Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda: State of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and/or on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Mission report: Historic Centre of Riga (Latvia) (852)
Centre historique de Riga (Lettonie) (852)


This mission report should be read in conjunction with Document:
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We would also like to acknowledge the great interest of the different stakeholders including the Council for the Preservation and Development of Riga’s Historic Centre, Riga City Municipality representatives and the City Architect, ICOMOS Latvia, the Deputy Chairman of the City Development Committee, NGO’s, Associations, the representative of investors, Andrejsala project’s representatives and the Riga City architect’s collegium, at the World Heritage site.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The report is based on the information available from the World Heritage Committee working documents and decisions, the periodic reporting reports provided by Latvia in 2004 and 2005 and additional information provided in the state of conservation report received from the State and local authorities in Latvia in 2007 and 2008, as well as the information and documents collected during the mission carried out by Ms. Margaretha Ehrström, ICOMOS and Mr. A. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Europe and North America Unit, to Riga from 25 to 28 March 2008, and on the complementary information provided by the State Party of Latvia on 14 April 2008.

The mission successfully concluded its technical review of the situation based on on-site visits, including meetings and discussions with authorities representing the State Party, the local government and Latvian National Commission to UNESCO as well as experts and representatives of NGOs e.g. ICOMOS Latvia. There was also a separate meeting with the investors of the Daugava-river left bank. The mission also attended the meeting of the Council for the Preservation and Development of Riga’s Historical Centre, where a revised plan of Daugava Conception Plan was presented. Field visits were carried out to view new constructions in the Art Nouveau and wooden architecture blocks as well as the Daugava River left bank. By special permission a visit to the top of Hansa Bank-building was provided.
Andrejsala was also visited and a presentation on the development of the area was provided. Before the departure of the mission, a last debriefing and consultation session with the State Inspection, City Architect and Latvian National Commission for UNESCO, was proposed by the mission and was organised by the State Inspection in order to obtain the opinion of these principal stakeholders in case the World Heritage Committee opts for inscription of the property on the World Heritage List in Danger, and to also obtain further necessary information and comments from them. (See Annex I for the Terms of Reference of the mission and annex II, for the full programme of the mission as proposed by the State Party and the list of persons met)

The mission considers that the overall situation of the administration, management and conservation of the World Heritage site of Riga are improving and thus moving in a positive direction. Though there are still constrains that have to be taken seriously, which, if implemented, will cause loss of integrity to the site. The most urgent threat is the Daugava Left Bank Conception Project, which if realised, would have an important negative impact on the visual integrity of the World Heritage site. The revised plan presented to UNESCO/ICOMOS mission will have a serious impact on the integrity of the silhouette of the Site. Although the State Party reports that high-rise constructions are banned from the Historic Centre of Riga and its buffer zone, it appears that they are willing to make an exception with regard to the Southern part of Kipsala, due to its long standing planning tradition. In contrast, ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre consider that any high-rise constructions in that area would impact negatively on the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage property and this includes the
realisation of the Kipsala detailed plan and the revised Daugave Left Bank Conception Project.

- The mission notes a positive development in terms of the overall state of conservation of the property, but urges the local and national authorities to produce a thoroughly revised “Conception Project”, which fully takes into consideration the visual integrity of the World Heritage property of Historic Centre of Riga.

The legislative basis for the protection of heritage is stable. There is a special act, recently adopted on the protection of the Historic Centre of Riga. In addition a Council on Protection and Development of Historic Riga, with representatives of local and national authorities, UNESCO National Commission and Architects Union, has been established. Due to the fact that all building and restoration projects within the World Heritage site have to be approved by the State Inspection, the institution is overloaded with work. The State Inspection on Heritage Protection is also actively taking part in international co-operation, e.g. the Council of Europe and the Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Co-operation.

- The mission considers it important that the legal framework for the preservation and development of Old Riga is fully implemented and that the established Council on the Preservation and Development approves projects that preserve the outstanding universal value and integrity of the site. The implementation also needs funding and adequate human resources.

The works of restoration and maintenance in the Historic Centre of Riga, the Art Nouveau blocks and wooden architecture, are moving in a positive direction. In addition to the restoration works, a number of projects for modern constructions have been realised or are under construction. Several conferences, workshops and seminars have been organised by State Inspection on modern constructions in historic urban settings. The conferences have produced recommendations on the conditions for modern structures. Nevertheless, the projects once realised, do not always meet the requirement of modern architecture in historic environments. Some of them do not fit into the traditional historic fabric and streetscape either due to their scale or their architectural design.

- Infill architecture should take into consideration the historic setting and urban fabric. It should “fill in” and form a dialogue with the historic structures.

There has been a general concern for the preservation and enhancement of the wooden heritage in Riga. A special programme for wooden architecture is approved and was signed by the authorities in March 2008.

- The Programme for Preserving the Wooden Architecture of Riga should be fully implemented. Large efforts, both human and financial, need to be made to restore and rehabilitate the wooden structures. An evaluation on the achievements should be carried out and if needed a follow-up programme should be set up.

- Exchanges and co-operation between the Municipality, the State Inspection and other stakeholders, including universities, NGOs, professional associations/organisations, local inhabitants etc., need to be further improved. The civil society should be more widely consulted in the framework of new projects developed by the Municipality and private investors.
• Continuous awareness-raising of municipal staff and local people about the World Heritage values and the site is necessary. A project on presentation/signage and promotion of the World Heritage area should be developed to enhance awareness of local people, tourists and other stakeholders of the values of the Property.

• The mission considers that the overall situation of the administration, management and conservation of the World Heritage site of Riga are improving and is moving in a positive direction due to the efforts made by the national and local authorities. The mission recommends that discussion on possible inscription of the Historic Centre of Riga on the List of World Heritage in Danger should be postponed until 2009, to allow time for the authorities to implement the recommendations of this report. The State Party is urged to thoroughly revise the Conception Project for the development of the left bank of river Daugava, in particular in the southern part of Kipsala island, which has to take into consideration the visual integrity of Old Riga, mainly by reducing considerably the height of any ongoing and new constructions in the area.

1 BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION

Brief Description

Riga was a major centre of the Hanseatic League, deriving its prosperity in the 13th–15th centuries from trade with Central and Eastern Europe. The urban fabric of its medieval centre reflects this prosperity, although most of the earliest buildings have been destroyed by fire or war. Riga became an important economic centre in the 19th century, when the suburbs surrounding the medieval town were laid out, first with imposing wooden buildings in neoclassical style and then in Jugendstil. It is generally recognized that Riga has the finest collection of art nouveau buildings in Europe.

Inscription History of the Site

Inscription Statement

The Historic Centre of Riga was inscribed on the World Heritage List by the World Heritage Committee at its 21st session (Decision 21COM C2.852), Naples, Italy, in 1997 under criteria (i) and (ii), considering that the Historic Centre of Riga, while retaining its medieval and later urban fabric relatively intact, is of outstanding universal value by virtue of the quality and the quantity of its Art Nouveau / Jugendstil architecture, which is unparalleled anywhere in the world, and its 19th century architecture in wood.

Criteria and World Heritage values

Criterion i

Riga has exerted a considerable influence within the Baltic cultural area on subsequent developments in architecture. As one of the largest ports and trading centers on the Baltic it provided the meeting place for the achievements of the western and eastern European cultures. As the only technical university for architecture in the Baltic States until World War I, the Riga Polytechnic promoted the dissemination of its own characteristic architecture to Tallinn, Vilnius, and the towns of western Tsarist Russia.
Criterion ii
The historic centre of Riga is among the most characteristic examples of a European capital city, representing significant cultural, social, artistic, scientific, and industrial development throughout its eight-hundred-year history.

Justification provided by the State Party
The Historical Centre of Riga City is considered to be of outstanding universal value as it represents a unique artistic value, comprising the aesthetic achievements (i)* from all the historic styles, from Romanesque to Functionalism. It contains the large number of historic buildings of monumental importance from all three main national groups, involved in the construction process over the centuries: Latvians, Germans, Russians. Riga was the member of the Hanseatic League and the strong Northern German influence was in force during the first centuries of it’s growth. Later Riga became part of the Swedish Kingdom and during the 17th and 18th century, parts of Old Riga has inherited buildings by Swedish engineers and the toponymes. The cultural input by Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian minorities is also recognizable in different buildings. The balanced Historical Centre of Riga City townscape is one of its features and Riga is comparable with the multicultural character of Prague.

Riga has exerted considerable influence within the cultural area of the Baltic Sea on subsequent developments in architecture, monumental sculpture and garden design of different settlements (ii)*. Riga as one of the biggest harbour cities and trade centres on the Baltic provided the exchange of the achievements of Western and Eastern civilizations. Due to the fact that Riga Polytecnicum was the only institution for architectural education in the Baltic States up until WWI it, promoted the dissemination of the patterns of it’s own architecture to Tallinn, Vilnius and all the towns of western part of tsarist Russia.

Riga Historic Centre is among the most characteristic examples of the European capitals, of the type representing an important cultural, social, artistic, scientific and industrial development (iv)* of the whole it’s 800 years long history.

The urban pattern of Riga consists of three integral parts:
- medieval core,
- semicircle of boulevards,
- regularly planned downtown - the main feature of Riga with the assets of Art-Nouveau style.

Each part of Riga has preserved the authenticity of its own time and building style.

