultural anthropology in the Faculty of Humanities.

Expert organisations in the field of construction need innovative graduates with a Master's degree in engineering. Their input is critical to Oulu's know-how, which will fade away if deprived of development. The university-level Master's training in the construction field is essential to northern Finland, so its re-establishment is needed. At present, training in construction engineering is provided by Oulu Polytechnic.

The Museum of Northern Ostrobothnia plays an important role in the research and evaluation of local building heritage. A three-year EU project was launched in September 2001: the Northern Ostrobothnia Centre for Building Renovation and Refurbishment. The Centre distributes accurate renovation information and is collecting a database of building methods, materials and planning procedures.



## Proposed measures

- *The city public's acquaintance with architecture should be expanded by reporting and presenting good planning and design. (25)*
- *Environmental awareness raising activity should be increased, especially for children and the young, for example in kindergartens, schools, youth clubs, courses and summer camps. (26)*
- *More exhibitions increasing knowledge of architecture and building should be arranged. (27)*
- *Interesting competition entry exhibits should be brought to Oulu as soon as possible after the competition results are known. (28)*
- *Attention should be drawn to exemplary works through encouragement and awards. (29)*
- *Plans should be presented at the draft stage, to make truly effective involvement possible. (30)*  
*Plans should be made accessible through three-dimensional illustrations and models, for example for the presentation of area plans containing new buildings. (31)*



*The responsibility for nature and its diversity, for the environment and for cultural heritage, is everyone's. Those in power must strive to secure for all the right to a healthy environment and the opportunity to affect decisions concerning the living environment.*

*Finland Constitution 1.3.2000, 20 §*

## *Knowledge increases interaction*



The local media carry a great responsibility for bringing matters concerning building culture to the knowledge of the Oulu public. Knowledgeable reporting increases awareness in Oulu of architecture and building. Energetic exhibition activity for its part makes architecture and building more visible, and provides some points of comparison for both the city public and local architects.

The Land Use and Building Act, which came into force in the year 2000, aims to ensure opportunities for all to participate in preparatory matters and to guarantee interaction and open communication of information. In fact citizens do not have merely the right to participate, but rather a duty to do so. Activating their involvement, however, requires an environmental awareness raising initiative.

For true interaction to be achieved, information must be delivered in sufficiently simple and concrete terms, without professional jargon. Reporting must reach the people, and regular Internet use is important. Habitual involvement of local democratic bodies in land use planning must become automatic.



## *Proposed measures*

- *A follow-up working group should be assembled to perform the task of evaluating the implementation of the measures proposed in the City of Oulu Architectural Policy, and, if necessary, of proposing further measures. (32)*



## 9 FOLLOW-UP

To ensure a quality environment, a number of aims and suggested measures are gathered together in the City of Oulu Architectural Policy. A working group will be established to monitor the implementation of the aims and measures; its members will be the authors of the programme and those parties responsible for implementation.

The follow-up working group will work for three years, during which time it will monitor the implementation of the City of Oulu Architectural Policy and make recommendations for further measures. It will prepare a final report on its activities, to be submitted to the City Council.

The City of Oulu Architectural Policy must be reviewed and updated on the basis of the follow-up working group's observations within five years at the latest.

