

Greening Turku

A Vision for a Greener and Sustainable Historic Town 2019

Ana Maria Jones and Markku Wilenius

Green IN TURKU
TOWARDS GREENER URBAN FUTURES

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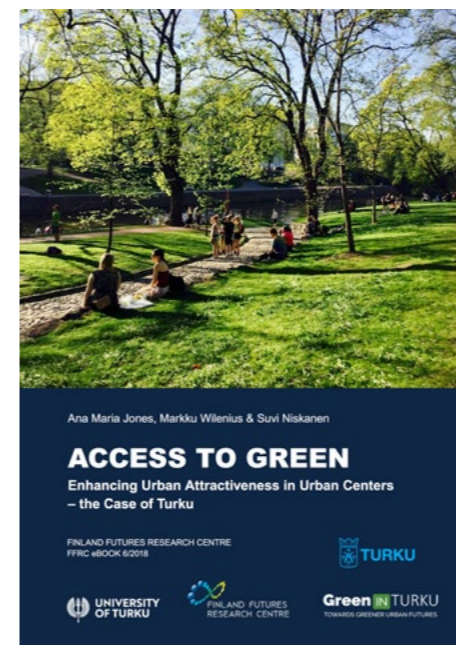
 TURKU
ÅBO

The Green-in TURKU project, originally titled as Towards a Greener Urban Future, has been an investigation towards innovative solutions to increase liveability in the inner city of Turku. The project idea stemmed from Turku Vision for the City Centre 2050, a project chaired by Prof. Markku Wilenius in the years 2016-2017. The Vision was well received by the public and political decision-makers alike. As a result, developing a more detailed plan on key priority areas was thought to be useful to push the progress of the city centre design to the forefront. A central theme, that came already well forward during the vision work, was the current state of green areas. That meant not only parks and gardens but actually the reinvigoration of the city core to meet the needs of a new urban generation, appreciative of social and ecological environments over cars, concrete-dominated landscapes and opportunistic economic reasoning. Together with the city authorities, a more qualitative research and urban analysis of Turku's urban structure was conducted by the Germany-based resource efficiency planner Ana Jones. The purpose of the project was to investigate innovative strategies, identify challenges and formulate new pathways for how to scale-up usability and access to green areas in the city centre of Turku.

The Green-In Turku project is structured in two phases:

Phase I: Understanding the role of green areas and public spaces in the city centre

The phase I of the project covers a comprehensive urban analysis of green and public spaces in the core districts of the city centre. Our analysis was based on urban trends and case studies from cities with a high greening profile in Europe and abroad. Following this analysis, an urban evaluation was conducted giving consideration to the Turku context and to the following trends and measures: 1. The growing need for adequate access to green space for human health in highly urbanised areas; 2. The growing need for adequate distribution and quality of green areas per inhabitant. The project has produced two key reports in the areas of urban futures research and urban green: *A Green Urban Future: Scaled-Up Perspectives in Urban Green for Human-Centred and Liveable Urban Cores*, and *Access to Green: Enhancing Urban Attractiveness in Urban Centres-The Case of Turku*.



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Phase II: Developing a plan for greening the core of the city centre

Phase II concludes with a plan to reactivate the network of green areas including some of the most important parks and public squares in Finland, the historic and commercial town of Turku. The plan consist of a total reconfiguration of this historical town and its parks to tackle critical challenges concerning fragmentation and spatial inefficiencies. The plan creates space for a new visitor centre and learning hub at the heart of the Suurtori and Cathedral Squares. With the cooperation of stakeholders and the local community, phase II has produced a revitalisation plan for the historic town and cultural landscape of Turku building on the appreciation and preservation of Turku's past as foundation for an economically and culturally dynamic future. The plan calls for a new green network structure and goes as far as to suggest new multifunctional approaches and new uses for historical parks and pockets currently underutilised by the city and its citizens.



Green **IN** TURKU
TOWARDS GREENER URBAN FUTURES

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A Vision for a Greener and Sustainable Historic Town 2019

Aerial view of Suurtori and Cathedral Square today

01 Introduction

Founded in 1229, Turku is the oldest city in Finland. The city centre is characterised by a cluster of districts: The Old Town, the central business district (CBD), the university town, and the riverbank district that together give Turku its identity. Yet, from a broad perspective, these core areas appear to be fractured. The contributing factors to this negative development are continuous urban sprawl, new development going outside the city core, and the ubiquitous presence of shopping malls that causes growing challenges to businesses in the area. All of this resulting in a poor connectivity and mobility flow deficiencies between districts. Turku's historic town has lost its role as being the heart of city life. The remaining of what in the past was a town for commerce and main urban squares is today a series of green areas fragmented by a main transportation artery that cuts through the system of parks. The disintegration of these important green and public spaces represent a major challenge for building land use efficiency and enhance well-being and liveability at the heart of the city.

The Situation

Population in 2017	189,669
Area	243 km ²
Mean annual temperature	6.5 °C
Annual rainfall	648 mm
Industries	Bioindustry, metal, maritime, food
Sustainability profile	Carbon neutral city by 2029

Turku Facts and Figures

Source: City of Turku; Turku Business Region

Population	ca 56,000
Total area	ca 121 km ²
Total number of buildings	3,388
City centre core districts	Yliopisto I, Vartiovuori II, Samppalinna III and Urheilupuisto III, Tuurepori VI, Kauppatori VI, Rauhankatu VII, Ursininkatu pohj., Kristiinankatu et., Kristiinankatu pohj., Puolalanmäki VII
City centre districts with the highest % of green area (52% - 31%) in 2017	Samppalinna III, Mäntymäki, Kupittaa, and Urheilupuisto III
City centre districts with 0% of green areas (2017)	Ursininkatu pohj., Kristiinankatu pohj., Kurjenmäki länt., Rahtisatama

City Centre Facts and Figures

Source: City of Turku



City Centre Core Identities



1827

The Old Town was known as the administrative and commercial centre of Turku



1897

After the Great Fire of Turku, the dense Old Town core structure was arranged around a series of parks



2050

Potential for strengthening the Turku's urban core as a vibrant historic town and European city