ICOMOS evaluation
The area of the Historical Centre of Riga nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List consists of three elements: the medieval Old City (35ha), the 19th century semi-circle of boulevards, and the 18th and 19th century former suburban quarters lying outside the boulevards, with a checkerboard layout. The area nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List is all covered by conservation area regulations, as is the adequate buffer zone proposed by the State Party. These are confirmed in the City Plan. There are certain buildings within the designated conservation areas that are of recent construction and low architectural merit, such as the Latviya Hotel.…

The ICOMOS mission suggested that the area nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List should be amended slightly so as to include the workers’ housing settlement, with its church and school, in the area bounded by Tallinn and Valmiera Street. This is of high architectural and historic significance and lies within a conservation area. This proposal was accepted by the State Party. (The full evaluation by ICOMOS of the nomination dossier is enclosed in Annex IV)
ICOMOS Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria i and ii:
The Historic Centre of Riga, while retaining its medieval and later urban fabric relatively intact, is of outstanding universal value by virtue of the quality and the quantity of its Art Nouveau / Jugendstil architecture, which is unparalleled anywhere in the world, and its 19th century architecture in wood.

Examination of the state of conservation by the World Heritage Committee and its Bureau

Since its inscription, the state of conservation of the Historic Centre of Riga was examined during the 27th, 28th, 29th and 31st sessions of the World Heritage Committee in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2007 respectively. Threats to the site have been identified such as the construction of a high-rise building in the buffer zone of the property in 2003 and on the left bank of river Daugava (the World Heritage Committee considered that any high-rise development at the waterfront is not appropriate for Riga's flat urban situation, however, there is currently one construction project ongoing, the complete halt of which, could produce severe economic consequences for the whole city of Riga), new high-rise building projects located in the buffer zone threatening the visual integrity of the property, regulations for building permissions and guidelines for new construction projects within Riga and its buffer zone, and the demolition of wooden buildings in the core and buffer zone of the property due to lack of conservation plan.

At its 31st session the Committee urged the State Party, in close co-operation with the city authorities, to reinforce upstream planning and to carefully review all current and future projects in the core area and its buffer zone, and in particular to halt ongoing high-rise projects and further inappropriate planning for the left side of the river Daugava, until a thorough and independent analysis of potential impacts on the values, authenticity and integrity of the Historic Centre has been undertaken and the “Conception Project” has been thoroughly revised. It also requested the State Party to undertake an overall visual impact study of the property and its setting in order to provide a framework for proposed new developments to ensure that they fully respect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to assess the state of conservation of the property, including the archaeological values of the site, in particular with regard to the proposed new development projects in the buffer zone on the left bank of the river Daugava, and to submit a report to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2008 on progress made with the “Conception Project” for the left side of the river Daugava, and to provide details on any projects which may have an impact on the visual integrity of the property, for examination by the Committee at its 32nd session in 2008 in view of the possibility of inclusion of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.
2 NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

Protected area legislation

- In Latvia there is a Special Act for the World Heritage Site of Riga and its buffer zone.
  This was created in order to improve the administrative mechanisms and institutional co-operation between the State Party and the Local Government. The law on “Preservation and Protection of the Historic Centre of Riga” came into force in 25 June 2003.
  The purpose of the law is to preserve, protect and qualitatively develop Riga Historical Centre and its buffer zone. The law states that any activities which may damage or destroy the cultural and historical values of these areas are prohibited.

The values are listed as follows,
- the structure of historical planning
- panoramic view, skyline, scenic vistas
- historical buildings (particularly those from the Middle Ages and the Art Nouveau era and those of wooden construction) their scale and character
- archaeological layer
- public space
- system of parks and green zones
- historical watercourses and reservoirs
- historical surfacing (cobblestone surfaces, gravel paths, etc.)
- elements of historical landscaping.

Modification of cultural and historical values shall be permitted if the necessary modification is the only way to ensure urban development and if the modification does not decrease the cultural and historical values.

According to the law World Heritage Committee should be informed on any significant planned modification of the area if they are to affect the cultural and historical values of the area.

The act also stipulates the creation of a specific fund for the Preservation and Development of Riga’s Historic Centre.

According to the law the physical Plan of Riga Historic Centre approved by Riga City Council shall be drawn up in conformity with other normative laws on preservation of Historic Centre of Riga and with the approval of the State Inspection of Heritage Protection.

- Cabinet of Ministers Regulations (No.127 of 8 March 2004) on the Preservation and Protection of Riga’s Historic Centre

- “Preservation and Development Plan of the Historical Centre of Riga” was approved on 7 February, 2006. The plan is approved, but the State Inspection has postponed the development of high-rises on the left bank of the Daugava River until the left-bank urban landscape draft concept is finalised. High-rises can only be constructed in those locations identified by previous planning documents,
including Detailed Plan of Kipsala. The Daugava River Left Bank Conception Plan is still under revision.

**Institutional framework**

The State Inspection for Heritage Protection has been at all stages active for improving the legislation, mechanism and working methods for the protection of cultural heritage of Riga. According to the General Construction Regulations (Regulations Nr 112 of the Cabinet of Ministers) all building permissions for any construction on state protected cultural monument or in its buffer zone can only be issued after presenting the project to the Inspection. Since the adoption of the Law the number of evaluated projects from the point of view of cultural heritage in Riga has increased considerably. By these regulations the damages and losses of authenticity in historic buildings has decreased and the restoration activities have improved.

**Management structure**

**Management /Administrative Body**

To facilitate institutional co-operation and decision making on issues pertaining to the preservation, protection and development of Riga’s Historical Centre and its buffer zone, a Council for the Preservation and Development of Riga’s Historical Centre was formed in 2003. Its aim is to provide democratic and transparent decision-making with regard to the preservation and development of the World Heritage site.

The Council, acting as an advisory body, has ten members. They represent the following institutions, State Inspection for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (three seats), Riga City’s Council (three seats), Ministry of Culture, Latvian National Commission to UNESCO, Latvian Architect’s Union and Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments. The members are appointed for a term of three years. The Council considers issues concerning both planning and individual building and restoration projects within Riga World Heritage site and buffer zone. The Council meets twice a month. Since its foundation the Council has had over 100 meetings, during which several hundred projects have been discussed.

The current management system is considered to be sufficiently effective. State Inspection has worked out a long term programme for Development and Preservation of Riga Vision 2020, including chapters on management, enhancement, education, conservation of the historic urban fabric of Riga.

The main threats and risks to the site are due to development pressures. Concerning the historic fabric a survey of individual blocks is being carried out. The work is costly and time consuming but is considered to be important for enhancing the historic values of the individual monuments and giving guidelines for restoration and complementary architecture. The historic information on the individual buildings is important for house owners.

A large number of international workshops and conferences have been organised by State Inspection in Riga since 1998 to set the frame for preservation and management
of Riga World Heritage site. Local planners, architects and consultants have actively taken part in these conferences.

Response to the recognition of values under international treaties and programmes (European label)

“The historic silhouette of Old Riga” received the European Heritage label in 2007. The proposal was made at the request of State Inspection.

3 IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES

Management

The Law on Preservation and Protection allows the State Inspection to have an overview of all planned projects. Despite the state and local authorities activities and the Council for Preservation and Development there are many NGOs and “ad hoc” groups taking part in the discussion of the preservation and development of the Site. Some of them are formed and work within one specific field, e.g. Daugava Left Bank development area.

Factors affecting the property

The overall management of the site deserves credit, however, there have been losses in historic structures (e.g. wooden architecture) and failures to realise specific projects (e.g. new constructions in Old Town and 19th century blocks). The foreseen perspectives on the development of the Latvian society, stated in the nomination file, have taken place. The rapid economic growth and the pressure from investors have had a negative impact on the urban historic fabric of Riga. In a young democratic country without longstanding traditions of democratic processes and heritage preservation and management the shortcomings of heritage institutions, and their efforts, are often evident. The pressures of investor have not always been successfully managed. Despite this, the efforts and work of State Inspection for Heritage Protection should be applauded.

Latvia’s economic growth has been the most rapid amongst the three Baltic States.

Development plan for the left bank (Conception Project)

The Kipsala detailed plan was approved in 2001 (see in Annex III). The planning started in 1995 (before the inscription). The plan protects the historic wooden architecture by the waterfront. This area is considered as of local historic importance.
An area for high-rise buildings is foreseen in a triangular area opposite the bridge to Old Riga, while the rest of the island is planned as a residential and business area with infill architecture fitting into the structure and height of the present built environment. The area for high-rise buildings in Kipsala was already foreseen in Soviet time. The high-rise building “Preses nams”, dates from this time.
The Kipsala detailed plan allows for the construction of a 25 storey buildings at the waterfront and 35 storey constructions in the middle of the area (where “Preses nams” is standing). There is no maximum height for the new constructions, or a limit of the number of high-rise buildings to be erected within the area. The area is earmarked for development as a business district. The legend of the detailed plan illustrates the visual realisation of the plan. The information in this plan was included in the Nomination dossier as Riga City Development Plan 1995-2005. In the document the city development policy was defined – to form the silhouette of the Left Bank of Daugava concentrating the high-rise building in the Southern part of Kipsala around the Golf of Agenskalns.

The development processes, and/or threats, in the buffer zone, of which Kipsala area is part, were not described or analysed in the text of the nomination. Neither were there any comments from ICOMOS on this issue.

