

InnoUrba case study Toppila Shore



Winning entry of the Toppila Shore competition, 'Seasons' by White Arkitekter.

InnoUrba – the Living and Working Environment for the Future
www.ouka.fi/tekninen/innourba



Toppilansalmi Strait has a long tradition as a harbour area for Oulu. As the main harbour of the city and other industrial activities are planned to be relocated, Toppilansalmi Strait will be ready for a new use. A residential area on the south side of Toppilansalmi Strait, Toppila Island, is being built at the moment. Toppila Island was the location for the National Housing Fair in 2005. City planning of the north side of Toppilansalmi Strait, Toppila Shore, has started in 2007.

In the General plan of Oulu for the year 2020 Toppila Shore is an area of housing and services. Toppila Shore is one of several areas of change around the city centre. As the industrial activities are being moved outside the city area, these brownfield areas are ready for new functions, usually services and housing, mainly in blocks of flats. Toppila Shore offers an excellent opportunity for densifying the city structure, enhancing the valuable estuary area cityscape and high quality urban living near the waterfront. The area is currently not in full use, and the environment is unfinished.

The planning of Toppila Shore was started with the outline plan, which has been approved by the Technical Committee in June 2006. City plan will be done in several phases. The InnoUrba project area is located in the south side of Toppila Shore, and is included in the first phase of city planning. Residential areas are situated mainly on the south side of Toppila Shore. Services and workplaces are situated on the south side of the power plant. The waterfront area is reserved for common functions such as light traffic, refreshment and boating. A new bridge is planned to connect Toppila Shore with Toppila Island. There are several buildings and constructions, which have been in use for the harbour activity, and are characteristic for the area. According to the outline plan there will be approx. 1800 housing units and 3500 new residents in the area.

City plan of the first area is currently in plan proposal phase. There are several land owners in the planning area, and land use contracts will be made between the city and the land owners. Preliminary contracts have been made.

The goals and activities of the Toppila Shore case relating to the InnoUrba project:

- To test a Nordic architecture competition as a method on a residential area with special values.
- To get fresh ideas for the planning of the buildings and environment.
- To use a Nordic reference group as an external commentator in the evaluation phase.



Location of Toppila Shore and photos from the area.

A Nordic invited architectural competition was organised in the residential block 80. Four architectural offices were invited: two from Finland, one from Sweden and one from Denmark. The competition was organised as a public-private partnership. The initiative was made by the city of Oulu. The city selected a private partner, the construction company SRV Yhtiöt Oyj which organised the competition in co-operation with the city.

The InnoUrba Steering Group commented on the proposals during the second InnoUrba Workshop March 12th-13th 2009 in Umeå. The proposal Toppila Light House got the highest overall rating in the commentary. According to the external evaluation:

- The competition has given a higher quality and new inspiration, and might inspire the planning of other blocks in the area. The four different solutions would never have been presented without an architectural competition.

- The competition only deals with the last part of a planning process; more transparency and dialogue should be involved. It could be better to have a competition in the start of a process – to start on a blank paper. More public influence could be allowed in the competition programme.



City plan sketch of Länsi-Toppila.

The competition proposals were shown for public April 6th – 14th 2009 in Oulu swimming hall and in the project web page (www.ouka.fi/tekninen/innourba). 113 public opinions were given. The public gave the highest overall rating for the proposal Toppila Light House. Comments on the proposal:

- Continues well the lines of existing buildings. The plan is closest to the city plan sketch.
- Good cityscape. Looks normal, liveable and cosy.
- The mass and courtyards have been divided into several units with a human scale. The courtyard gives shelter from the weather. City and sea have been combined well.

The public was also asked about further planning of the area, and whether the results were successful. A lot of comments on further planning of the area were given, mostly about conditions caused by the northern location the maritime character of the area, greenery areas, and versatile local services. Almost everyone thought that the competition had been successful and more competitions should be arranged. Comments on the method:

- An architectural competition is a way to get personality and variation to new areas in a city, and also differences to other cities.
- More open architectural competitions should be arranged.
- Comparing the proposals will help with planning the right kind of solution.