From Past to Future

Historic Town Evolution



The Aura River



The Old Town used to be an administrative commercial centre of Turku



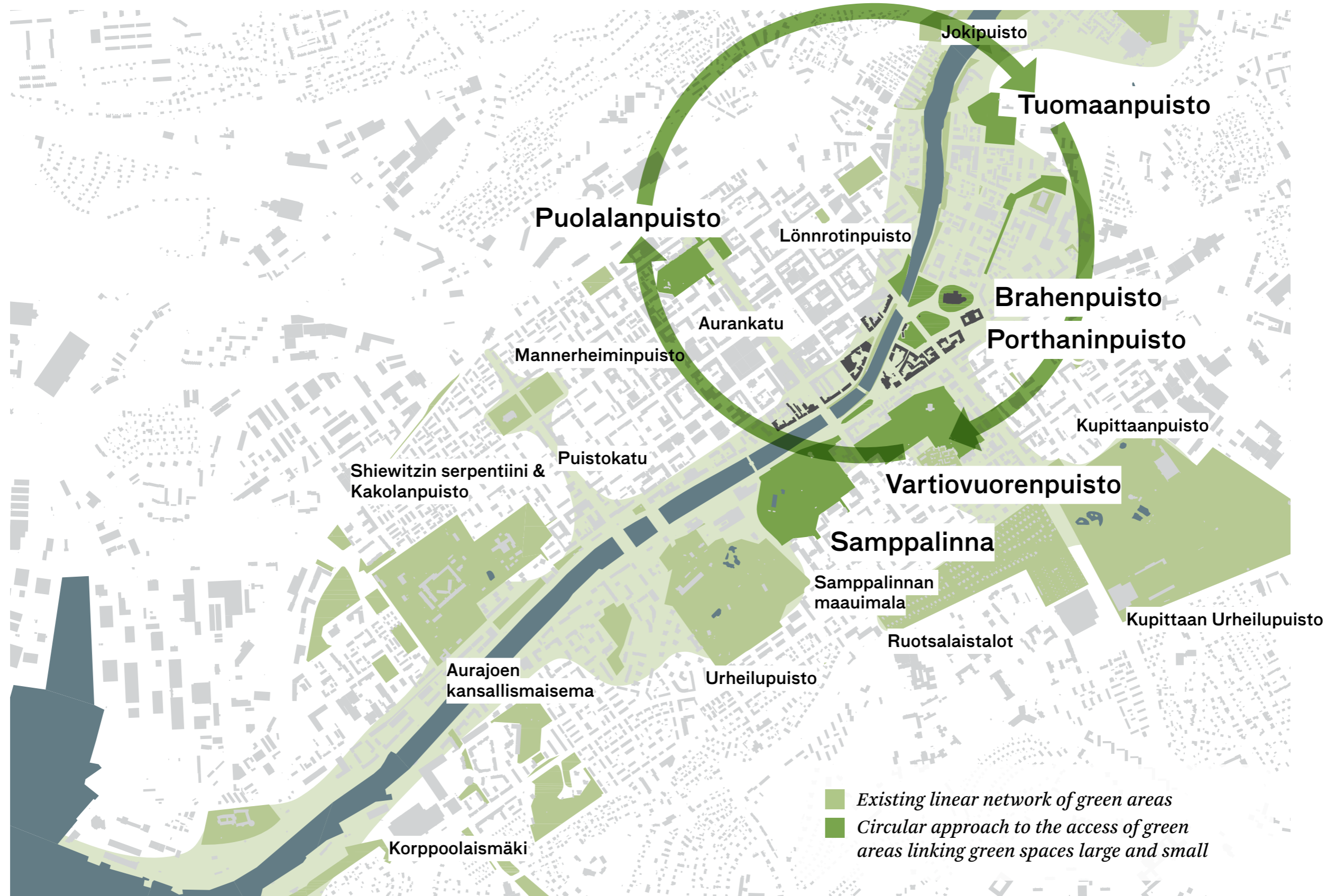
Cultural landscape



Urban green and tree canopy

Urban Life in Historic Turku

Source: Lahtinen, 2009; Lahtinen et al., 2016.



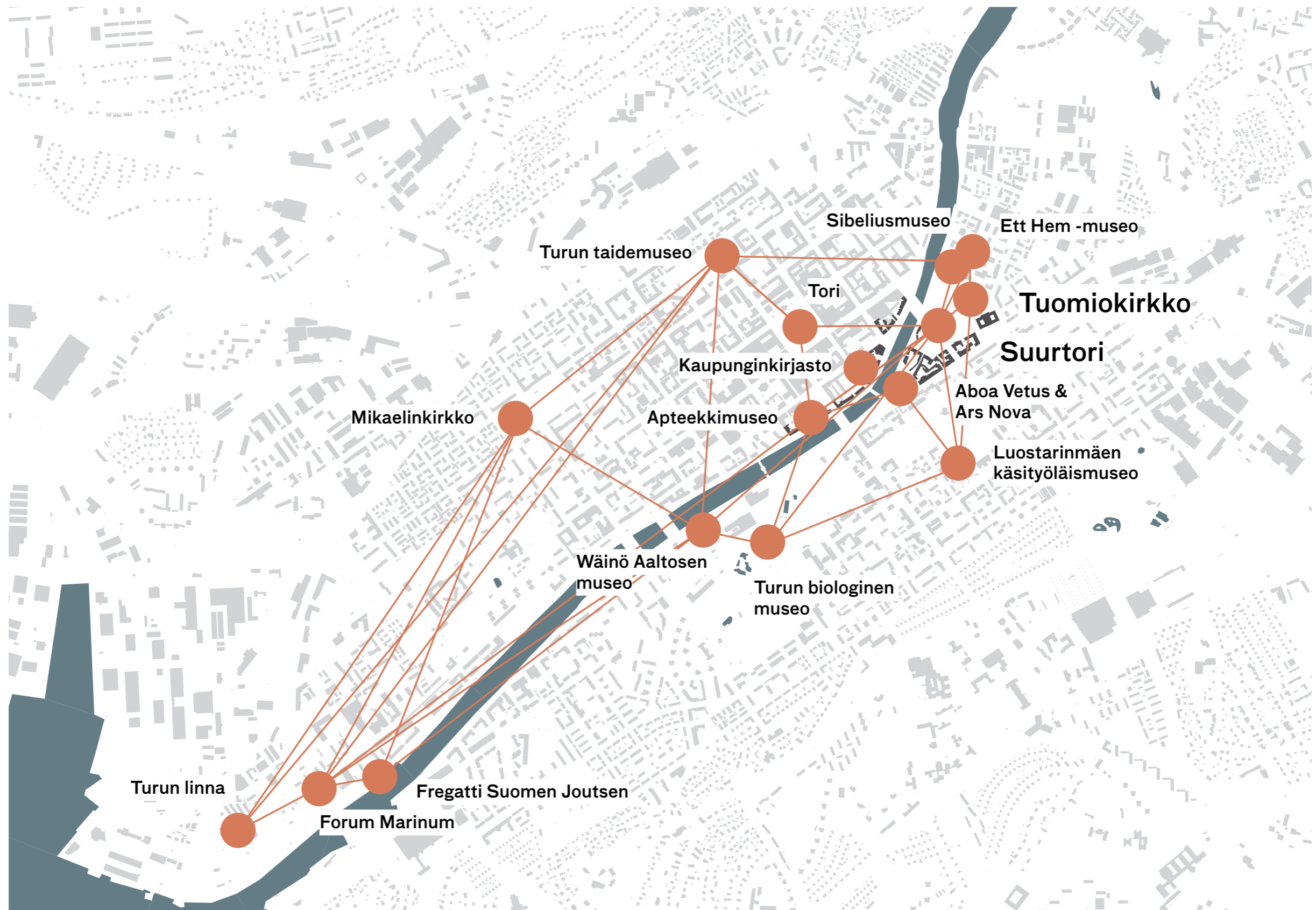
Green Network and Urban Connecting Tissue

Moving from a linear arrangement of parks to a circular network of green spaces



A Concept for Future Green Mobility

Towards a human-centred mobility infrastructure prioritising pedestrian, bicycle and public transport



Cultural Urban Nodes

Capitalising on the cultural assets concentrated in the Old Town and surrounding areas