However, this is the plan to which World Heritage Committee was referring at its 27th session. The decision was taken after the construction of Hansa Bank building at the very waterfront of Daugava. The place and construction height of Hansa Bank was against Kipsala detailed plan. The initiative to alter the project was taken by State Inspection and there was a joint UNESCO/ICOMOS mission to the site. The Committee’s decision at 27th session states as follows:

- **Considers** that any high-rise development at the waterfront is not appropriate for Riga's flat urban situation, and that currently one construction project is ongoing, and its complete halt could produce severe economic consequences for the whole city of Riga;

- **Therefore requests** the State Party to review the construction project and to fully guarantee the respect of the approved detailed plan of Kipsala in order to protect the World Heritage property and its visual integrity;
The decision taken by the Committee was focusing on halting the “illegal” construction of the Hansa Bank project. In the decision of the Committee there was no thorough examination of Kipsala detailed plan’s visual impact of Riga Historic Centre. Kipsala detail plan is still in force. Another building project has been approved recently and the high-rise building is under construction at the waterfront at the Golf of Agenskalna. The height of this building is estimated to be 20 storeys. This project is according to the plan.

This area of Kipsala has been subject to further planning. The area is included in the “Daugava Left Bank silhouette Conception Project” (Report to 04-2007), which includes the left bank of river Daugava at a length of more than 4 km. These plans have been reviewed by ICOMOS as a desk evaluation (October 2007) concluding that the options presented do not meet the demands on preserving the visual integrity of Historic Riga. ICOMOS proposed other alternatives to be explored for providing development on the left bank in other low rise configurations which optimise the potential of both banks of the river and protect the values and integrity of the World Heritage site.
A revision of the “Conception Project” (see pictures below) was presented at the meeting of the Council on Protection and Development of Historic Riga, where representatives of UNESCO and ICOMOS participated. In the revised version the high-rise buildings were excluded from all other areas except the southern part of Kipsala island. This positive result was much due to the efforts of the State Inspection. The argumentation of State Inspection for accepting this area for high-rise constructions is that the area has been appointed as a business area already in Soviet time (the existing high-rise building dates from 1960s).
3D visualisation of the Riga “concept for the silhouette of the Left Bank of the river Daugava” showing in bleu colour the new high-rise buildings proposed in Kipsala island, April 2008

3D visualisation of the “Riga concept for the silhouette of the Left Bank of the river Daugava”, view from Historic Centre of Riga showing in bleu colour the new high-rise buildings proposed in Kipsala island, April 2008
Model of Left Bank, view from south-east with the existing building of Hansa bank on the right. March 2008

Model of Riga Left Bank silhouette concept, view from south-west. March 2008

Kipsala southern part, Model of the Left Bank “Conception project”, as of April 2007
The mission commented at the meeting that the main problem of high-rise buildings in the Kipsala area still exists. No substantial change to the height and grouping of new constructions in the triangular area has been made. The Council did not take any decision on the revised conception project.

The mission also met the representatives of a group of investors and real estate developers that have formed an association named “New Riga Center”. Their aim is to open up a dialogue with municipality, government, UNESCO and inhabitants on developing the left bank, including its infrastructure. The investors regretted the delay in the proceedings of the approval of the conception plan. They very much urged the municipality to split the Left Bank Conception Project into parts and have an approval of those parts, where no high-rise constructions are appointed. UNESCO/ICOMOS mission pointed out that the main focus and concern was on high-rise constructions in Kipsala southern part. None of the representatives of investors were landowners of this specific area.

A position letter from the above-mentioned investors association was also received after the mission, in which they committed themselves to respectful and responsible development of the city vis à vis the Historic Centre of Riga value and shape.

UNESCO World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS have received by a letter dated 14 April, visual impact studies (621 photos from different viewpoints) and a written text “Visual impact studies of the development in the Buffer Zone of the Historic Centre of Riga to the Core Zone of UNESCO World Heritage site”, prepared by the Riga City Municipality. In the text there is reference to the Kipsala detailed plan and the Committee decision (27 COM 7B.69) with respect to the Kipsala detailed plan. The Municipality wishes to respect the historical value of the city and to create on the left bank a predictable and efficiently controllable architectonic composition. The conclusions of the visual impact analyses are that high-rise buildings in the southern part of Kipsala are visible from several places within the public urban area in the Historic Centre of Riga disrupting the perception of the silhouette of Old Riga. Consequently, the maximum height of buildings in this area has been decreased to 121m and higher constructions have been moved further from the Historic Centre. This conforms to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers 8.3.2004, nr. 127 “Regulations regarding the Preservation and protection of the Historic Centre of Riga”.

With regard to the implementation of Decision 31COM 7B.99, paragraph No.4, made by the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session concerning the construction of high-rise buildings in the buffer zone, the State party report 2008 states that “High-rises are banned from the Historic Centre and its buffer zone, and allowed only in locations not having a negative impact on the view to it, AND locations identified in the planning of 1930-ies, i.e. the Southern part of Kipsala.” This area is in fact the Kipsala detailed plan area, for which the plan was approved in 2001, and the anticipated area for high-rise buildings in the Daugave Left Bank Conception Project. By referring to the long planning tradition of this area, where a high-rise building from the Soviet period already stands, the State Party has already accepted that this area will be developed as a high-rise district. The State Inspection anticipates significant difficulties in stopping the on-going planning of the area, especially as the Inspection has managed to stop high-rise projects in other parts of the city. This point of view is also reflected in the State Party’s report. On the other hand, the report could be interpreted as an indication that the State Party does not consider high-rise buildings to have a negative impact on the historic skyline of Riga and therefore, does not perceive development of this kind within the
area, as a major concern. This opinion is contrary to the World Heritage Committee decisions and the ICOMOS desk reviews of the “Conception project”.

ICOMOS considers that both the realisation of the Kipsala detailed plan (in opposition to the 27th Committee session Decision 27 COM 7B.69) and the revised Daugava Left Bank Conception Project in the southern part of Kipsala, would have a negative impact on the visual integrity of the Historic Centre of Riga and thus also on the outstanding universal value of the property.

The mission considers that the height of 121 m for new constructions in the area is still too high, considering the fact that the Medieval church spires measure 121 m. The Hansa Bank building was a fatal mistake, also taking into consideration that the condition for public access to upper floors (one of the conditions for the delivery of permit for this building) was not met because of security reasons of the Bank. In addition, both the State Inspection and the City Architect recognise this mistake. The mistake made in the construction of Hansa Bank should not then be repeated. According to the revised plan eight high-rise buildings can be constructed within the area (see annex III). In addition two high-rise buildings are in the planning stage and one is under construction (see photos in page 14). The mission considers that the southern part of Kipsala island can be developed as a densely built business area, without necessitating the construction of high-rise buildings, as proposed in the revised concept. It would irreversibly affect the visual integrity of historic site of Riga. The number and height of the projected buildings will be a threat to the outstanding universal value of the historic silhouette of Old Riga.

High-rise building projects in general

Urban development pressure in Riga is evident and high-rise constructions are the way to realise building projects as landmarks. According to State Inspection presentation almost 20 high-rise projects have been stopped within the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site. There now exists 5 high-rise buildings, 2 within the site and 3 in the buffer zone. The discussion on new constructions is for the moment focused only on the triangular area of Kipsala, where there are already 2 high-rise buildings, one from Soviet time and Hansa Bank from 2005.

In addition, the State Inspection for Heritage Protection of Latvia organized an international seminar on the Preservation and Development of Historic centres of towns (16 -17 April 2007, Riga) attended by local and international experts including representatives from the city municipality, Council of Europe and UNESCO. The outcome of the seminar and the site visits stressed that utmost attention should be given to the continuity between the city’s silhouette, the river Daugava and its two banks. The value of Riga as a World Heritage property lies in the relationship between these elements. In order to preserve the visual integrity of this exceptional urban landscape, it is absolutely necessary to opt for an integrated approach to any urban development projects for the city based on these values and a clear vision for the city’s future. In that regard, the seminar concluded that high-rise buildings are incompatible for the property (core, buffer zone and beyond) and thus the ongoing high-rise projects and constructions on the left bank of the river threaten the values of the property.
Wooden heritage and new wooden constructions

The wooden architecture of Riga is exceptional as forming an integrated part of the historic, urban structure. When similar wooden buildings in other European cities have been demolished to a great part, the wooden architecture has been preserved in Riga. This has not been due to active preservation of its time but to political and economical conditions in the society. Because of this the architecture is also quite unique from the point of view of its authenticity. Because of its uniqueness the wooden architecture is especially mentioned in the decision of the Committee in 1997, when Riga was inscribed on the World Heritage List. ICOMOS also paid attention to and expressed its concern of the wooden architecture of Riga. In its recommendations for future actions ICOMOS stated (September 1997) that the “state of preservation is poor in a disturbing number of cases”.

During the ten years since World Heritage inscription, the wooden architecture of Riga faced some loss and undergone transformations but also been subject to preservation and restoration activities. The major problems of the wooden architecture have been lack of appreciation by owners, neglect of maintenance and expectation and speculation on replacement of new constructions of several stories instead of 1-2 storied wooden constructions. A number of sudden fires, neglect followed by dismantling and new constructions, where the historic fabric is lost, has initiated the authorities to work out a programme and strategy for the preservation and enhancement of the wooden architecture. The general opinion and the attitudes of house owners have also changed. At the time of inscription the values of wooden architecture were mostly recognised by experts. For real estate owners the wooden buildings were considered as obstacles rather than possibilities. As mentioned above, the opinion is changing due to activities on promoting the values of the vulnerable wooden constructions.
Wooden buildings, streetscape

Wooden buildings restored

Wooden buildings, facade

Wooden buildings, details

Wooden building, in need of repair
The trend is positive and ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre warmly welcome the new programme signed by the Minister of Culture on 11 March, 2008, on “Preservation of Wooden Heritage. Rising of the Role of Wooden Heritage in Elaborating the Quality of Life and Space of Citizens”. The programme is for the period of 2008-2011.

