

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State Party:
Lithuania

State, Province or Region:
Kaunas Region / Kaunas

Name of Property:
Modernist Kaunas:
Architecture of Optimism, 1919–1939

**Geographical coordinates
to the nearest second:**
Latitude: N 54° 53' 49";
Longitude: W 23° 55' 45"

Textual description of the boundary of the nominated property

Modernist Kaunas is situated in central Lithuania, at the confluence of two major rivers. The nominated property consists of two areas: Naujamiestis and Žaliakalnis. Both areas possess several distinctive components in terms of historical significance, architecture, and urban planning. Naujamiestis consists of an administrative centre of the provisional capital [1.1], an upper and middle-class residential districts [1.2], and an industrial area [1.3], while Žaliakalnis, which was developed on the upper north-eastern territories, is divided into five sections: the Garden City residential area [2.1], the Kaukas residential area [2.2], the Perkūnas residential area [2.3], Ažuolynas park with sports facilities [2.4], and the Research Laboratory [2.5].

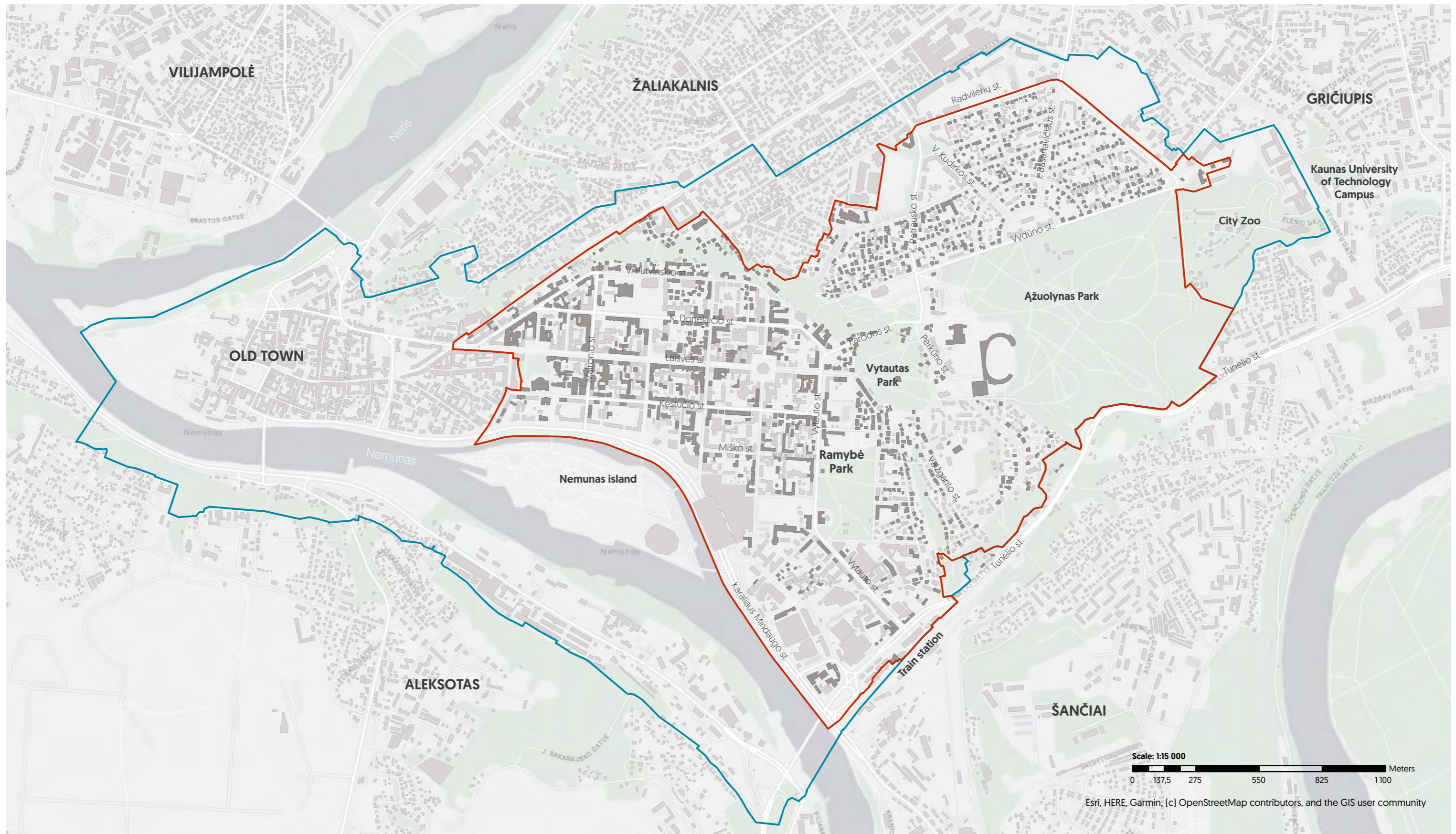
A Buffer Zone covers the existing protected areas of the cultural heritage sites comprising the nominated property, while on the west side it covers the territory of a protected cultural heritage site of national significance: the Kaunas Historic Centre [National Register of Cultural Heritage No. 20171]. On the east side, the buffer zone encompasses the area of the Kaunas University of Technology Campus [National Register of Cultural Heritage No. 33502] and the Kaunas Zoo [est. 1938]. No buffer zone is designated on the south-east side because of distinctive natural and urban features which set a clear historic boundary: a deep valley with transportation [motor and railway] infrastructure.