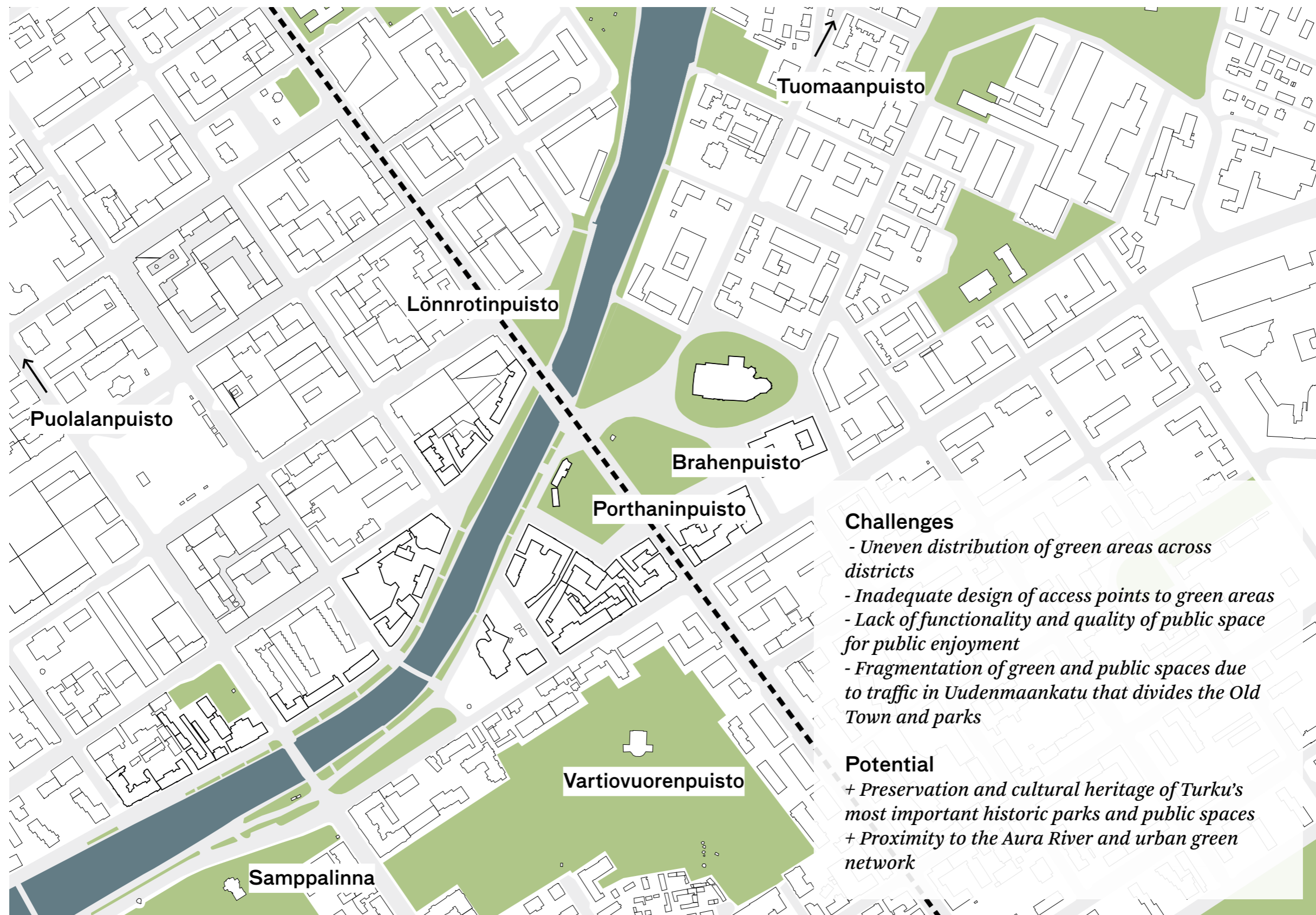
02 The Old Town

Potential and Challenges



Green and Public Spaces

The current situation



Green and Public Spaces



Historic Buildings and Urban Spaces

The current situation

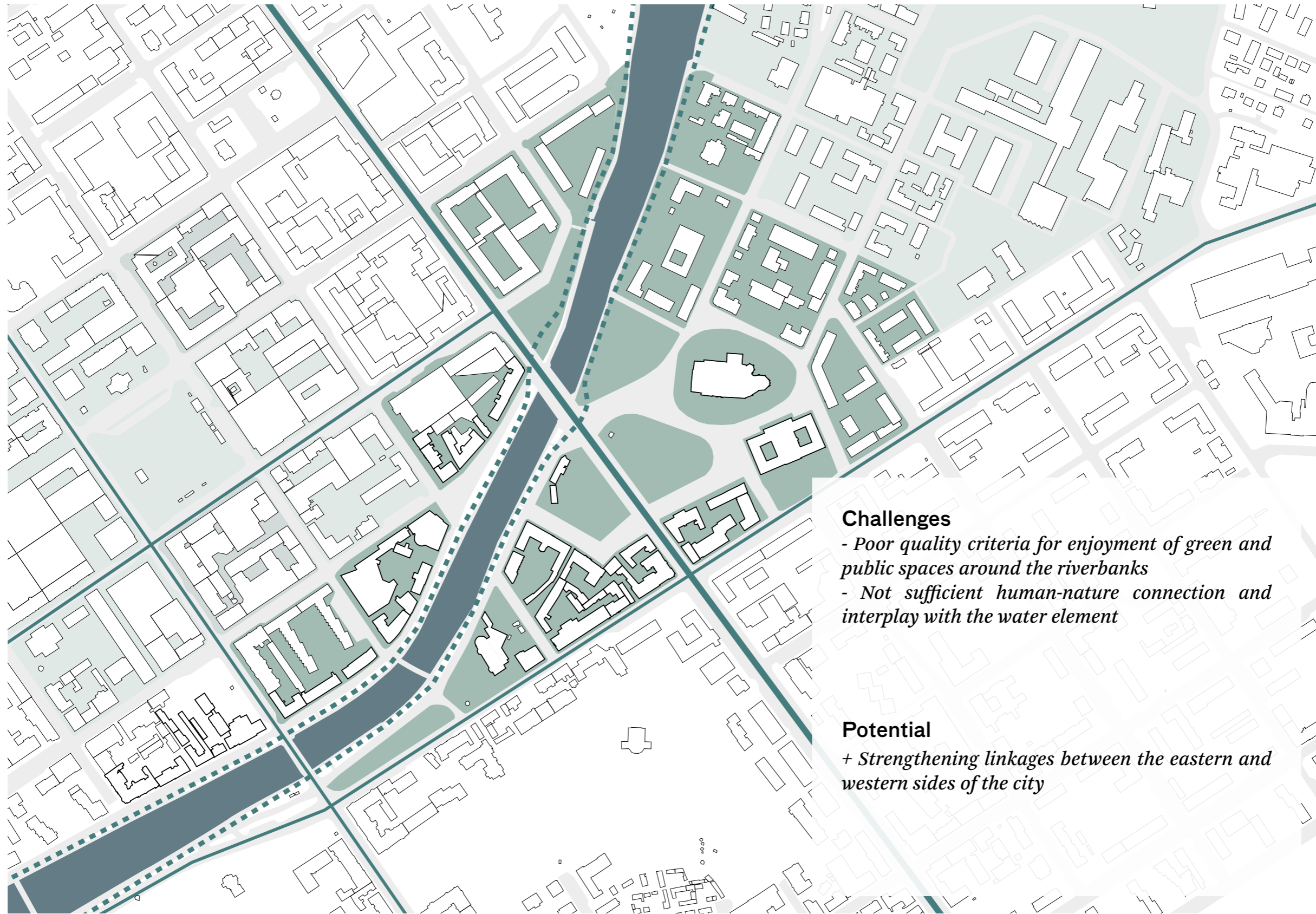


Historic Buildings and Urban Spaces



The Blue Spine

The current situation



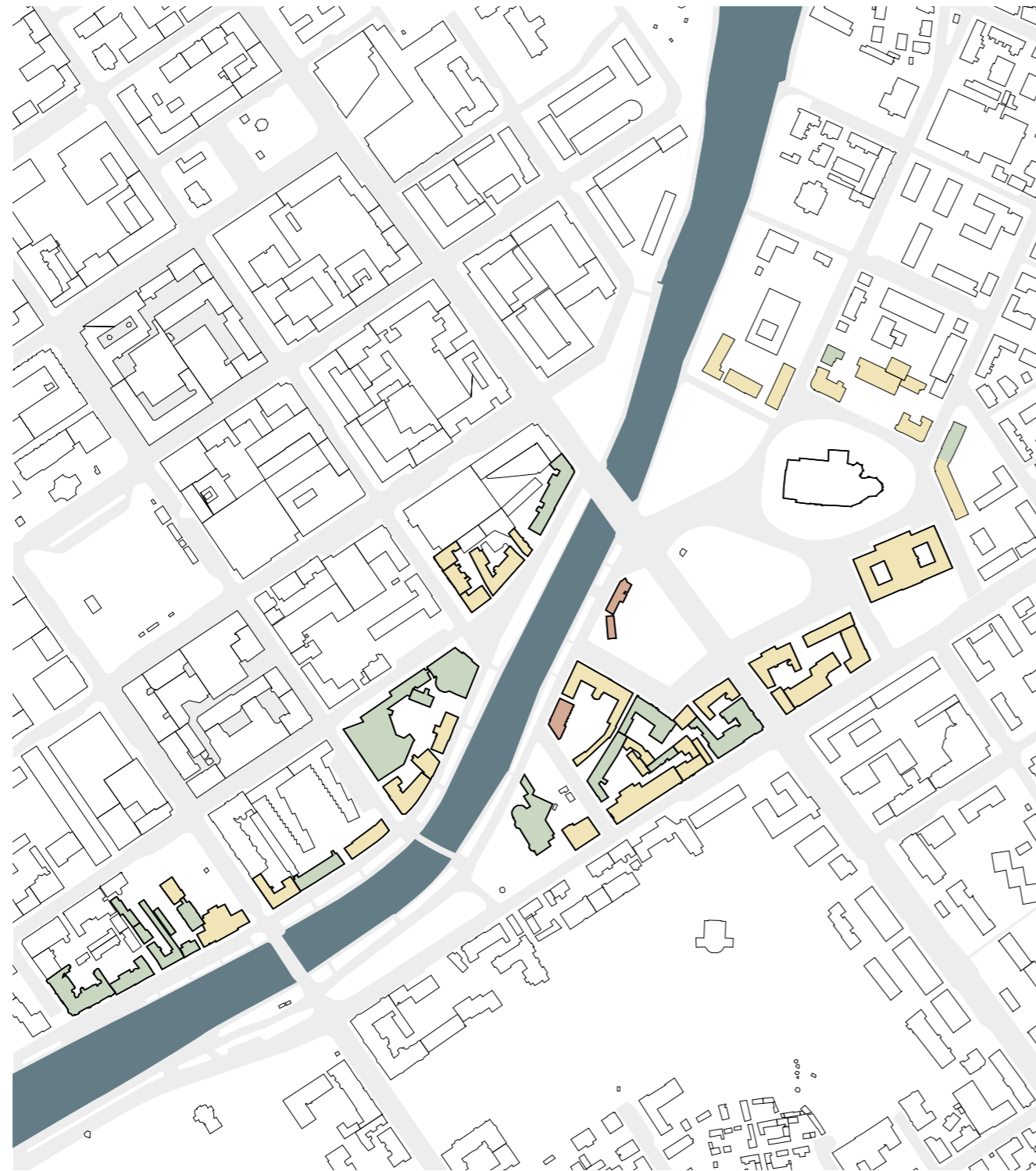
Challenges

- *Poor quality criteria for enjoyment of green and public spaces around the riverbanks*
- *Not sufficient human-nature connection and interplay with the water element*