The priorities of the programme are:
- cultural historic quality of environment
- preservation of authenticity an original substance
- easy affordable life system of preservation
- professionalism in decision making

The Actions Plans is focused on:
- by-laws elaboration
- territorial planning
- information and popularisation
- field work, database information system, engage municipality
- monitoring of change
- financial status.

For financing restoration projects the authorities apply grants from the Norwegian European Economic Agreement's Fund.

Since March 2008 if a wooden construction is destroyed, it should be replaced by a new structure of wood with similar dimensions. This restriction is a considerable improvement.

Due to investors expectations and “innovative” designers ideas wooden houses have undergone considerable and irreplaceable change. One wooden house has been raised to the forth floor on top of a modern construction and the other has been enlarged with four stories and covered with a facade of glass. These shall be treated as warning examples of unacceptable solutions of restoration of wooden architecture.

Wooden heritage up-raised to 4th floor
New architectural project in the core and buffer zones

Many new constructions are subject to architectural competition. This has been a general policy of the state authorities. On the one hand, architectural competitions often produce high quality solutions. One the other hand, there is a risk that winning projects are chosen for their architectural qualities and may not fit into the historic setting. The dialogue between old and new is frequently lacking.
The medieval core of Riga is an urban fabric built over centuries, where many buildings are constructed through good workmanship and handicraft. The original builders/craftsmen/architects might be anonymous and not recorded. When designing new constructions in Medieval Riga the emphasis should be on producing good quality.
modern “anonymous” architecture, which also stresses traditional materials and handicraft of high quality. Historic Riga should not be a playground for fancy modernistic constructions. The stress should be on modern design taking into consideration the historic setting. New constructions should also take into consideration the historic urban structures such as the streetscape. A project (25.1.2007, Skārnu 11), which does not meet these qualities is the design of new construction in the near vicinity of St Peters church, in a place where the former house has been bombarded during the war.

The Andrejsala Detailed plan was also presented during the mission and a visit was undertaken to the peninsula. ICOMOS received a revised detail plan on April 14th. “Andrejsala Detailed Plan, Final Edition, Extract of Binding and Explanatory Maps.”

The historic fabric of the area consists of industrial buildings and constructions and a harbour. The architecture of the buildings is moderate, to some extent humble, but the area as such forms an interesting ensemble of industrial activities that has created and formed a historic environment. A high chimney of the local power plant station forms the landmark of the peninsula.

Andrejsala aerial view (on left part of the above photo)
The area, situated within the buffer zone but close to the core zone, is subject to considerable changes. The proposed land use will be for residential and commercial constructions. Some historic buildings, constructions and structures will be preserved. The building density of the area will be high. The detailed plan will change the character of the area completely.

The mission does not recommend that the current plan is approved. It requires further development including:

- taking into consideration the historic structures and industrial constructions of the area (by historic survey on the development of the area, analyses of different stages and functions of buildings, state of condition of individual buildings) and use the information gained as the basis for planning;
- lowering the density of new constructions in the area;
- allowing more public space within the area and mainly in the area near to the river bank;
prohibiting new high-rise buildings within the area (the chimney of the power plant station shall be preserved).

4 ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE SITE

Review whether the values on the basis of which the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List are being maintained

The value of the historic core of Riga lies in the urban structures of the city, the plots of land, the individual buildings with masonry, details as window frames, doors, tiled roofs handcrafted by talented workers. The decision of the Committee identifies the site as the medieval Riga, the Art Nouveau blocks and the wooden architecture. Specific attention has also been paid to the visual integrity, the skyline, of historic Riga.

The medieval Riga has undergone both restorations, full and partial reconstructions of historic buildings (especially in the Town Square) and new infill architecture. The reconstructions have been completed to “rebuild” the historic past of Riga. On the other hand constructions from Soviet time have been safeguarded in the historic core. Modern architectural design has given form to new constructions in old Riga, often as a result of architectural competitions. This has to a degree been positive however, it has also resulted in overly modern and “fancy” constructions, which lack dialogue with the historic environment. All building project are subject to the approval of State Inspection.
Some of the Art Nouveau blocks have undergone restoration activities but some are still in a pretty poor and neglected state. Considering the number of houses to be maintained, the restoration work proceeds appropriately. The restoration work can from case to case be close to reconstruction, which, concerning the preservation of historic fabric of the building is not to be recommended. On the other hand, the technical conditions of the building/buildings might be so poor that only new constructions, architectural details and decorations can be applied.

The wooden architecture is the most vulnerable part of the historic structures in Riga. Prone to sudden fires, neglect and dismantling, parts of this heritage has been destroyed. A special strategy and action programme for a long term safeguarding of the wooden heritage has been approved by the authorities in March 2008. The mission warmly welcomes this initiative.

The mission considers that the works of restoration and maintenance in historic centre of Riga, the Art Nouveau blocks and developments concerning the wooden architecture are moving in a positive direction. A lot of work has been done and a number of international conferences on restoration, rehabilitation and construction of modern architecture in historic settings have been organised by the authorities in Latvia. The State Inspection has been very active in this field. Local designers and planners have also participated in these conferences. A number of recommendations concerning especially modern constructions in historic fabric have been agreed upon. A special programme for restoration of wooden heritage has been approved.
The visual setting and silhouette of old Riga is characterised by the flat urban landscape, the river Daugava and islands. The medieval church towers form the characteristic landmarks of the city. Skyscrapers from Soviet time are additional vertical elements of the city. The recently erected high-rise building, the Hansa Bank, forms a new element in the visual setting of old Riga. Due to its setting and height, the construction has a negative impact on the visual integrity of the historic silhouette of old Riga. The negative visual impact of the Hansa Bank should also lead to the revision of Kipsala detailed plan, by reducing considerably the height of any ongoing and new constructions in the area.
5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The mission considers that the overall situation of the administration, management and conservation of the World Heritage site of Riga are improving and thus moving in a positive direction. Though there are still constrains that have to be taken seriously, which, if implemented, will cause loss of integrity to the site. The most urgent threat is the Daugava Left Bank Conception Project, which if realised, would have an important negative impact on the visual integrity of the World Heritage site. The revised plan presented to UNESCO/ICOMOS mission will have a serious impact on the integrity of the silhouette of the Site.

- The mission notes a positive development in terms of the overall state of conservation of the property, but urges the local and national authorities to produce a thoroughly revised “Conception Project”, which fully takes into consideration the visual integrity of the World Heritage property of Historic Centre of Riga.

The legislative basis for the protection of heritage is stable. There is a special act, recently adopted on the protection of the Historic Centre of Riga. In addition a Council on Protection and Development of Historic Riga, with representatives of local and national authorities, UNESCO National Commission and Architects Union, has been established. Due to the fact that all building and restoration projects within the World Heritage Site have to be approved by the State Inspection, the institution is overloaded with work. The State Inspection on Heritage Protection is also actively taking part in international co-operation. e.g. the Council of Europe and the Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Co-operation.

- The mission considers it important that the legal framework for the preservation and development of Old Riga is fully implemented and that the established Council on the Preservation and Development approves projects that preserve the outstanding universal value and integrity of the site. The implementation also needs funding and adequate human resources.

The works of restoration and maintenance in the Historic Centre of Riga, the Art Nouveau blocks and wooden architecture, are moving in a positive direction. In addition to the restoration works, a number of projects for modern constructions have been realised or are under construction. Several conferences, workshops and seminars have been organised by State Inspection on modern constructions in historic urban settings. The conferences have produced recommendations on the conditions for modern structures. Nevertheless, the projects once realised, do not always meet the requirement of modern architecture in historic environments. Some of them do not fit into the traditional historic fabric and streetscape either due to their scale or their architectural design.

- Infill architecture should take into consideration the historic setting and urban fabric. It should “fill in” and form a dialogue with the historic structures.

There has been a general concern for the preservation and enhancement of the wooden heritage in Riga. A special programme for wooden architecture is approved and was signed by the authorities in March 2008.
• The Programme for Preserving the Wooden Architecture of Riga should be fully implemented. Large efforts, both human and financial, need to be made to restore and rehabilitate the wooden structures. An evaluation on the achievements should be carried out and if needed a follow-up programme should be set up.

• Exchanges and co-operation between the Municipality, the State Inspection and other stakeholders, including universities, NGOs, professional associations/organisations, local inhabitants etc., need to be further improved. The civil society should be more widely consulted in the framework of new projects developed by the Municipality and private investors.

• Continuous awareness-raising of municipal staff and local people about the World Heritage values and the site is necessary. A project on presentation/signage and promotion of the World Heritage area should be developed to enhance awareness of local people, tourists and other stakeholders of the values of the Property.

• The mission considers that the overall situation of the administration, management and conservation of the World Heritage site of Riga are improving and is moving in a positive direction due to the efforts made by the national and local authorities. The mission recommends that discussion on possible inscription of the Historic Centre of Riga on the List of World Heritage in Danger should be postponed until 2009, to allow time for the authorities to implement the recommendations of this report. The State Party is urged to thoroughly revise the Conception Plan for the development of the left bank of river Daugava, in particular in the southern part of Kipsala island, which has to take into consideration the visual integrity of Old Riga, mainly by reducing considerably the height of any ongoing and new constructions in the area.