Naujamiestis spans a territory of 226 hectares and Žaliakalnis has a total area of 243 hectares. The nominated property extends approximately 2.8 km from north to south and 3.4 km from east to west, covering a total area of 451.6 ha. The buffer zone extends approximately 3.4 km from north to south and 5.4 km from east to west, covering a total area of 407.4 ha. Total area covers 859 ha.

Maps of the nominated property, showing boundaries and buffer zone

Two maps show the position and the delimitation of the nominated property – Modernist Kaunas: Architecture of Optimism, 1919–1939 – and of the associated buffer zone: Fig. 2. Position of the nominated property and buffer zone. See p. 12–13
Fig. 3. Delimitation and zoning of the nominated property. See p. 14–15

Criteria under which property is nominated (ii, iv)



Map of the nominated property
**Modernist Kaunas:
 Architecture of Optimism, 1919–1939**

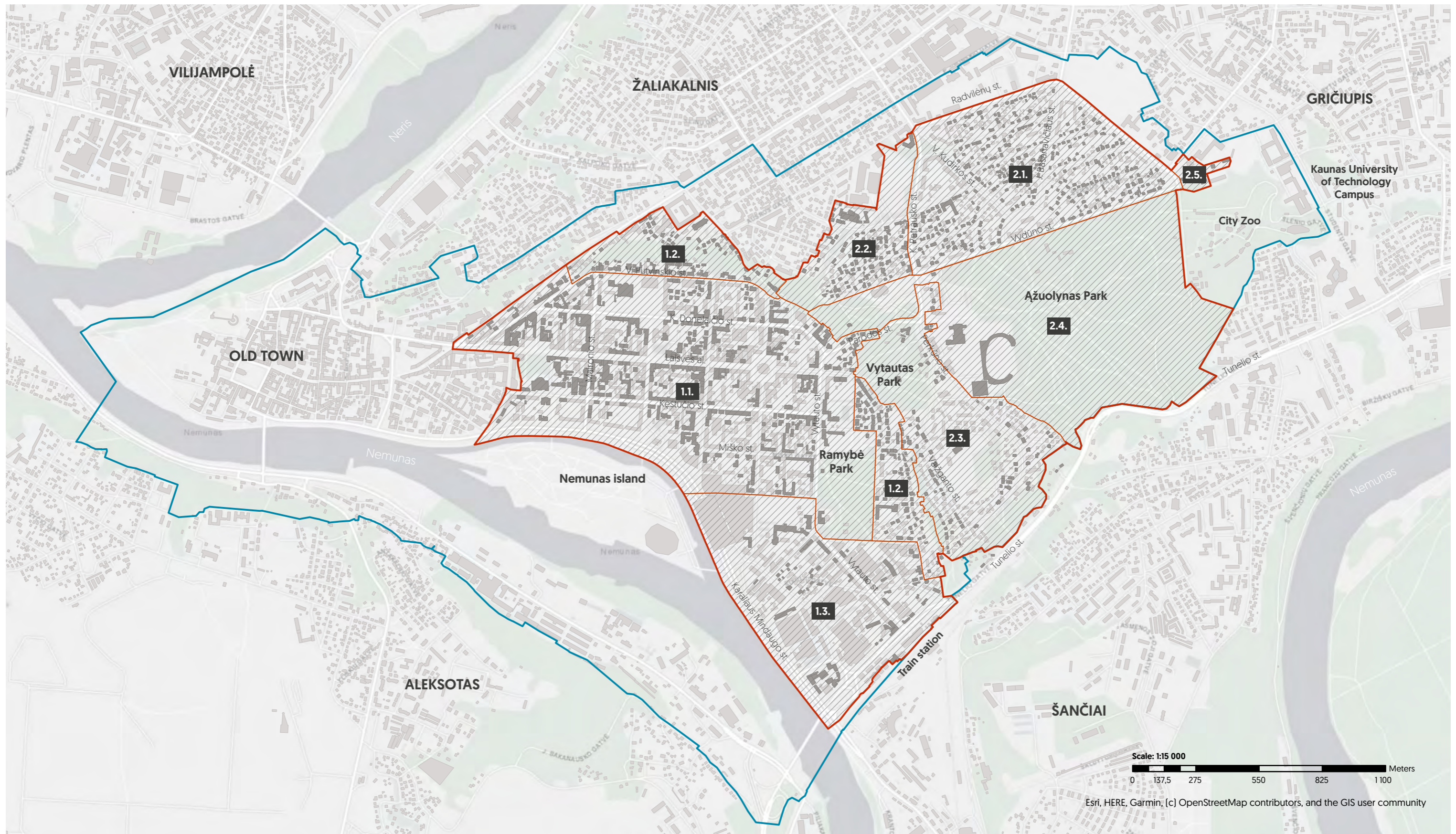
Geographical coordinates of the central point
 of the nominated property: N 54° 53' 49"; W 23° 55' 45"

2. Position of the nominated property and buffer zone

Legend

- Nominated property
- Buffer zone
- Buildings in the nominated property constructed in 1919-1939

Scale: 1:15 000
 0 137.5 275 550 825 1100 Meters
 Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community



Map of the nominated property
Modernist Kaunas:
Architecture of Optimism, 1919–1939

Legend

- Nominated property
- Buffer zone
- Buildings in the nominated property constructed in 1919-1939

- Territories of listed cultural heritage objects and areas
- 1.1. Central Naujamiestis
- 1.2. Residential Naujamiestis
- 1.3. Industrial Naujamiestis

- 2.1. The Garden City Area
- 2.2. The Kaukas Area
- 2.3. The Perkunas Area
- 2.4. Ažuolynas Park and Sports Complex
- 2.5. Research Laboratory Complex

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief Synthesis

Modernist Kaunas is situated in central Lithuania, at the confluence of two major rivers: the Nemunas and the Neris. The area within the nominated property was planned in the mid-19th century and developed in 1919–1939 when, after the declaration of an independent Republic of Lithuania in 1918, Kaunas served as the provisional capital of the state. The status of provisional capital was crucial for the city's unprecedented growth and architectural development. In less than twenty years, under the auspices of the new national government and civic initiative, Kaunas was transformed into a modern city based on the assimilation of modern urban planning and architecture with pre-existing natural, urban, and other local conditions. Architecture, specifically in the form of a local inflection of the international language of modernism, played a particularly important role in that transformation. Kaunas Modernism, therefore, bears exceptional testimony to an authentically multifaceted modernism born out of local political and cultural exigencies and an evolutionary urban modernisation responding to pre-existing humanmade and natural features.