Potential

- + *Strengthening linkages between the eastern and western sides of the city*

The Blue Spine



Knowledge Creation
University, business, city



Social
Parks, sports, nature



Creative
Culture, art, design

Emerging Functions

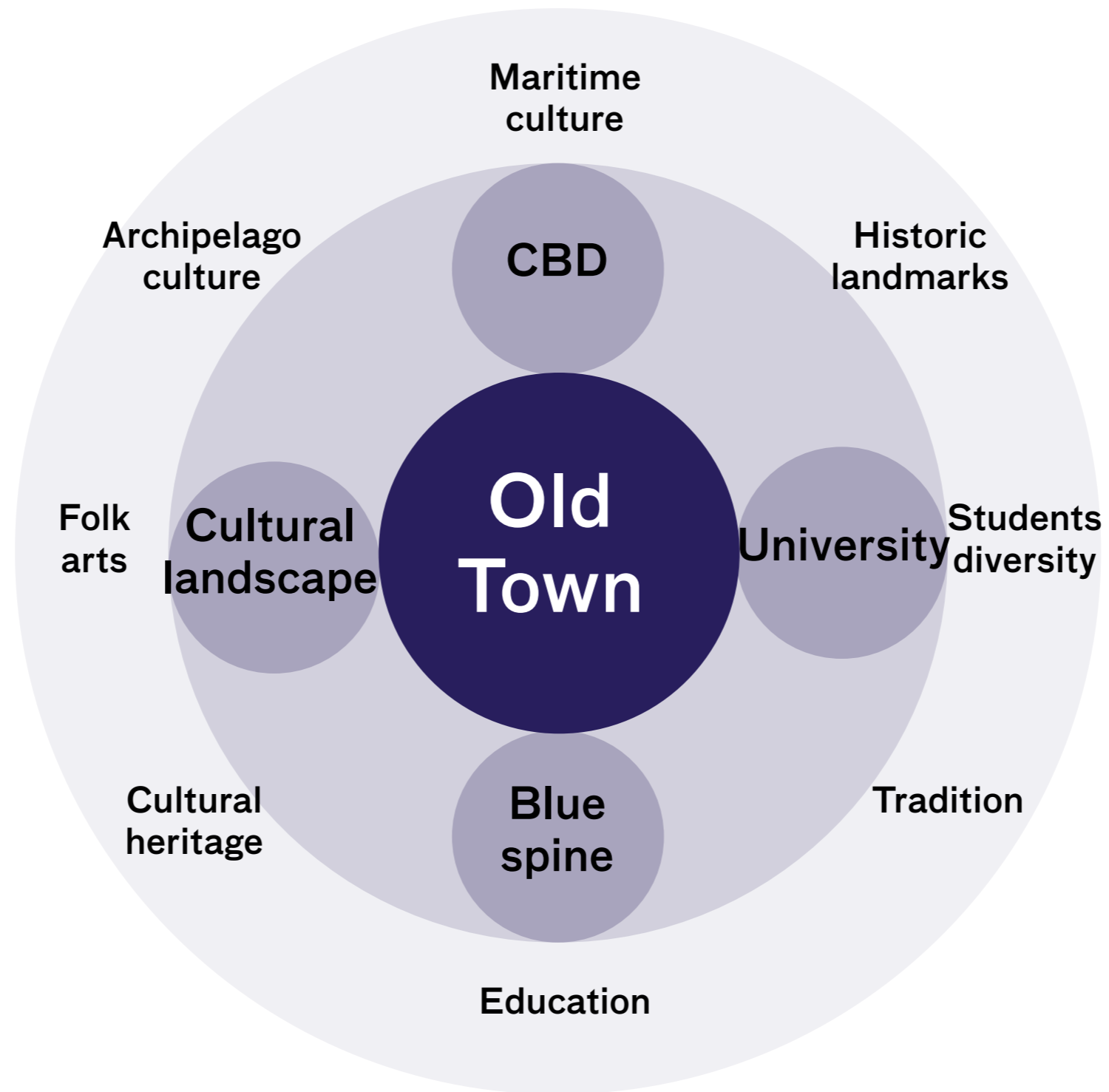
03 A New Historic Town

Vision

The Vision is the revitalisation of the Old Town and consolidation of Turku's most important sites and parks, the Old Market Square, Turku Cathedral Square and adjacent parks. The idea is to create a dynamic and integrated space with potential to generate the highest positive impact on city and community.

Vision

A sustainable historic town at Finland's most significant cultural centre



Vision

Appreciation for Turku's past as foundation for an economically and culturally dynamic future



The New Historic Town

Masterplan

04 Planning Approach

1

Scale-up the access to green areas in the heart of the city

3

Employ human-centred design as guiding principle for new public spaces

2

Focus on complexity management of urban nodes, networks and functions

4

Use a systemic approach to urban planning instead of parochial, project-based development

Planning Approach



Scale-Up Green and Public Spaces



1. Proximity to green spaces (Linear distance of 300m or 15 min. walking distance)



2. Access to green areas for public use



3. Access points to green areas (Pathways, stairs, ramps)

Measure of Accessibility to Green Areas

+ Enhancing liveability in the city centre by working with the access and connectivity of green areas and pockets, elevating biodiversity and ensuring well-being

+ Improving the urban experience by increasing the availability of and proximity to multifunctional green areas

+ Prioritising walking and cycling, and their relationship with the urban landscape and extended network of green areas