Endnote:
This report was written by Ms. Margaretha Ehrström (ICOMOS) and Mr. Ahmad Junaid Sorosh-Wali (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Europe and North America Unit)
UNESCO-ICOMOS joint reactive monitoring mission to the World Heritage property of the Historic Centre of Riga, Latvia
25 to 28 March 2008

In conformity with the Decision 31 COM 7B.99 by World Heritage Committee, taken at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007), concerning the state of conservation of the Historic Centre of Riga, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997, and the invitation letter by the Latvian authorities dated 4 Feb. 2008, and taking into consideration the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, carry out a joint UNESCO World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission, in order to:

1. Assess the overall state of conservation of the property, in particular with regard to the proposed new high-rise development projects in the buffer zone on the left bank of the river Daugava,

2. Review the implementation of the last decisions of the World Heritage Committee and the corrective measures proposed;

3. Meet with relevant stakeholders of the local, regional and national authorities, including local associations and NGO’s in Riga, to discuss and review:
   - the current situation and the overall state of conservation of the World Heritage property;
   - the impact on the Outstanding Universal Value, integrity and authenticity of the World Heritage property by major development projects which are being either considered for implementation or are still under discussion, in the core zone, buffer zone and in particular on the left bank of the river Daugava (this should be supported by the relevant technical documentation to be provided by the State Party);
   - the changes made and the ICOMOS comments taken into account the proposed “Conception Project”, especially in relation to the proposed alterations to the Riga skyline and impacts on important views and visual integrity of the world heritage property through new high-rise construction,
   - the reinforcement process of the current legislations on the preservation and protection of the Historic Centre of Riga by limiting the height of new construction in the World Heritage core and buffer zones, and beyond if necessary;

4. Explore approaches for alternative models to the proposals outlined in the “Conception Project” and assess their impact on the Outstanding Universal Value and integrity of the property (this should be supported by the relevant technical documentation to be provided by the State Party), if any;

5. Prepare a concise joint ICOMOS-UNESCO report according to the format with recommendations, with a executive summary, taking into account, if appropriate, the
provisions in the *Operational Guidelines* in Chapter IV concerning reactive monitoring (paragraphs 169-176), Danger Listing (paragraphs 177-191), as well as the Resolution by the General Assembly of the State Parties (October 2005) on the Protection of the Historic Urban Landscapes, by 18 April 2008 at the latest, to be reviewed by the World Heritage Committee at its 32nd session (Quebec City, Canada, July 2008).

**Composition of mission team:**

1. Ms. Margaretha Ehrström (ICOMOS)
2. Mr. Ahmad. Junaid Sorosh-Wali (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Europe and North America Unit)
Annex II  
Mission itinerary and programme

Joint ICOMOS/ UNESCO reactive monitoring mission to the Historic centre of Riga, Latvia
From 25 to 28 of March 2008

24 March

23.35: Arrival in Riga of Mr. Sorosh-Wali
Hotel “Konventa sēta”
Adress: Kalēju Street 9/11

25 March

10.30: Arrival of Mrs. Ehrström (welcome in airport by the State Inspection for heritage protection)
Hotel “Konventa sēta”
Adress; Kalēju Street 9/11

14.00 – 17.00: Visit of the Historic Centre of Riga and its buffer zone (accompanied by arch. Lejnieks)
Meeting in the hotel.

26 March

10.00-12.15: Meeting in the State Inspection for heritage protection
Participants:
Juris Dambis, Head of the Inspection,
Rolands Ozols, Secretary General of the national Commission of UNESCO
Anita Vaivade, Head of Culture and Communication department of the national Commission of UNESCO
Peteris Blūms, the Adviser of the Head of Inspection
Baiba Murniece, Head of Heritage policies department of the Inspection
Katrina Kukaine, Deputy Head of Heritage policies department of the Inspection
Adress: M.Pils Street 19

12.30: Lunch in restaurant “Bergs”
Address: Elizabetes Street 83/85

15.00: Attendance of a Session of the Council for the Preservation and Development of Riga’s Historic Centre.
Adress: Elizabetes Street 18, 2nd floor
Agenda:
- Conception of the silhouette development of the Left bank of Daugava River
- Reconstruction of the former cinema house “Spartaks”, Elizabetes Street 61
Participants:
Andris Kronbergs, Chairman of the Council, architect, a specialist attracted by Minister of Culture
Jānis Asaris, Archaeologist, Deputy Head of the State Inspection for Heritage Protection
Juris Dambis, Head of State Inspection for Heritage Protection
Rolands Ozols, Secretary General, UNSECO National Committee
Iveta Staša, Head of Riga City Council division responsible for urban planning in the City of Riga
Pēteris Strancis, Head of Development Department, Riga City Council
Edgars Treimanis, Board Member of Latvian Union of Architects
Jānis Zilgalvis, Head of Architecture and arts department, State Inspection for Heritage Protection
Jānis Dripe, Riga City Architect

20.00: Dinner offered by the Riga City Municipality in restaurant “Salve”
Participants:
Jānis Dripe, Riga City Architect
Gvido Princis, Deputy Head of Development Department, Riga City Council
Adress: Rātslaukums 5

27 March

9.00: Meeting with the representatives of NGOs
Participants:
Jānis Asaris, Archaeologist, representative of ICOMOS Latvia
Andis Zilāns, Sandra Jakušonoka, Vīlnis Putrāms, representatives of NGO “Coalition for the protection of the natural and cultural heritage”
Pēteris Blūms, NGO “Latvia Nostra”
Adress: M.Pils Street 19

10.30: Meeting with the representatives of investors’ association „New Riga centre” (Jaunais Rīgas centrs) related with development of the Left bank of Daugava River
Participants:
Representatives of investors’ association „New Riga centre”:
Juris Dreimanis – TK Development
Paolo Mikelozzi – Pro Kapital
Ainars Paunins – RE&RE/Pro Kapital
Ahto Ader – YIT Construction
Arturs Igaņš – Hanner Real Estate
Adress: Elizabetes Street 18, 2nd floor

13.00: Visit of the building of Hansabanka in Kipsala to have a panoramic view over the city (accompanied by arch. Lejnieks)

14.00: Visit of the Andrejsala and meeting with the representatives of the developers in Andrejsala
Participants:
Aigars Kušķis, representative of company “Jaunrīgas attīstības uzņēmums”
Lolita Čače, architect, urban planner, Grupa 93, Ltd
Adress: Andrejostas Street 6

15.30: Meeting with Mr. Ivars Gaters, Chairman of the Riga Municipality Communal and quarter issues committee and Deputy Chairman of the City development committee, ex-minister of the Regional development and regional affairs.

16.15 -18.00: Attendance of a session of the Riga City Architect’s collegium (chaired by Jānis Dripe, Riga City Architect)
Adress: Architects Union house, Torņu Street 11
In working order:
Development project of the Stockmann Commercial centre in Riga Historic centre
20.00: Dinner in restaurant „Fabrikas restorāns”
Participants:
Paolo Mikelozzi – Pro Kapital, Chairman
Ainars Paunins – RE&RE/Pro Kapital
Juris Dambis, Head of State Inspection for Heritage Protection
Adress: Balasta dambis 70

28 March
10.30: Debriefing meeting in the State Inspection
Participants:
Juris Dambis, Head of the Inspection,
Jānis Dripe, Riga City Architect
Rolands Ozols, Secretary General of the national Commission of UNESCO
Anita Vaiadve, Head of Culture and Communication department of the national Commission of UNESCO
Jānis Lejnieks, architect
Katrina Kukaine, Deputy Head of Heritage policies department of the Inspection

11.00: Departure of Mr. Sorosh-Wali (delivery to airport by the State Inspection for heritage protection)
15.00: Departure of Mrs. Ehrström (delivery to airport by the State Inspection for heritage protection)
Annex III  Maps and other documents as provided by the State Party
Detail Plan for the Southern part of Kipsala, adopted in 2001
Mr. Francesco Bandarin  
Director  
Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali  
Department of Europe and North America  
UNESCO World Heritage Centre  
7 Place de Fourntenoy  
F – 75352 Paris  
07 SP France  

Ms Margaretha Ehrström  
Po box 169, Stuuremkatu 4  
FIN – 00311 Helsinki  
Finland

Riga

April 1, 2008

The State Inspection for Heritage protection (hereinafter – the Inspection) would like to thank UNESCO World Heritage Centre for the accorded attention and offered assistance to the protection of the World Heritage site – the Historic centre of Riga, delegating the joint ICOMOS/World Heritage centre expert mission to Riga from 25 to 28 of March 2008. We hope that in conclusion of this fruitful mission, rich in experience, the mutual understanding of the different problems has been obtained.

According the experts’ request, the Riga City Municipality has prepared supplementary materials about the visual impact studies of the Left bank of Daugava silhouette conception that we send to you in attachment. We add also the materials prepared by Andzejsala development project coordinators.

We would like to inform that the primordial intentions of the Left Bank of Daugava development conception are substantially changed. The height of buildings has been changed in whole territory of development on the Left Bank of Daugava in order not to allow the negative visual perception of the World Heritage site. There is only one place with heighten building – the Southern end of Kipsala Island. The Riga City Municipality assures that the constructions with appropriate height in the planning structure were historically provided in all planning documents. As you can see in attached documents, in the rest of the new building area the building height is restricted and the high-rise buildings are not allowed.

We would like to inform you also, that a serious work is going on in the preservation of the World Heritage site itself focusing on the authenticity of the values, specially on the preservation of the wooden heritage.
5. Evaluation of the silhouette using the 3dimension model

There is the digital model created for the territory included in the elaboration of the Conception (rev. profile in Annex 4, "Existing spatial structure of the territory in the digital model"), that will be used for the evaluation of the building proposals.

