

LATVIA

Historic Centre of Riga

Brief description

Riga was a major centre of the Hanseatic League, deriving its prosperity in the 13th–15th centuries from the trade with central and Eastern Europe. The urban fabric of its medieval centre reflects this prosperity, though most of the earliest buildings were 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.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription

1997

Agency responsible for site management

- Riga City Council
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The State Inspection for Heritage Protection
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria

C (i), (ii)

Justification provided by the State Party

The Historical Centre of Riga City is considered to be an 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 its growth. Later Riga

became as a part of the Swedish Kingdom and from the 17th and 18th century the parts of Old Riga has inherited buildings by Swedish engineers and the toponymes. The cultural input by Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian minorities also is recognizable in different buildings. The balanced Historical Centre of Riga City townscape is one of its features and Riga is comparable with multicultural character of Prague.

Riga has exerted considerable influence within the cultural area of Baltic Sea on subsequent developments in architecture, monumental sculpture and garden design of different settlements (ii)*. Riga as one of the biggest harbor cities and trade centres on the Baltic provided the exchange of the achievements of Western and Eastern civilization. Riga Polytechnicum, being the only one high-school for architect's education till WWI in the Baltic states, promoted the dissemination of the patterns of its 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 its 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.

As provided in 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.

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.

Committee Decision

Bureau (June 1997): The Bureau recommended the Committee to inscribe this site on the World Heritage List on the basis of cultural 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.

Session (1997): The Committee decided to inscribe this property on the basis of 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.

- Statement of significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: a buffer zone has been defined

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- No foreseen changes

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- The law "On the Preservation and Protection of the Historic Centre of Riga" came into force in 25 June 2003

- The Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers Nr 127 on the Preservation and Protection of Historic Centre of Riga, adopted 8. March, 2004.
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Urban centre

Management /Administrative Body

- Steering group: The Council for the Preservation and Development of the Historic Centre of Riga is a public advisory body set up in order to facilitate the process of developing and implementing the physical plan of Riga's Historical Centre
- Legally constituted
- Management under protective legislation; consensual management; local municipality
- No site manager
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national, local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: January 1995
- Adequate
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: The State Inspection for Heritage Protection; Riga City Council

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- The Historic Centre of Riga includes many objects which are financed either by state, municipal or private funding
- Extra funding has been drawn from World Heritage status
- Investment of the State Cultural Capital Foundation
- World Heritage Fund; Bi-lateral cooperation
- Funding available for the adequate management of the site: sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- 20 staff

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, management, promotion, interpretation
- Average: education, visitor management

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Conservation, management, archaeologists, structural engineers, chemists, urban planners are available in site

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: not provided - tendency increasing
- Visitor facilities: catering, accommodation, tourism information centers, museums and other cultural centers, etc.
- Tourism/visitor management plan

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, studies related to the value of the site, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, impact of World Heritage designation, archaeological surveys, visitor management, transportation studies
- The results of the studies and investigations have been used as core data for drafting the plan for the preservation and development plan of the Historic Centre of Riga

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- The State inspection for Heritage Protection in 2001 established the Information centre at its premises. There are different exhibitions concerning the preservation of the Historic Centre of Riga as the World Heritage site held in the centre, as well as all kind of topical information is available for public
- Web site available
- Local participation

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 27th (2003); 28th (2004); 29th (2005)

Action taken to implement the Committee's decision(s)

- The law "On the Preservation and Protection of the Historic Centre of Riga" was adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia in May 29, 2003 and it came into force in June 25, 2003

Conservation interventions

- Urban planning, practical conservation and renovation of the buildings, streets and communication network. Management of the site and facilities of the site
- Present state of conservation: very good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure

Actions taken

- Urban planning, strengthening of management system of the Historic Centre of Riga

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- Measures taken/planned: Monitoring is performed mainly by giving building permits, monitoring of technical condition and performing cultural assessment. This includes technical and cultural monitoring

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, economic, management
- Strengths: Ensured qualitative preservation and development of the site
- Weaknesses: More human resources needed in order to facilitate the management of the site. Still economical pressure is felt in the trends of development of the site

Future actions

- Optimizing management bodies, public awareness rising and education on the issues of cultural heritage preservation within the World Heritage site
- Activity does require funding from the World Heritage Fund