

# CLOSE TO YOU

*Urban policy programme*

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# We are building comfortable cities.

Urbanisation is a worldwide trend which is influenced by globalisation and economic development. It is important for this trend to progress sustainably. We need strong urban areas as well as a vital and vigorous countryside.

Finland needs a comprehensive and coherent urban policy. A healthy economy, strong growth and high employment rate in cities will bolster the success of the whole of Finland. Urban areas hold great responsibility and offer excellent opportunities for tackling societal challenges, such as climate change and social inequality. It is important that cooperation between the government and cities works smoothly.

Our cities come in various stripes, and they must be able to develop based on their individual strengths. A comprehensive urban policy addresses different types of cities, both large and small, and emphasises cooperation involving cities, the public sector and the private sector.

The coronavirus epidemic has hit the whole of Finland, presenting special challenges to many of our larger cities. The epidemic will continue to affect politics well into the future. Urban areas need proper resources to recover from the present crisis. Crises can also provide cities, companies and the whole of Finland with new opportunities for developing fresh innovations.



- We want our cities to be vibrant, safe, sustainable and comfortable.
- We believe that cities should look after and make use of their characteristics and be allowed to base their development on their individual strengths.
- Our cities must be open to Nordic and international cooperation.
- We believe that cities are good environments for testing new smart solutions and running pilot projects related to, for example, digitalisation and artificial intelligence. The resulting experiences can be used when carrying out larger reforms.
- Cities carry great responsibility regarding integration. Education, employment and language skills provide good resources for successful integration.



# Healthy and thriving city residents.

A wide range of culture and sports activities is key to a healthy and thriving city. A diverse enjoyment of culture and sports provides added value to residents and, in the long run, results in savings in health and social services. A good healthcare system and smooth cooperation between public and private care are important factors for the well-being of residents.

- Cities must increasingly emphasise the important role of low-threshold services in preventing the social exclusion of young people. It is important for services to be present in places frequented by young people, such as shopping centres.
- Our cities need well-functioning preventive activities related to, for example, child protection, youth work and senior citizen activities.
- We strive to prevent the increasing loneliness among both the young and the old.
- All children and young people must have guaranteed access to a hobby and be able to influence the range of leisure activities offered in cities.
- We want cities to offer their residents equal opportunities to sports, exercise and hobbies.
- We want to see cities invest in outdoor activities that encourage movement and exercise among different age groups.
- Urban exercise facilities promote the well-being of residents, and we hope the facilities can also be made available to clubs and associations.
- We encourage innovation, free of unnecessary bureaucracy and regulation, to ensure that both commercial and non-commercial parties have the opportunity to organise events and gatherings.
- We believe there must be open public spaces where city residents of all ages can get together.
- Cities should create more green spaces, as these contribute greatly to our well-being.
- We need enough rest areas and dog parks in our cities.
- It is important that we all feel included in the development of our surroundings, for example, through participatory budgeting.
- Urban planning must combat social exclusion.
- All pupils and students must have real opportunities to influence their surroundings.
- Youth councils must be guaranteed the right to participate and speak in committees, councils and local executives in all cities.

# Socially and ecologically sustainable cities.

Urbanisation puts pressure on residential construction, but also offers cities unique opportunities for innovative urban planning. Housing policy must strive to ensure suitable housing for everyone.

Climate change is one of the major challenges of our time. Cities play an important part in finding solutions to these challenges. A sustainable future calls for clear policies that stimulate ecologically sustainable investments. We must make our energy supply renewable, improve our energy efficiency and adopt smart technological solutions. Cities must enable daily choices that are sustainable from a climate perspective. This applies to everything from consumption to recycling and reuse.

Carefully planned public transport and appropriate pedestrian and bicycle routes are crucial to a smooth daily life in cities.

- The aim of urban planning must be to combine different forms of housing in a single district. We want to see diverse housing and living environments, with an adequate supply of rental apartments at a reasonable price.
- Comfort and safety are important aspects of public outdoor spaces that must be taken into consideration when building new residential areas and developing parks and squares. The public space must be equally safe for everyone round the clock.
- Pedestrian and bicycle routes, jogging tracks and public transport stops must have adequate lighting and be well maintained all year round so that they are safe and accessible to everyone.
- We want to promote construction where senior housing is planned in conjunction with, for example,

day care facilities.

- Rapidly growing cities call for smooth urban planning and efficient housing production that is not encumbered by unnecessary regulation.
- In our view, districts must be given the chance to develop their own special features and an identity.
- We want the expropriation of privately owned land to be avoided.
- Public buildings in cities must be planned so that they can also be used for other purposes. An example of this is office spaces that can be converted into residential apartments. Land use planning must enable a flexible city capable of change.
- We want architecturally valuable buildings to be preserved.
- We want the percent for art scheme to be observed in public construction.
- We want all cities to be climate neutral by 2030.
- We want the government to promote renovation to improve energy efficiency.
- Extensions and repairs to infrastructure must be planned so as to avoid any unnecessary traffic jams.
- We want public transport to be expanded in densely populated areas and more park-and-ride facilities to be set up.
- Well-functioning public transport solutions within and between cities contribute to a smooth daily life and successful business. Priority must be given to construction in the vicinity of public transport routes.
- We want to renew the vehicle fleet in order to promote low-emission passenger cars, for example, by expanding the charging infrastructure for electric cars. Public transport must increasingly run on electricity or on low-emission fuels.
- We want to ensure that digital solutions help us smoothly plan our travel and easily use different modes of transport. We want it to be easy and safe to travel by bike or on foot. It must also be easy to change from car to public transport. We want cities to make city bicycles more widely available for shared use.
- All students and pensioners must be entitled to a discount in public transport, irrespective of their place of residence.
- Waste management and recycling must work smoothly in cities, and waste sorting must be effortless for everyone.
- Cities must take a more active role in protecting biodiversity in accordance with the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Cities must prioritise locally produced food in their public procurement.