The studies of the building visual impact (rev. profile in Annex 6, "Photo fixation and the visual impact of new construction in the Southern part of Kipsala with the height of 150 m on the Historic centre") detected that high-raised buildings in the Southern part of Kipsala would be visible from several places of the public urban area in the Historic centre of Riga disturbing the perception of the silhouette of the Old Riga. As follows, the utmost height of building in the Southern part of Kipsala has been decreased till 121 m and higher constructions have been moved farther from the Historic centre. That conforms to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers 08.03.2004. Nr. 127, "Regulations regarding the Preservation and Protection of the Historic Centre of Riga".

Annexes:
Annex 1: map "Evaluation of the silhouette from the public urban area and the analysed points of view" on 1 page;
Annex 2: map "Photo fixation – views’ directions" on 1 page;
Annex 3: 621 photos on 18 pages;
Annex 4: profiles "Existing spatial structure of the territory in the digital model" on 1 page;
Annex 5: profiles "Photo fixation and the visual impact of new construction in the Southern part of Kipsala with the height of 150 m on the Historic centre") on 2 pages;
Annex 6: "Photomontage from the chosen points of view in the public urban area" on 3 pages
Annex 7: maps, profiles and 3D visualizations "Riga concept for the silhouette of the Left Bank of the river Daugava" on 11 pages
Mr. Francesco Bandarin  
Director  
Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali  
Department of Europe and North America  
UNESCO World Heritage Centre  
7 Place de Fontenoy  
F – 75352 Paris  
07 SP France

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We would like to inform you also, that a serious work is going on in the preservation of the World Heritage site itself focusing on the authenticity of the values, specially, on the preservation of the wooden heritage.
Thanks to the active action of the Inspection and different professional organizations and to the professional consultations and position of the UNESCO World Heritage centre, it is succeeded in a short period of time to limit a chaotic contemporary construction and to achieve a harmonic development of area in the Historic centre of Riga and its Buffer zone, respecting the heritage values and creating a qualitative human living space.

The Inspection considers that Riga is an example, where thanks to the World Heritage site’s status it has been possible to stop and to limit so many dissonant new buildings by the side of the other neighboring countries. Consequently, a very strict new order is establish grounded on the legislation.

We would like to thank you one more time for your contribution in the preservation of the World Heritage site and we hope to the fruitful dialogue also in future.

Faithfully,

Juris Dambis
Head
State Inspection for Heritage Protection
Republic of Latvia
Visual impact studies of the development in the Buffer zone of the historic centre of Riga to the core zone of UNESCO World Heritage site

According to the status of the World Heritage site – the Historic Centre of Riga, important public interest, diversity of opinions and dialogue between the local specialists and UNESCO, a lot of analyses and visual impact studies have been made concerning the silhouette development on the Left Bank of the river Daugava, in cooperation with the best architects in Latvia.

Since 2006 there are regular consultative sessions in the Riga City Architect bureau with the participation of the State Inspection for heritage protection, the Architecture Faculty of Riga Technical University and Riga City Development department. A dimensional model has been created for whole area of the Left Bank, 3Dimension model has been updated. The photo and graphic visual impact studies from 621 points of view have been realised. (Annex 1) These are the instruments to start the evaluation of the new building impact on the historic urban environment. This work could be finished in the middle of the year 2008.

Further dialogue with the UNESCO World Heritage centre could help to stimulate a successful conclusion of this work. In this case we request to take into consideration that the Conception of the silhouette development of the Left Bank of Daugava is built on the continuity of the city planning documents generated during the whole 20th century, also on the Riga City Development Plan 1986-2005 that was added to the UNESCO Nomination file of the Historic Centre of Riga in 1996. In mentioned document the city development policy was defined – to form the silhouette of the Left Bank of Daugava concentrating the heightened building in the Southern part of Kipsala around the Golf of Aunaskalns.

The heightened building in the Southern end of Kipsala is the part of the common Riga City spatial composition conception, that foresees to mark with accented building structures the relevant crossing points of Daugava with transport arteries (in the central part a distance between the silhouette of the Old Riga and new accents is 700 m). Based on these documents, the real estate market developed since 1991 on the Left Bank of Daugava, int. al., in the Buffer zone of the UNESCO World Heritage site.

Also the Kipsala detailed plan adopted by the Riga City Municipality in 2001 envisages the accented building in the same pace in Kipsala. The World Heritage Committee requested the State party in its decision 27 COM 7.B.69 to fully guarantee the respect of the approved detailed plan of Kipsala in order to protect the World Heritage property and its visual integrity. The Riga City Municipality wishes to respect the historical value of the city and to create on the Left Bank of Daugava predictable and efficiently controllable architectural composition.

The silhouette of the Left Bank of Daugava is composed of four major centres located at planned crossings of the river. One of them, on the South end of Kipsala Island, has been on the planners list for last ninety years, the one on the south, Tormakals, has lately come to existence as the best new location for municipal administration, while the rest two in the North, Pūdre and the South, Luņaavalkals, has potential because of their close location to planned transportation routes. All the new centres are just on the edge of the Buffer zone for World Heritage Site - Riga Historic Centre.

All the four planned new centres along with extensive office use are supposed to contain public use on the lower levels, and certain quantity of dwelling. Presently Riga Technical University exists and the new Riga
Concert Hall, the new State Library, and the new Riga City Administration is planned within the area in question, producing strong attraction knots for whole city.

Riga Municipality has undertaken development of Park & Ride system on the periphery of the city, since capacity of streets to accommodate private cars in the area of Riga Historic centre is close to the limits. This obliges all the access and the future development base on public transportation. Tram is seen as the best issue. Location of the existing greenery areas, however, allows planning of new greenery in order to develop comfortable pedestrian route between new planned centres.

Taking into account abovementioned, we will be grateful to continue the dialogue related to the final stage of the project of the silhouette development of the Left Bank of Daugava, as well as concerning urban development of the Riga City centre overall.

The methods used for the visual impact studies of the planned building on the Left Bank of Daugava

To precise the authorized building height on the Left Bank of Daugava, there were realized the visual impact studies of the planned building on the Historic centre of Riga, i.e., the Old Riga, urban environment. In result the most important points of view, wherefrom a „intact“ perception of the Old Riga silhouette must be provided, are determined.

The elaboration of the Conception project was realized in several stages using different methods of the visual impact analyse:

1. The survey of the public accessible urban space of the Historic center of Riga and its Buffer zone and the classification vis-à-vis the perception of the building on the Left Bank of Daugava

These studies gave the possibility to divide conditionally the public urban space into 3 categories (rev. the map in Annex 1 „Evaluation of the silhouette from the public urban area and the analysed points of view“):
1. The place wherefrom the visual perception from the building on the Left Bank of Daugava isn’t acceptable;
2. The places, wherefrom the perception of the building’s accents must be carefully analysed in context of the Old Riga and the historic building in other city centre parts;
3. The places, wherefrom the silhouette of the Left Bank of Daugava is openly perceptible and is considered as important component of the public urban area.

The studies of the current situation contained also the summarization of the information about the building, where the technical project is concerted and the construction is going on; building proposals that overcame in the project competitions for the object concerned; projects in the preliminary stage; building propositions – visions; currently ongoing competitions and plain-air events.

Photo fixation

The photo fixation and 521 points of view has been chosen for their digital treatment – mainly, straight spans of streets which are turned to the Left Bank of Daugava, and wherefrom it’s possible to perceive the high-raised buildings; both embankments of Daugava taking into account the views from the bridges (the embankments’ panorama in 360° taken from the middle of bridge); all the public urban area zones in the Old Riga and around the Old Riga (Green belt on both sides of the City Channel, Boulevard Circle etc.), as well as the most important transport highways and pedestrian roads (rev. map of Annex 2 „Photo fixation – views’ directions“).

Thanks to the method of photo fixation, an overview there is obtained concerning the places (rev. Annex 3 – 521 photos) wherefrom the silhouette of the Left Bank of Daugava has been evaluated.
5. Evaluation of the silhouette using the 3D model

There is the digital model created for the territory included in the elaboration of the Conception (rev. profile in Annex 4 „Existing spatial structure of the territory in the digital model“), that will be used for the evaluation of the building proposals.

The studies of the building visual impact (rev. profile in Annex 5 „Photo fixation and the visual impact of new constructions in the Southern part of Kipsala with the height of 150 m on the Historic centre“) detected that high-raised buildings in the Southern part of Kipsala would be visible from several places of the public urban area in the Historic centre of Riga disturbing the perception of the silhouette of the Old Riga. As follows, the utmost height of building in the Southern part of Kipsala has been decreased till 121 m and higher constructions have been moved farther from the Historic centre. That conforms to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers 08.03.2004. Nr. 127 „Regulations regarding the Preservation and Protection of the Historic Centre of Riga“.

Annexes:
Annex 1: map „Evaluation of the silhouette from the public urban area and the analysed points of view“ on 1 page;
Annex 2: map „Photo fixation – views’ directions“ on 1 page;
Annex 3: 621 photos on 18 pages;
Annex 4: profiles „Existing spatial structure of the territory in the digital model“ on 1 page;
Annex 5: profiles „Photo fixation and the visual impact of new constructions in the Southern part of Kipsala with the height of 150 m on the Historic centre“ on 2 pages;
Annex 6: „Photomontage from the chosen points of view in the public urban area“ on 3 pages
Annex 7: maps, profiles and 3D visualizations „Riga concept for the silhouette of the Left Bank of the river Daugava“ on 11 pages.
the historical centre of Riga which is included in the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites must apprise the development of the silhouette together with the silhouette of Old Riga.

Places from must not see the new multi-storey buildings.

Places from must approve the development of the silhouette.