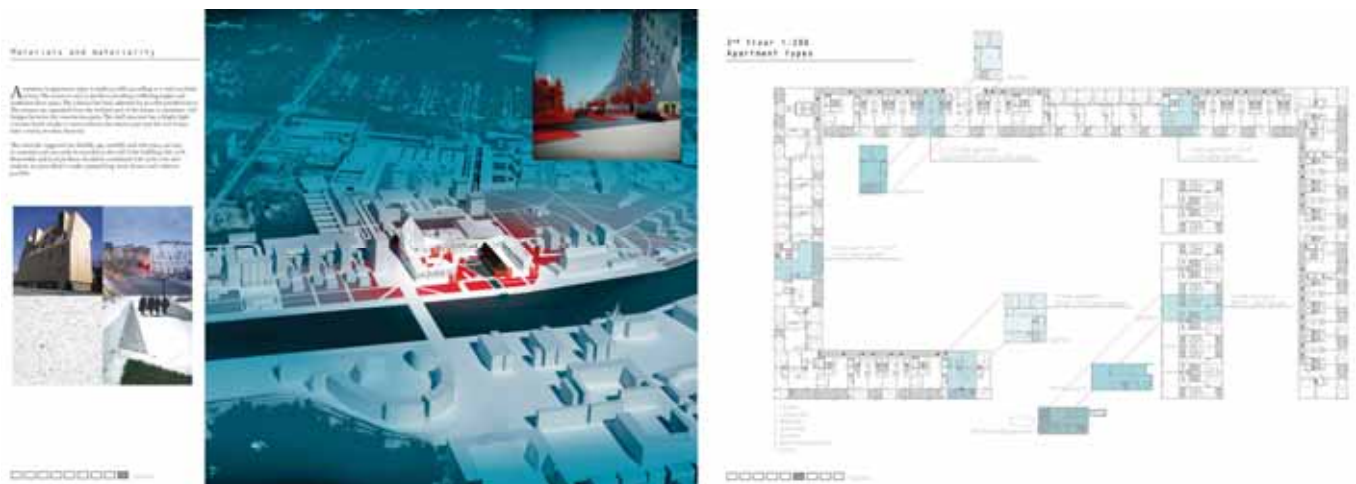
Competition results were announced on April 23rd 2009. White Arkitekter from Sweden won the competition. The jury evaluation summary on the winning proposal 'Seasons': A strong, original and memorable entry with a lot of potential to become a major and memorable townscape focus for the area as well as providing a very liveable and sympathetic neighbourhood for future residents. The architectural language of the scheme would act as a strong catalyst for developing a more appropriate character to this former harbour area than the usual standardized approach of so many new housing developments. Despite some technical challenges the proposal is strong and flexible enough to accept alternative dwelling solutions.

Planning of the competition area will continue now that the construction company and the planner have been brought together. Negotiations on a plan draft have been started between SRV Yhtiöt and the competition winner White Arkitekter in April 2009. Realisation will be done on the basis of the competition in Nordic co-operation.

Benefits of architectural competitions:

- In addition to the legal procedures, the use of alternative plans enriches the study of the planning task. The result could be a synthesis of the best ideas among the alternatives.

- Use of the architectural competitions has had good results. To reach the best solution, the planning problem should be clearly defined. Production of several alternative ideas is possible through a competition.
- Rules for architectural competitions by the Finnish National Association of Architects, 2007, can be found at http://safafi.fi/archive/170_Competition_rules_2008_ENG.pdf
- In some cases a limited competition can be utilized. A limited competition enables the organiser to look for plan alternatives in a short time for an area where planning is just starting, and requires less resources from participants as the necessary competition documents are limited, for example 2-4 A3-size panels. A typical competition period could be 4-8 weeks and the evaluation period 3-4 weeks.



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The Nordic architecture competition organised by the city of Oulu and a private construction company in connection with the InnoUrba project encourages all actors in the Toppila Shore area to ensure the high-quality realisation of the future residential and working area. The city plan will be ready by the end of the year 2009 and the construction of the public infrastructure, as well as residential buildings, will start in 2010. The co-operation of a public and private organisation in Toppila Shore area has been strong all through the city planning process and the InnoUrba project has diversified the group of actors. The future constructors, investors and planners of the area have complemented the view provided by the city land-use planning professionals and resident participation on the new city district.

The Nordic planning competition challenged and will challenge the area's planners to engage in a higher-quality residential planning and the builders to produce high-quality construction. With the project, both private actors and the city increased their direct personal level contacts to Nordic land-use planning actors. This will provide businesses – design and planning offices and constructors – new co-operation possibilities across national borders.

In the future city planning projects the City of Oulu will actively seek an international approach to the land-use planning objectives and planning solutions. The city planning process of the Ranta-Toppila area located north from the Toppila Shore competition area will be started in 2010 and as a part of this project the City will participate together with 10 European cities in the B-Team project, the application for which has been submitted to the Interreg IVC programme. In Ranta-Toppila, diverse functional and economic solutions will be sought for the realisation of the Sea Centre to be located in the area.

The Sea Centre implementation will be carried out using the public-private model. The area's national cultural heritage will be combined in Oulu's new public activity centre, Sea Centre that will be realised according to the jointly developed investment and implementation model.

The co-operation of the participating Nordic cities will continue. The actors involved in the project have new ideas and proposal drafts that are hoped to develop into new project applications in the next years. New partners, both cities and private land-use and construction actors are welcome. Only a contact to the InnoUrba project personnel is needed:

Kaija Puhakka, City Surveyor, Technical Centre
 Matti Karhula, City Planning Manager, Technical Centre
 Jere Klami, City Planning Architect, Technical Centre
 Sari Matinheikki, Project Coordinator, Innovations and Marketing

Kaija.Puhakka@ouka.fi
Matti.Karhula@ouka.fi
Jere.Klami@ouka.fi
Sari.Matinheikki@ouka.fi