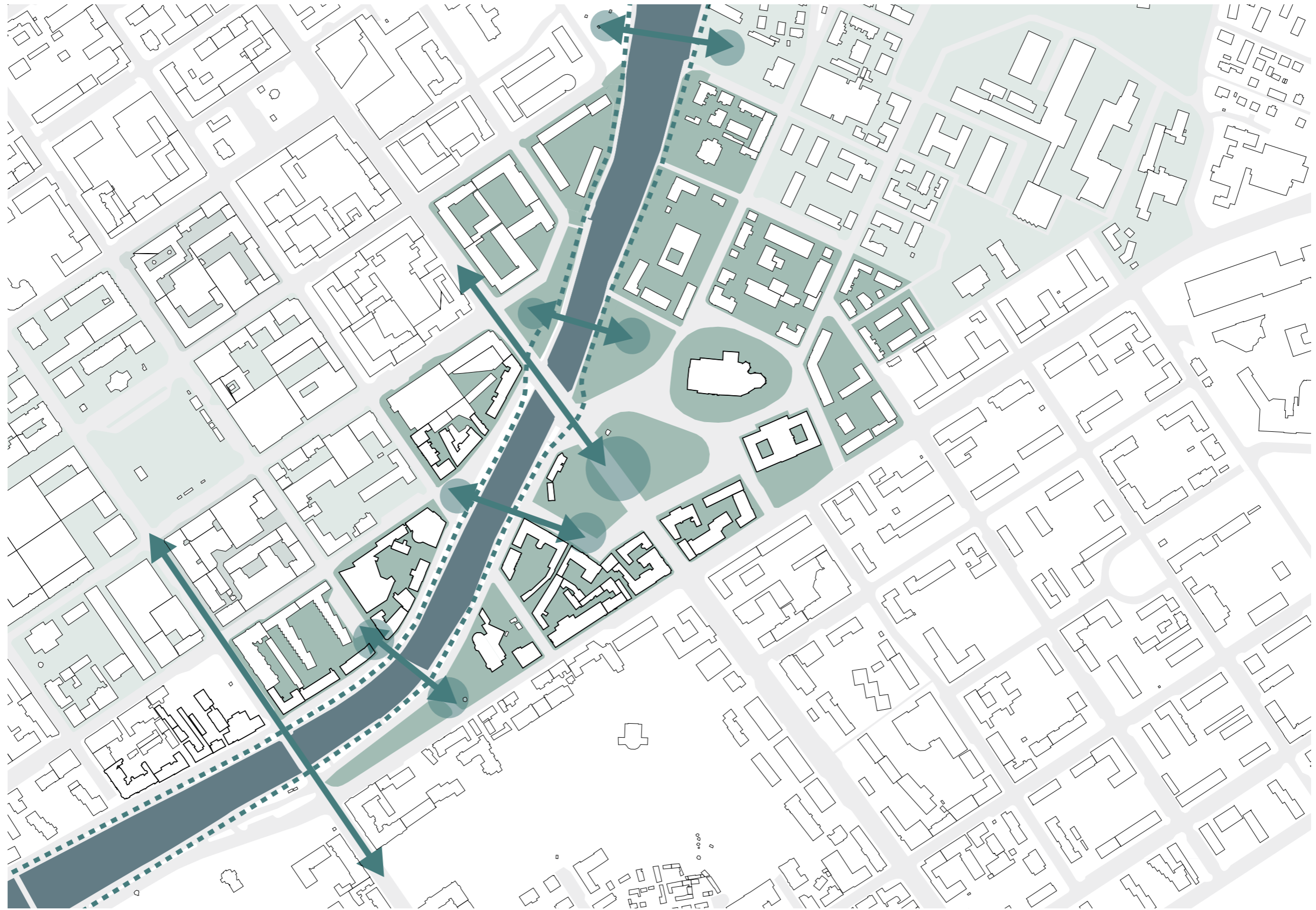
Scale-Up Green and Public Spaces



Revitalising Historic Buildings and Urban Spaces

+ Introducing mixed-use schemes on existing building infrastructure, highlighting the historic layer and scale of the historic town and a new urban and architectural dialog

+ Transforming the urban experience revitalising pockets and spaces between buildings



Activating the Blue Spine

- + Strengthening the connection between the central business district (CBD), university area, the commercial layer of Old Town with the River Aura
- + Creating linkages between the east and the west side of the historic town to enhance access, pedestrian and bicycle flows
- + Enhancing the quality of green areas and public spaces to improve the urban experience along the Aura River and further into surrounding inner city districts

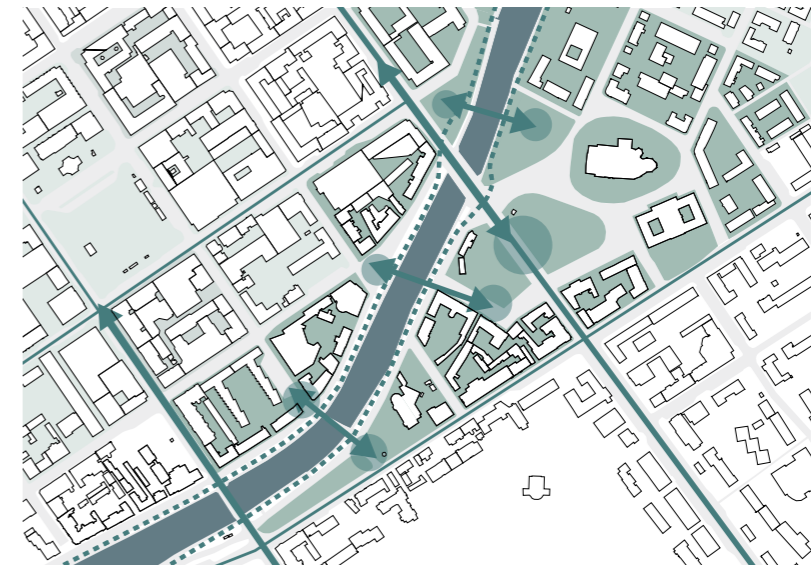
Activating the Blue Spine



1. Scale Up Green Areas and Public Spaces



2. Revitalising Historic Buildings and Spaces Between Buildings



3. Activating the Blue Spine

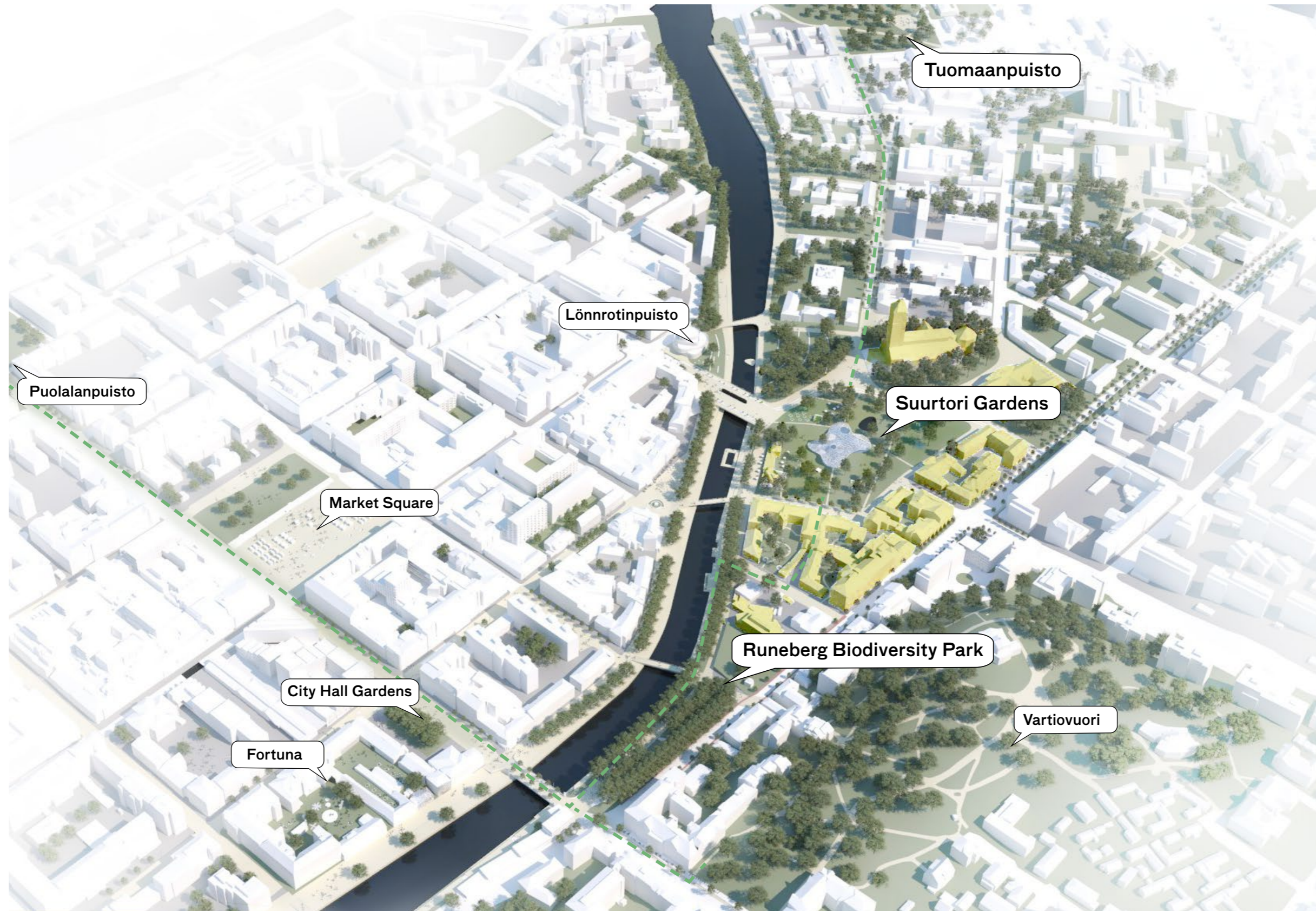
= The key elements of the new historic town strategy



The New Historic Town

*A sustainable historic town at Finland's most significant cultural centre
with appreciation for Turku's past as foundation for an economically and culturally dynamic future*