## Competence as a success factor.

In many larger cities, young people and students account for a larger than average share of the population. It is important for cities to enjoy good cooperation with their universities and to take care of the students' well-being. Cities have every opportunity to take advantage of innovations and high-quality research. They also need a wide range of options for upper secondary education.

Cooperation between cities, universities and upper secondary education helps guarantee access to competent staff in early childhood and basic education. All children, irrespective of their place of residence, must have ac-

cess to equal, high-quality education.

The high level of education in Finland supports companies in their search for a competent workforce, but the demand exceeds the number of university graduates. The lack of a competent workforce is one of the toughest challenges facing cities. Access to a workforce must not be restricted artificially. Means testing for international employees must therefore be abandoned and permit processes must be handled within one month. To make Finland attractive to international experts, we must ensure that the daily lives of their families are also smooth.

- All children have the right to good day care close to their home. Day care centres and schools must be strengthened through positive discrimination to ensure that all children have equal opportunities. The availability of competent Swedish-speaking staff in early childhood education and basic education must be secured.
- All pupils in basic education as well as in upper secondary education must have the opportunity, if required, to meet the school social worker at least once a year. The national recommendations regarding the number of school social workers must be complied with.
- Larger volumes of affordable housing must be built in the Helsinki metropolitan area. University cities must guarantee an adequate volume of affordable housing for students.
- Pupils and school staff have the right to safe and healthy buildings.
- We want cities to offer international schools and day care services to make Finland an attractive option for international experts and their families.
- We want to see a wide range of language immersion and language show-er programmes in early childhood education as well as in basic education.
- Since education helps prevent social exclusion, we want there to be an adequate number of student places in upper secondary and tertiary education.
- We want to see adult education centres offer a broad range of courses and other activities to encourage the lifelong learning of residents.
- We want international students who graduate from a Finnish university to be granted a residence permit.

# Cities as growth centres.

Cities can reach their best potential as growth centres if the private, public and third sectors cooperate and help promote one another's operating conditions. Successful companies, a high employment rate, well-functioning trade and industry, as well as inviting opportunities for start-up companies benefit cities and their residents. Companies value a stable, safe and predictable environment. It is essential to ensure that fundamental operating conditions, including premises and a competent workforce, are available to companies.

Finland faces global competition in its strive to draw companies to invest and set up business in the country. Good connections and accessibility are crucial to the international competitiveness, export conditions and growth of companies.

New market trends, such as the sharing economy, often emerge first in cities. It must be possible to turn new initiatives into reality. Cities must invest in their brand, which builds on their individual strengths and attractiveness. By building brands that are relevant to the target groups, cities can boost their profile both nationally and internationally.

A rich and varied offer of experiences and tourist services benefits both those who visit cities as well as those who live in them. Sustainable tourism calls for carefully devised strategies concerning infrastructure, experiences, accommodation and conferences.



- We want our cities to be attractive to international investments and companies.
- We want our cities to be open and welcoming to entrepreneurs. Engaging in active and regular dialogue with trade and industry is the best way for us to promote companies' interests locally. This also adds to the vitality of cities.
- We want there to be clear rules for any new forms of the sharing economy.
- We want innovations, artificial intelligence and open data to be used more effectively. We need good regulation for data management.
- A functioning infrastructure, including airports, ports and railways, plays a key role for the success of trade and industry. This emphasises the importance of good cooperation between the state and cities.
- For people to find it attractive to work in the city, we also need housing for employees in sectors suffering from a shortage of a workforce.



# Characteristics of the Helsinki metropolitan area.

The Helsinki metropolitan area primarily competes against other international metropolises rather than other urban areas in Finland. An internationally successful metropolitan area boosts the country at large.

The challenges facing the metropolitan area differ from those facing other parts of the country. Land use planning, housing policy, the environment and transport call for intensified cooperation across municipal borders. Migration to the Helsinki metropolitan area is considerable and prompts cities in the area to think along new lines. The area must be able to offer enough housing, good care as well as an adequate number of places and competent staff in early childhood and basic education. All this calls for Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen to engage in close cooperation to ensure that they can make full use of resources and retain local services.

The Helsinki metropolitan area is home to a number of central institutions and important societal functions. As a result, rescue services in the area perform a special task and require adequate resources to fulfil it.

We need a functioning Swedish-language administration and better coordination of services in the Helsinki metropolitan area. While the area is home to many Swedish speakers, their percentage share is small. Therefore, we must create strong Swedish structures through cooperation and coordination. We want to see a strategy for Swedish-language services in the Helsinki metropolitan area.



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