The nominated property comprises two areas: Naujamiestis and Žaliakalnis. Naujamiestis (New Town), a generous grid planned in 1847, was attached to the eastern edge of the Old Town and extends eastwards along the valley of the Nemunas River. Naujamiestis was modernised and intensively developed in 1919–1939. Encircling Naujamiestis to the north and east is Žaliakalnis (Green Hill) – a distinctive natural plateau rising to an average of 35–40 metres. Žaliakalnis was developed as a garden city residential suburb in 1919–1939 according to a 1923 master plan of Kaunas, which enabled a seven-fold increase in area and accommodated a doubling of the city's population to 155,000 over the same period.

The most significant attributes of the city's resulting urban form and associated architecture are defined by the inherent optimism and civic initiative behind the creation of the new modern city as a provisional capital with inherited geographical and urban morphological distinctiveness. A rich architectural heritage of emerging modernism overlaid on the 19th century urban grid and a new garden suburb create a unique ensemble of two complimentary urban landscapes. The sensitive adaptation of the pre-existing 19th-century urban grid, implementation of a garden city residential suburb, the successful integration of the natural environment, and the assimilation of local and global interpretations of architectural modernism gave birth to Kaunas

Modernism, that reflects a diverse and innovative response to Lithuania's encounter with modernity and early 20th century European modernism. 1500 of the 6000 remaining buildings erected in Kaunas in 1919–1939 are concentrated in the nominated area and bear exceptional testimony to the multifaceted nature of architectural modernism in response to local conditions. The façades, streetscapes, and natural elements, combined with the pre-existing urban and geomorphological setting, create a unique sense of place exhibited through broad panoramas, open urban and natural spaces, and varied topography. Unlike many experiences of urban and architectural modernity, Kaunas reflects an evolutionary rather than revolutionary process of and response to modernisation in the early 20th century Europe.

World Heritage criteria under which the property is proposed

Criterion (ii): Kaunas Modernism of 1919–1939 expands the concept of Modernism beyond the International Style by revealing a more diverse, complex fabric of numerous, often divergent, cultural, social, political, and artistic trends. Kaunas Modernism is an exceptional example of rethinking architecture as a process of social, political, and cultural modernisation in the 20th century. Kaunas Modernism provides arguments for the decentralisation of modernism not only in the geographical sense, but also in terms of stylistic expression. Outstanding value of the Kaunas cityscape is its architectural diversity, represented through the plurality of modern architectural ideas, from modernised Neo-Classicism to National Modernism, which co-existed throughout the world in the first half of the 20th century. By integrating and locally interpreting the principles of the Modern Movement, Kaunas Modernism displays a bold plurality of modern architectural expression in response to local needs and conditions.

Criterion (iv): Modernist Kaunas is an outstanding example of a historic city subject to rapid urbanisation and modernisation, encapsulated by diverse expressions of the values and aspirations associated with an optimistic belief in an independent future amid the turbulence of the early 20th century, when national borders were changing fast. The creation of a modern capital city of an emerging nation state is an outstanding testament to people's faith in the future and their ability to be creative under difficult

political and economic conditions. The gradual and sustainable modernisation of Kaunas, carried out through civic initiatives with respect to the urban context and natural environment, produced an outstanding urban landscape and modern architectural language serving the needs of provisional capital and possessing functions, structures, and building typologies that reflected the modernisation of urban life in the 20th century.

Statement of integrity

Modernist Kaunas consists of Naujamiestis and Žaliakalnis, two adjacent districts that have been preserved in adequate size in almost unchanged historical form and design. The significant architectural structures and the original urban layout, including the characteristic sloping natural and humanmade terrain, public spaces and historic parks, have been retained in their entirety. Of 6000 surviving buildings constructed in Kaunas in 1919–1939, the greatest concentration of significant modernist structures is located in Naujamiestis and Žaliakalnis with 1500 buildings of representative administrative, public, industrial, and residential functions testifying to the speed and diversity of development undertaken in the spirit of modernity. 220 structures and urban areas, constructed in the period of 1919–1939 within the Nominated Property, are listed on the National Register of Cultural Heritage. The buffer zone contains structures and groups of buildings dating back to the interwar period which strengthen the character of the nominated property.