05 The Plan



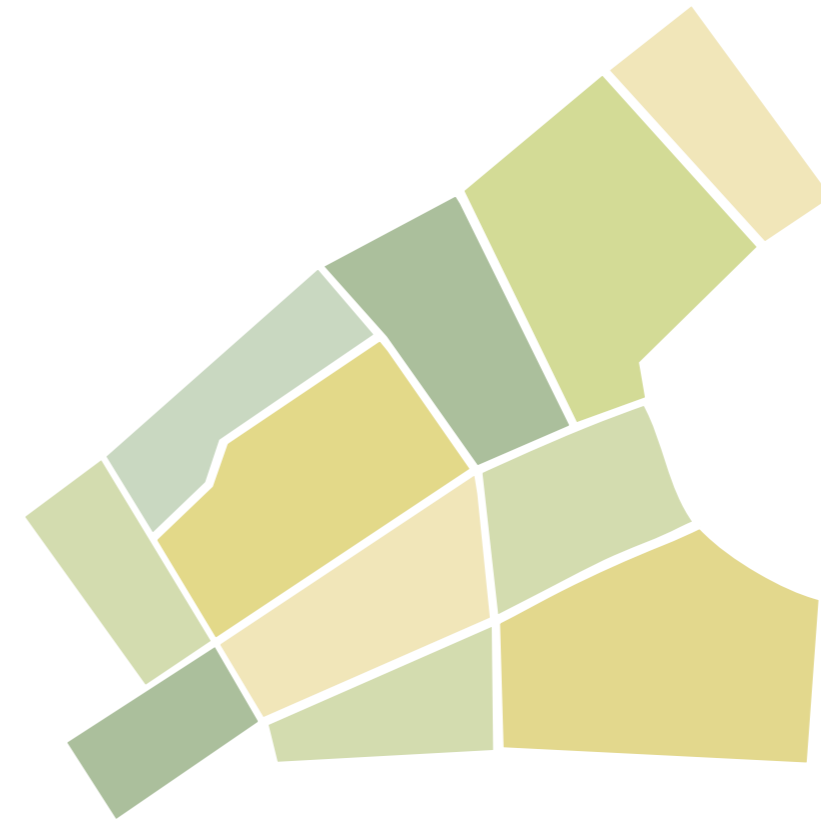
New Green Areas Masterplan



Suurtori Gardens



Historical plots before the Great Fire 1827

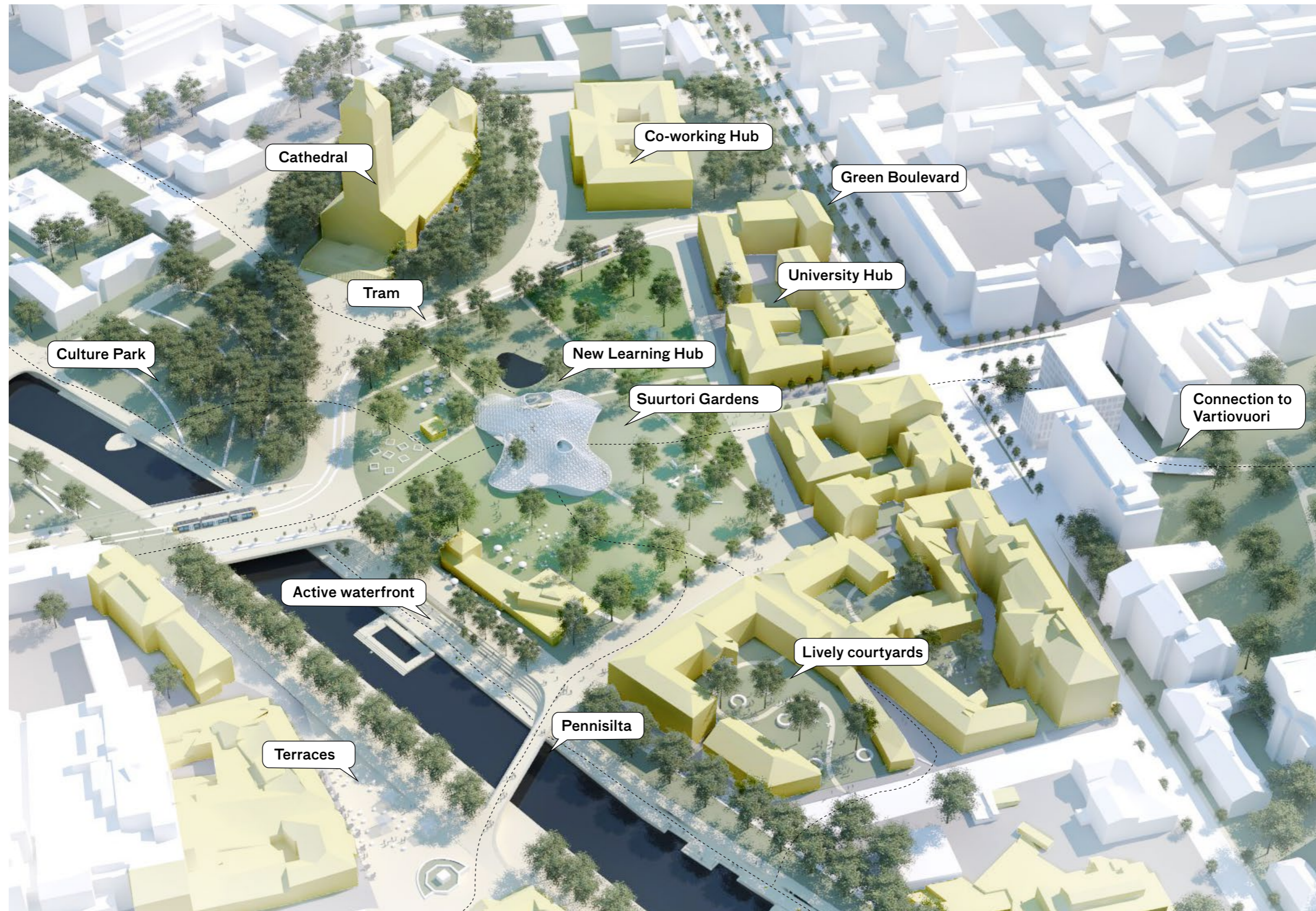


Reintroduced as new gardens

Suurtori Gardens Concept



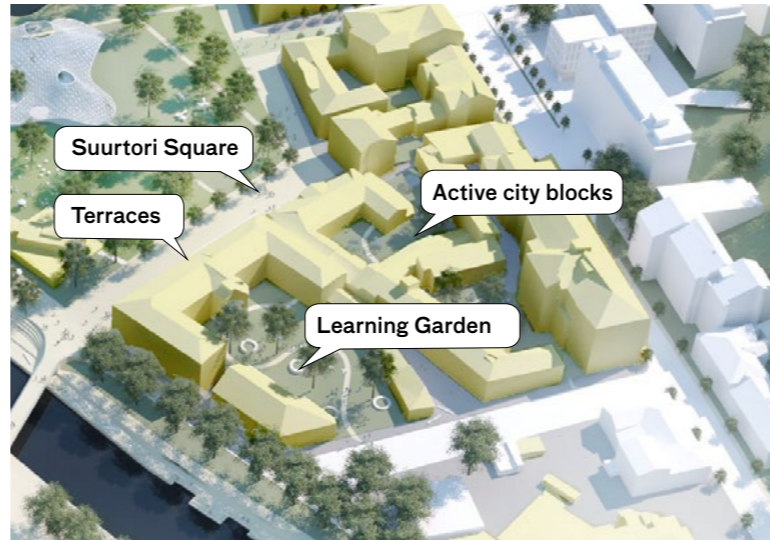
Suurtori Gardens Plan



Suurtori Gardens Aerial View



Suurtori gardens and New Learning Hub



Suurtori blocks and courtyards



Aurajoki and waterfront



1. Scale-Up Green and Public Spaces



2. Revitalising Historic Buildings and Spaces Between Buildings



3. Activating the Blue Spine

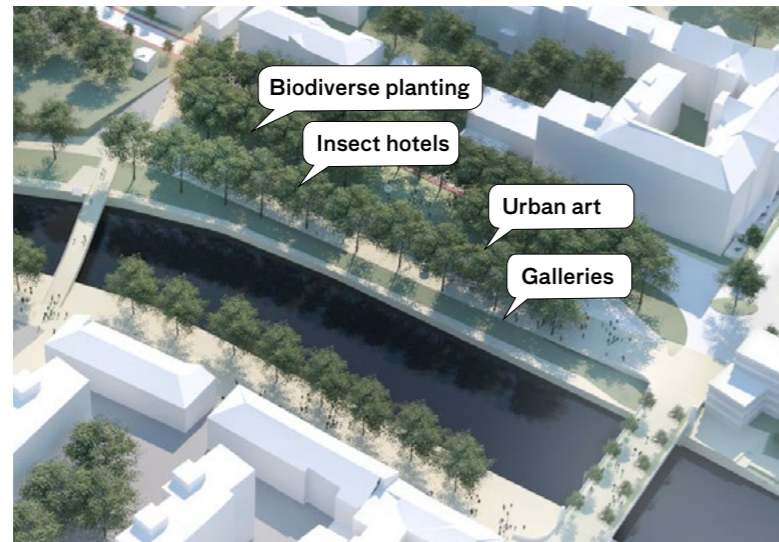
Suurtori Gardens



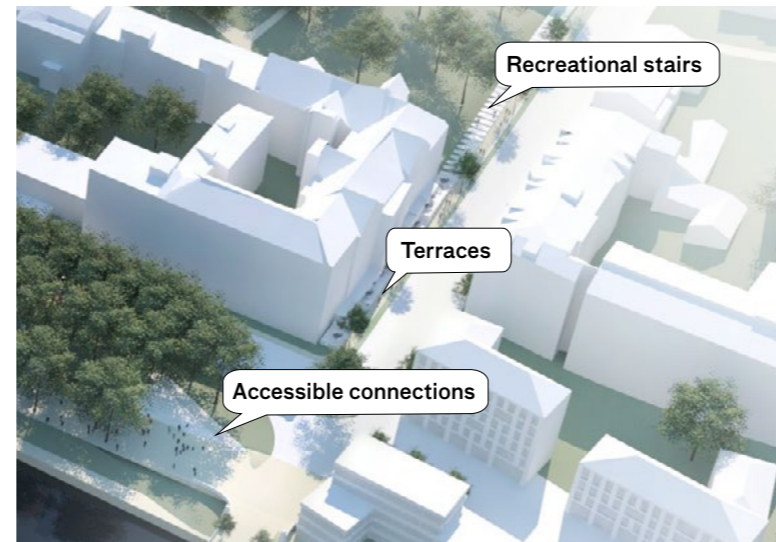
Runeberg Biodiversity Park



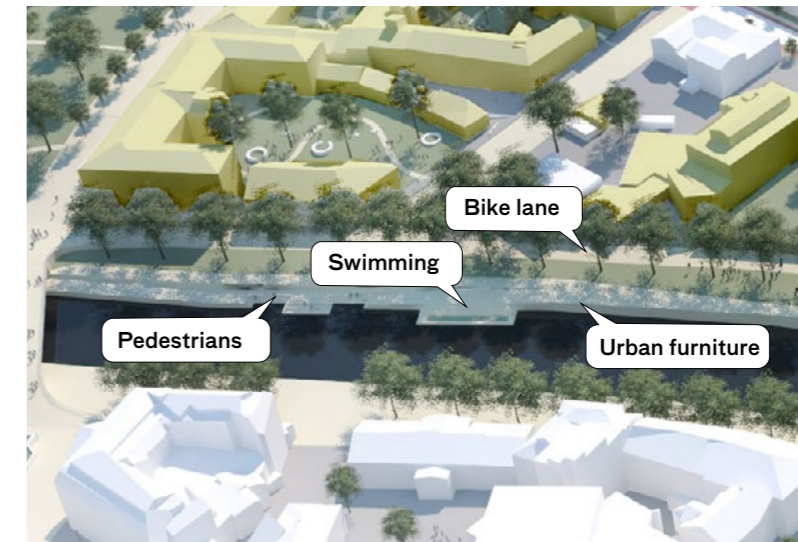
Runeberg Biodiversity Park



Runeberginpuisto



Kaskenkatu and Vartiovuori connection



Aurajoki and waterfront



1. Scale-Up Green and Public Spaces

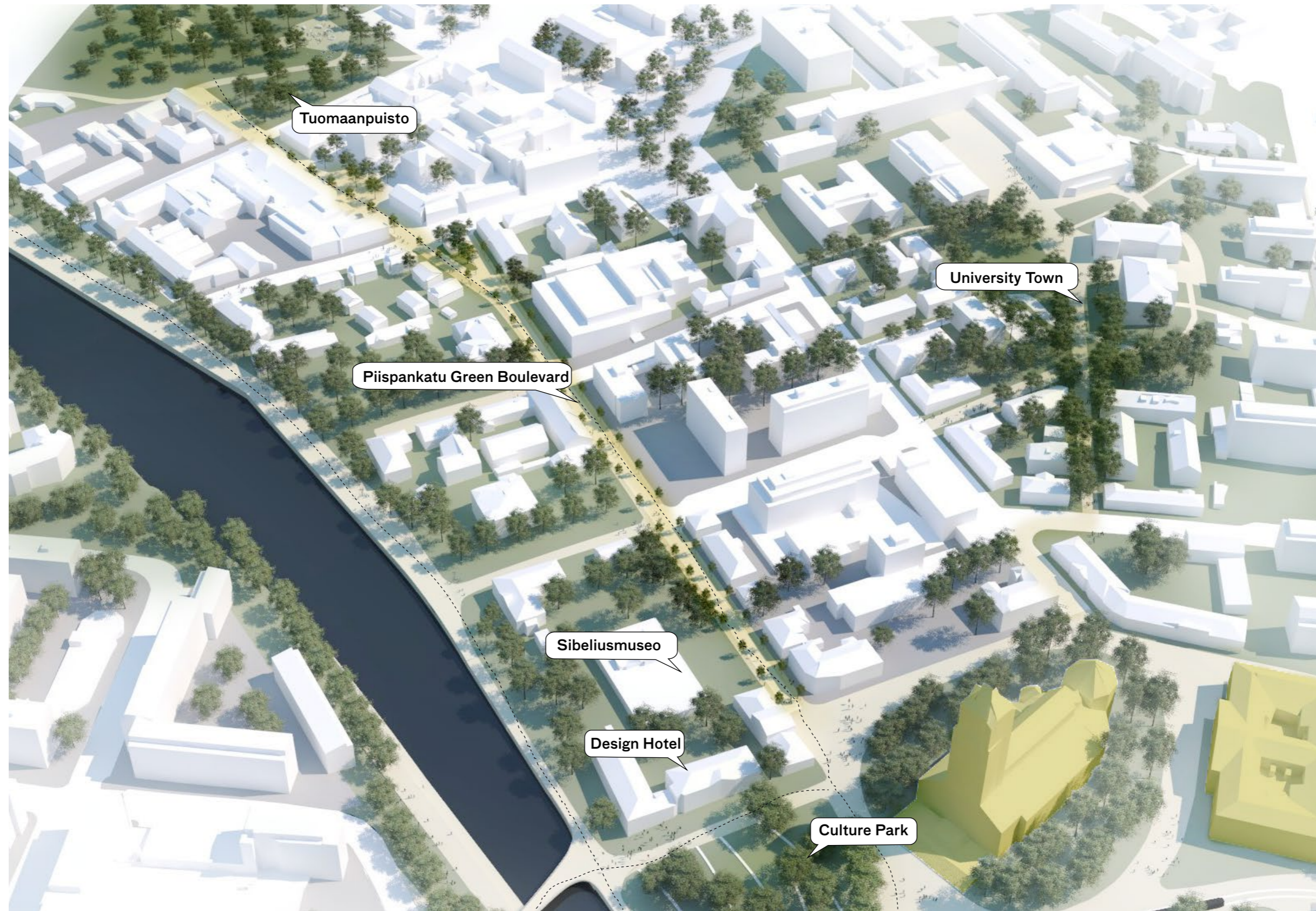


2. Revitalising Historic Buildings and Spaces Between Buildings



3. Activating the Blue Spine

Runeberg Biodiversity Park



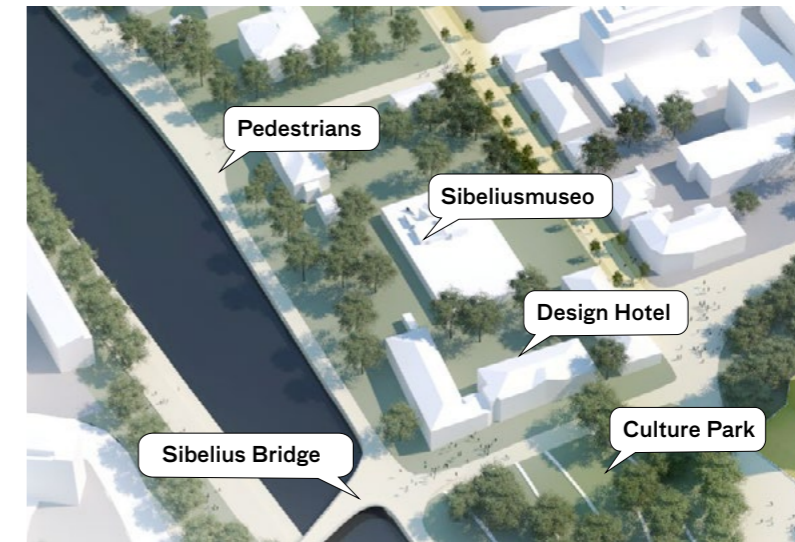
Green Connection to Tuomaanpuisto



Tuomaanpuisto and universities



Piispankatu



Cultural waterfront



1. Scale-Up Green and Public Spaces



2. Revitalising Historic Buildings and Spaces Between Buildings



3. Activating the Blue Spine

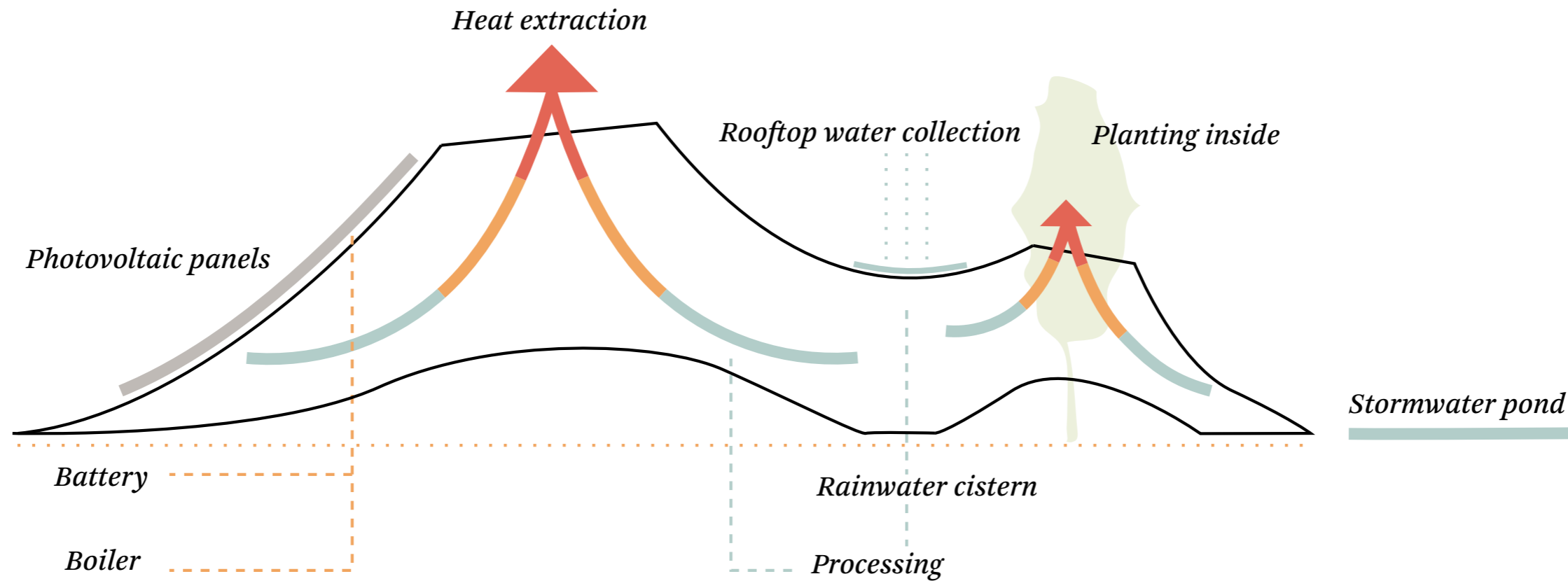
Green Connection to Tuomaanpuisto

06 New Learning Hub and Citizens Park



New Learning Hub and Citizens Park

A view overlooking Aninkaistenkatu



Sustainability Concept