Historical centre of Riga which is included in the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The protective zone of historical centre of Riga which is included in the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The border of Daugava left bank silhouette conception project.
The protective zone of Riga's historical centre which is included in the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Existing buildings

Historical centre of Riga which is included in the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The protective zone of historical centre of Riga which is included in the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The border of Daugava River's bank silhouette conception project.

Photo location points.
5. pielikums „Fotofiksācija un Kipsalas dienvidu daļas jaunās apbūves ietekmes analīze apbūvei 150m augstumā uz vēsturisko centru”

148 punkts – Doma laukums

140 punkts – Doma laukums

254 punkts – Livu laukums
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbrs</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<td>278</td>
<td>Brīvibas pieminekļa apkārtne</td>
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<tr>
<td>238</td>
<td>Stacijas laukums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fotomontāža</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>256</td>
<td>no Kanālmalas apstādījumiem</td>
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</table>
LEGEND:

- BORDER OF HISTORIC CENTRE OF RIGA
- PROTECTION BELT OF HISTORIC CENTRE OF RIGA
- BORDER OF LEFT BANK CONCEPT PROJECT
- CONNECTION BETWEEN NEW CENTERS - PUBLIC SPACES AND GREENARY SYSTEM
- LOCAL CONNECTION
- NEW CENTERS OF THE LEFT BANK OF THE RIVER
- HISTORIC CENTRE OF RIGA-OLD RIGA
- PUBLIC CENTERS-CULTURE AND EDUCATION.
- EXISTING DAUGAVA CROSSING
- PLANNED DAUGAVA CROSSING

RIGA CONCEPT FOR THE SILHOUETTE OF THE LEFT BANK OF THE RIVER DAUGAVA
Riga Concept for the Silhouette of the Left Bank of the River Daugava
Pirmā Daugavas kreisā krasta augstaclīne – romantisks rekonstruēts t.s. Sarkanā tornā attēls tagadējā dzelzceļa tiltu galā.

1937
Latvijas Ministru kabinets pieņem likumu par Uzvaras laukuma loteriju, kuras ienēmumi tikt izmantoti kompleksa izbūvei un izdalīšanai. Visatvērīgie loterijas būšu piešķirti Ogres un Bauskas aprociejā latvistvotāji, kā arī ievērojami vietējie uznēmēji.

Atbalstot ideju par valdības kompleksa izbūvi Pārdaugavā, īstenēja piecās naktīs Pāvils Pāvulāns uzskici eikārtu tiltu no Mintas ielas uz Pārislas dienvidgalu.

1938
Konkursā par Uzvaras laukuma izveidi tiek iegūtu kompleksa darbi. Vairākas no tiem ir izteikts priekšlikums Daugavas kreisajā krastā veidot jaunu, reprezentatīvu pilnības administratīvo centru.


Arhitekta Artūra Reinfelda priekšlikums, kurā lidzīgi kā Skujīla un Dauges projektā uzsvērta Uzvaras bulvāra ass.

1945
Pilsētas centra kompozīcijas shēma pirmajā Rīgas generalplānā pēc 1945. gada. Maskavas norīcējot arhitekta Živiecija Visnieka darbā raksturo taupīšu ideju no abās vērtības ar plāšiem laukumiem, simetriju asimā un tālām perspektīvām.

1949

Annex IV  ICOMOS evaluation of the nomination dossier

Identification

Nomination  The historic centre of Riga
Location  City of Riga
State Party  Republic of Latvia
Date  19 July 1996

Justification by State Party

The historic centre of the City of Riga is considered to be of outstanding universal value because it represents a unique artistic value, comprising aesthetic achievements from all the historical styles from Romanesque to Functionalism. It contains a large number of historic buildings of monumental importance from the three national groups involved over the centuries in its creation: Latvian, German, and Russian. Riga was a member of the Hanseatic League and was strongly influenced by northern Germany during the early centuries of its growth. In the 17th and 18th centuries, as part of the Kingdom of Sweden, it acquired buildings by Swedish engineers and Swedish place-names. The cultural influence of Jewish, Polish, and Ukrainian minorities can also be identified in some buildings. The proportions of its townscape constitute one of the features of Riga, which is comparable in its multicultural character with Prague.

Criterion i

Riga has exerted a considerable influence within the Baltic cultural area on subsequent developments in architecture. As one of the largest ports and trading centres on the Baltic it provided the meeting place for the achievements of the western and eastern European cultures. As the only technical university for architecture in the Baltic States until World War I, the Riga Polytechnic promoted the dissemination of its own characteristic architecture to Tallinn, Vilnius, and the towns of western Tsarist Russia.

Criterion ii

The historic centre of Riga is among the most characteristic examples of a European capital city, representing significant cultural, social, artistic, scientific, and industrial development throughout its eight-hundred-year history.

Criterion iv

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the historic centre of Riga is a group of buildings.

History and Description

History

Archaeological excavations in the Old Town have shown that there were settlements of the local tribes, the Livi and the Cour, along with some foreign trading posts, on the peninsula formed by the confluence of the Riezene and Daugava rivers by the late 11th century, and the place became a cross-roads for trade between east and west. Livonia was christianized in 1184 by the German monk Meinhard, but early chronicles attribute the establishment of the city to Bishop Albert in 1201. However, almost nothing is known about the layout of this first city. Its simple wooden buildings were concentrated on the tip of the peninsula around the harbour and the streets were made of logs. There appears to have been no defensive enclosure wall.

German settlers brought stone building techniques with them, and two castles were built, one for the Bishop and the other for the knights of the Teutonic Order, who accompanied Albert on his mission to Livonia. A stone defensive wall was constructed in 1216, to enclose all the existing settlements, including the foreign trading posts. Vigorous opposition from the merchants forced the Bishop to accept the Visby Law, which assigned important rights to citizens.

However, strife between the Bishop and the Order on the one hand and the merchants on the other persisted, and in 1221 the inhabitants successfully rebelled against German domination. A town council was elected by the body of the citizenry to become its legislative and executive body. The independent city prospered, becoming the third largest mercantile centre on the Baltic (after Lübeck and Gdansk), and in 1252 it formed an alliance with Lübeck and Visby to become a member of the Hanseatic League. Its wealth increased as Riga assumed the role of the principal port handling Russian furs, wax, timber, tar, potatoes, tea, leather goods, textiles and clothes, salt, herrings, wine, beer, and spices moving into the Russian heartland.

The 13th and the early 14th centuries saw Riga grow in size to some 25,000. Work began on the three main churches that survive to the present day and on a number of imposing public and commercial buildings. Regulations promulgated first in 1295 prohibited the use of wood for construction and north German stone techniques were brought in. By the 14th century Riga was a typical large Hanseatic town, with winding streets and densely packed dwelling houses, a large
market square in the centre on which the town hall was situated, and strong fortifications (which were to be radically reconstructed from 1537 onwards to counter the new weapon, artillery). By the end of the 16th century the population had risen to over ten thousand.

The mid-16th century saw two strong forces acting on Riga. It embraced the Reformation and the teachings of Martin Luther and successfully resisted the Counter Reformation in the 1530s and 1540s. However, it was unable to stand up to the forces of Ivan the Terrible in 1559. Russian occupation was followed by Polish domination, and Riga stood between Poland and the ambitions of Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden. In 1621 Riga became part of the enlarged Swedish kingdom, and experienced many years of war during the struggles between Sweden and Russia. In 1710, following the defeat of Charles XII of Sweden at the battle of Parnawa, Riga fell to the Russian army after a siege of nine months, to remain part of the Tsarist Russian Empire until the creation of the First Republic of Latvia in 1918.

Both Sweden and Russia made Riga the administrative capital of the Baltic countries. During the Russian period, the administrative centre moved from the Old City to the former castle of the Teutonic Knights outside the walls. There was also considerable suburban expansion, in 1769 and again in 1815, on a checkerboard layout. Throughout this period Riga experienced changes in its building styles. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries the emphasis was on Classicism, expressed in the form of single-storey wooden buildings, especially in the new suburbs but also replacing earlier buildings in the Old City.

The advent of Russian rule in the mid 18th century resulted in a short period of economic stagnation, but by the end of the century booming foreign trade led to considerable industrial development. The population rose from over 60,000 in 1857 to over 300,000 forty years later. Riga was the fifth largest city in the Russian Empire (after Moscow, St Petersburg, Kiev, and Warsaw) and its largest port, whilst its factories were responsible for 5.7% of the gross industrial production of the Empire.

This new prosperity led to a radical new approach to the city's urban structure. The fortifications were levelled in 1857 and a new plan for the reconstruction of the city was implemented in 1857-63. As a result, the whole spatial and structural design of the city changed. The space occupied by the walls was replaced by a green belt of gardens, and outside these a new semi-circular sweep of broad boulevards was laid out. The new city that developed beyond these boulevards was marked with many public buildings - theatres, schools, the university, the central post office, and the central railway station.

The bourgeoisie of Riga used their wealth to build imposing private residences and apartment blocks in the expanding suburbs, where an earlier ordinance forbidding the use of stone for building was rescinded. Latvian and Russian architects adopted the European movements enthusiastically, and in particular Art Nouveau, which came from Finland. This developed its own characteristics in Riga, where a national style was created by graduates of the Riga Polytechnic.

During the two decades of the first Latvian Republic, it was Functionalism that dominated the architecture of Riga, adding to its stylistic diversity. The project for modernizing the medieval Old City, as part of which a number of blocks were completely rebuilt and several streets widened, came to an abrupt halt with the outbreak of World War II. During that conflict the Old City suffered grievously from bombardment, and only the most outstanding monuments, such as St Peter's Church and some medieval houses, were restored.