Kaunas lost its status as Lithuania's provisional capital in October 1939, and the sudden change in the city's political status helped to preserve the physical attributes of the 1920s and 1930s. Under the Soviet rule, which lasted from 1944–1990, the physical state of interwar modernist buildings was not deliberately neglected, since the superior quality of the architecture was put to pragmatic use. Intermittent development of the area continued with the construction of many buildings that, although new, were compatible with the interwar period of development by being restrained in volume and form. Construction during this era did not alter the established street grid and squares, but it did see the addition of large modernist buildings. The growth of contemporary Kaunas and developmental pressures resulted in several large structures along Karaliaus Mindaugo Prospektas and sparked numerous debates about the relationship between

new commercial architecture and the historic surroundings. Any risk is mitigated by listing of all areas comprising the Nominated Property on the National Register of Cultural Heritage and preparing of adequate conservation and management plans.

Statement of authenticity

Because the historically evolved areas of Naujamiestis and Žaliakalnis have changed relatively little, Modernist Kaunas is truly a time capsule of the 1919–1939 period. The location and setting, form and design, material and substance as well as use and function of the Nominated Property all represent a historic modernist city of the interwar period that evolved harmoniously, integrating the natural and historic settings, producing a diverse legacy of architectural modernism. The area of Naujamiestis is home to the largest concentration of landmark modernist buildings that were part of the formation of a new administrative, cultural, and social core of the Lithuanian state in 1919–1939. Modernist residential areas of Naujamiestis constitute a superior architectural background for the landmark buildings, creating a harmonious cityscape. The urban structure of the Naujamiestis, embodying the architectural and urban nature of a modern city, is noted for the greatest diversity of stylistic forms, materials, and functions – a feature which is still evident in the city today.

The Žaliakalnis area with Ažuolynas Park, designed in 1923 and gradually developed up to 1939, represents an outstanding example of the integration of urban and natural landscapes and the adoption of the contemporaneous garden city concept to local conditions. Although the plan was only partially implemented, the elements that were realised and which have survived to this day reflect the local interpretation of the most progressive garden city urban planning concepts of the time, adjusted with an intelligent approach to suit pre-existing natural, topographical, and humanmade features. Another feature of Kaunas Modernism that has retained its authenticity is its historical, cultural and symbolic significance (intangible heritage). Today, the Nominated Property continues to see the highest concentration of active social, cultural, and economic activity, as well as the evolution of new traditions and initiatives inspired by the legacy of Kaunas Modernism.

Protection and management system

The Nominated Property covers a central part of the city Kaunas – a group of areas that are legally protected on the national and local level under the Law on the Protection of Immovable Cultural Heritage, the Law on Protected Areas, the Law on Spatial Planning, the Law on Construction, the Law on Landscaping, and the Law on Environmental Protection. The property consists of seven protected zones: Naujamiestis, a historic district of Kaunas [National Register of the Cultural Heritage No. 22149]; Žaliakalnis, a historic district of Kaunas [National Register of the Cultural Heritage No. 22148]; Žaliakalnis 1, a historic district of Kaunas [National Register of the Cultural Heritage No. 31280]; Kaunas Ažuolynas Park Complex [National Register of the Cultural Heritage No. 44581]; the Kaunas Ažuolynas Sports Complex [National Register of the Cultural Heritage No. 31618]; the Research Laboratory complex [National Register of the Cultural Heritage No. 28567] and Christ's Resurrection Church [National Register of the Cultural Heritage No. 16005]. There are 408 listed cultural heritage properties and areas within the nominated property.

The cultural significance of the Nominated Property is integrated into the Kaunas City General Plan 2013–2023, as well as in subsequent preservation, regulation, and special plans on the national and local level. In 2015, the Kaunas City Municipal Heritage Restoration Programme was launched to provide financial support for the maintenance of cultural heritage and to improve the condition of modernist buildings in Kaunas. In 2017, the Kaunas City Municipality approved a Cultural Strategy for 2027 to establish an integrated approach toward the interwar period heritage, with a view to protecting this legacy and meeting the contemporary needs of the public. A management plan concept was formulated in 2020 to safeguard the preservation and proper management of the Nominated Property, Modernist Kaunas.



4. Kaunas from a bird's view. Photo: Živilė Šimkutė, 2019

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