The learning hub will not only serve as a magnet for the New Historic Town, but an exemplar of sustainable design. The building will work in harmony with its natural surroundings: using resources efficiently, and utilising solar energy and rainwater. Constructed from structural wood and glass, the naturally lit and ventilated interior will provide ideal conditions for people and plants.

New Learning Hub and Citizens Park



Knowledge Creation
University, business, city

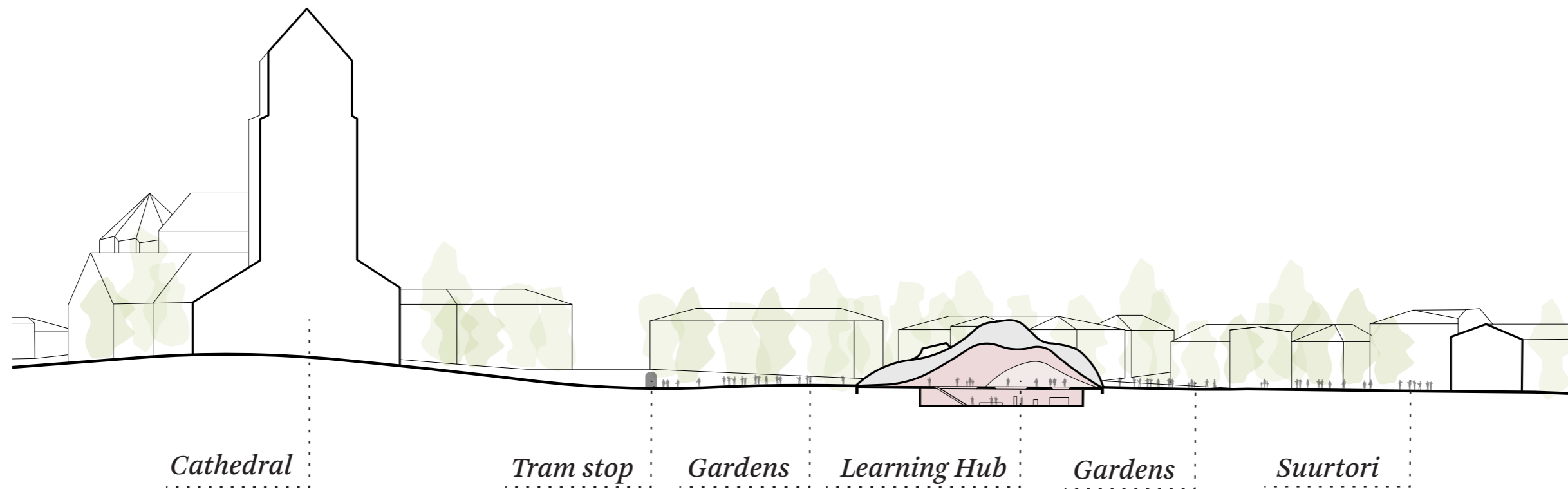


Social
Parks, sports, nature



Creative
Culture, art, design

New Learning Hub and Citizens Park



Site section

New Learning Hub and Citizens Park

Closing Remarks

The Green-in TURKU project lays the foundation for the further development and planning of green areas in Turku in support of the city centre strategy for liveability and vibrancy. Our research draws from a comprehensive analysis and city-level initiatives implemented in Europe and abroad aimed to scale-up the value of green areas in mixed-use dense urban centres. Our investigation also draws from a series of meetings with corresponding city officials, urban planners, architects and researchers involved in greening development plans in cities and communities. The project builds on a series of workshops organised under the BASTU- platform. BASTU is a network of active citizens of Turku, coordinated by Finland Futures Research Centre, working for more sustainable and dynamic business environment for the region.

Our investigation has led us to the conclusion that creating an attractive urban environment is today - more than ever - a highly complex task. The new demands for space utilisation coupled with urban pressures on equal distribution, access, and quality of the green areas is a hard equation in itself. Yet it is obvious that progress towards more and better access to green space is of paramount importance for ensuring liveability. Congested and grey environments are no one's benefit.

In our view, the capital investments made towards this urban revitalisation and greening plan will pay back in the years and decades to come. Improvements on urban green infrastructure will mean more people, residents and tourist flows, and it will also mean more capital and business exchange as more services will be needed to support the economic vibrancy and trade of the new historic town.

This project is a contribution towards holistic planning and integration of green areas in Turku and its historic town. The project addresses challenges hindering development and puts forward a plan for resource utilisation of green areas to improve vibrancy and liability at Turku's most representative commercial and historic centre. The proposed plan formulates a new pathway and calls for the need for a more circular approach to greening the city core and its most representative districts and historic parks. In our view, a vision for a greener and sustainable historic town for Turku entails the transformation of its core to that of a town that is above all human-centred, accessible and with adequate presence of nature. So, what this all means is more biodiversity in the city, and better integration of nature and public space with a full consideration for all groups of society. It means calling visitors and residents to the experience of an urban life that is of strong human quality. Simply put, more *life* at the heart of the city.



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