Description

The area of the historical centre of Riga nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List consists of three elements: the medieval Old City (3ha), the 19th century semi-circle of boulevards, and the 18th and 19th century former suburban quarters lying outside the boulevards, with a checkerboard layout.

There are several major churches in the Old City. Building of the Cathedral, dedicated to the Virgin, with its adjacent monastery, began in 1211; it was largely reconstructed in the 14th and 15th centuries and underwent renovation and restoration in 1586-1906. In its present form, there are elements of Romanesque and Gothic side by side with Late Renaissance Mannerism, Baroque, Classicalism, and Neo-Gothic.

St Peter's Church is first mentioned in 1209, but construction of the present building began in 1408. Massive reconstruction work was necessary after World War II damage. Its spire, originally raised in 1609, is one of the major landmarks of the Old City. The three elegant Baroque portals on the west facade are a notable feature of this building, now in use as an exhibition and concert hall.

St John's Church was, in its original role as the church of the Dominican monastery, in Late Gothic style. However, in 1582 after the Reformation it was enlarged and rebuilt in the Renaissance idiom to the design of a Dutch architect.

The narrow-fronted building plots, typical of medieval European towns, survive to a considerable extent within the Old City. However, few medieval houses are still intact, of these one of the most interesting is the House of the Three Brothers, an impeccably restored group from the 15th century now combined to serve as the headquarters of the State Inspection for Cultural Heritage. The late 17th century Reinhold's House and Danneméster's House are more monumental buildings, notable for their interior decorations and fittings as well as their impressive facades.

The towns walls were demolished in the mid 19th century, but one section has been reconstructed, complete with bastion. The last gate surviving is the attractive Swedish tower (1698), which now serves as the house of Architects. Elements of the Riga Castle, begun by the Teutonic Knights, are still extant but
have been extensively reconstructed. The Arsenal, built by the Russians in the 1820s, is a handsome structure in Russian Classicism style.

The impressive sweep of the boulevards, lying outside the gardens and the canal on the site of the former defences, provides an attractive frame around much of the Old City. The boulevards have many important 19th and early 20th century public buildings fronting on to them, including the National Theatre and the Museum of Latvian Art. The creation of the boulevards coincided with the reign of Eclecticism in Europe, and this movement is abundantly represented. The gardens themselves are excellent examples of municipal garden planning, laid out between 1879 and 1914.

The suburbs that expanded and developed so rapidly from the mid 19th century onwards are notable for both the surviving wooden buildings in the classical Russian style and the extraordinary wealth of buildings that arose after the removal of the fortifications and the implementation of the new city plan, and in particular in the closing decade of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th century. The era of Eclecticism allowed architects to produce many flights of fancy, well illustrated by the "House of the Cat" on Meistaru Street.

However, it was Art Nouveau (Jugendstill), which reached Riga via Finland at the very end of the 19th century, that provided the suburban area with its most noteworthy feature. There are countless examples, perhaps the most outstanding of which are the works of Mikhail Eisenstein in Alberta and Elizabeth Streets. National Romanticism evolved from Jugendstill in Latvia, again on the Finnish model. This movement is represented by the work of architects such as E. Laube, K. Pekšs, and A. Venags, with some striking examples of their work in Alberta and Brivibas Streets.

Riga was a major industrial city, and it also possesses an impressive heritage of workers' housing from the 19th and 20th centuries. The workers' housing estate bounded by Tallinn Street and Valmiers Street, complete with its own church and school, is an outstanding example of this type of residential unit.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The legal status of the area covered in the nomination is provided by the 1992 Law concerning the Protection of Cultural Monuments (with amendments 1993 and 1995) and the 1992 Regulations for Listing, Protection, Use and Restoration of Cultural Monuments. It relates to both individual buildings and to areas (of which the nominated historic centre is one). It is necessary for authorization to be obtained from the State Inspection for Heritage Protection (major projects) or from the City of Riga Inspection for Monument Protection (minor projects) for any interventions on protected monuments or in conservation areas. At the present time there are 1674 protected monuments in the historic centre of Riga - 3 urban monuments, 6 archaeological sites, 39 historical monuments (18 cemeteries, 21 buildings), 459 artistic monuments (28 sculptures, 37 interior paintings, 24 icons, 111 monuments in cemeteries, 259 other works of art), and 1167 architectural monuments (41 public buildings, 28 churches, 8 castles, 2 castles, 743 dwellings, 4 parks, 341 other buildings). Each cultural monument has, where appropriate, a protection zone around it, determined by the State Inspection, in which further development is prohibited.

Management

Owners (whether individual, corporate, or official) are responsible for the preservation and maintenance of their property.

The State Inspection has the power to stop any economic activities within the cultural monuments or their protection zones where unauthorized activities are taking place. Monitoring of all protected properties is carried out regularly by the Riga City Inspection for Monument Protection.

All new construction within the historic centre of Riga is prohibited.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

There have been individual actions involving conservation and restoration in the historic centre of Riga for more than a hundred years. However, conservation as a central component of urban planning began with the Regeneration Plan for Old Riga (1978-81). Among its provisions were the return of the Old City to its late 19th century appearance, with the removal of low-quality later structures, the restriction of vehicular traffic, and limitations on the height, roof, form, materials, etc of new buildings. This has been largely successful (though some insensitive buildings from the Soviet period remain), especially with the banning of virtually all vehicles from the Old City.

The current overall City Plan (1995) and its complementary Strategic Development Plan extend and strengthen the earlier Plan, especially in those parts of the historic centre lying outside the Old City. Specific provisions relating to the built heritage are prescribed in the Building Site Plan and Zoning Regulations, and these appear to be respected in considerable measure.

The area nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List is all covered by conservation area regulations, as is the adequate buffer zone proposed by the State Party. These are confirmed in the City Plan. There are certain buildings within the designated conservation areas that are of recent construction and low architectural merit, such as the Latvija Hotel.

All designation is based on survey and inventory. A detailed architectural inventory of the entire city is currently in progress, but it is proceeding slowly, owing to problems in funding.
Authenticity

Whilst the overall urban fabric of Riga has retained a high degree of authenticity, some reconstruction and restoration work, especially in the past two decades, has not respected current conservation principles, with the use of inappropriate materials. It is important that the powers available to the State and City Inspections in this respect should be more rigorously applied.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Riga in September 1996. ICOMOS also consulted DoCoMoMo and members of the UNESCO Joint Cultural Study and Action Project to Preserve and Restore World Art Nouveau/Jugendstil Architectural Heritage on the architecture of Riga and the coordinator of the Council of Europe’s Cultural Routes Project on the towns of the Hansatic League on the city’s historical and cultural significance.

Qualities

Riga has indisputably played a key role in the economic, commercial, and social history of northern and eastern Europe. It was a leading member of the Hansatic League and one of the most important industrial cities in Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This is reflected in its urban fabric in terms of its street patterns and the quality and style of its buildings. However, damage by war and insensitive demolitions of historic structures in peace-time have adversely affected the character of the Old Town in particular.

Nonetheless, Riga does possess qualities of outstanding universal value in the form of its 19th and early 20th century buildings, particularly its wooden buildings and those of the Art Nouveau/Jugendstil movement, which, taken with the overall urban fabric mentioned above, give it qualities not present in any other European town.

Comparative Analysis

As a Hansatic city, Riga does not compare in terms of completeness and authenticity with Lübeck (Germany) or Visby (Sweden), which are already inscribed on the World Heritage List, or with Tallinn (Estonia), nominated for 1997.

If it is evaluated for its importance in European architectural history as an assemblage of Art Nouveau/Jugendstil buildings, however, it is impossible to cite any city to compare with Riga. There are outstanding examples of buildings in this style in a number of cities, such as Barcelona, Brussels, Glasgow, Helsinki, Moscow, Paris, Prague, and Vienna. However, these are all single works of art.

It is relevant in this context to note that the Final Report of the 7th Plenary Meeting of the UNESCO International Joint Cultural Study and Action Project to Preserve and Restore World Art Nouveau/Jugendstil Architectural Heritage, held in Turin (Italy) on 4-9 October 1994, includes “the central part of the town” of Riga in its second list of “buildings for consideration to be included into the World Heritage List.” It should be noted in particular that Riga is the only ensemble on either of the Project’s lists, all the remainder being individual buildings.

Riga also has a remarkable heritage of fine wooden buildings of the 19th century.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

The ICOMOS mission suggested that the area nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List should be amended slightly so as to include the workers’ housing settlement, with its church and school, in the area bounded by Tallinn and Vaiņņierģis Street. This is of high architectural and historic significance and lies within a conservation area. This proposal was accepted by the State Party.

The inventory of buildings should be completed with the minimum of delay and used as the basis for a detailed programme for the rehabilitation and restoration of the buildings outside the Old City, especially the 19th century wooden structures, whose state of preservation is poor in a disturbing number of cases.

Incentives for investment and restoration should be provided by the State and City administrations. These could take the form of tax exemption and, in certain cases, free transfer of ownership, in return for undertakings that the necessary repair and restoration work will take place, under the supervision of the relevant monuments inspection.

Whilst ICOMOS understands the need for the State Party to benefit from the restoration and rehabilitation of some of its finest buildings by foreign investors, it feels that the relevant authorities should be given greater support in enforcing the regulations governing historic monuments.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria i and ii:

The historic centre of Riga, while retaining its medieval and later urban fabric relatively intact, is of outstanding universal value by virtue of the quality and the quantity of its Art Nouveau/Jugendstil architecture, which is unparalleled anywhere in the world, and its 19th century architecture in wood.

ICOMOS, September 1997