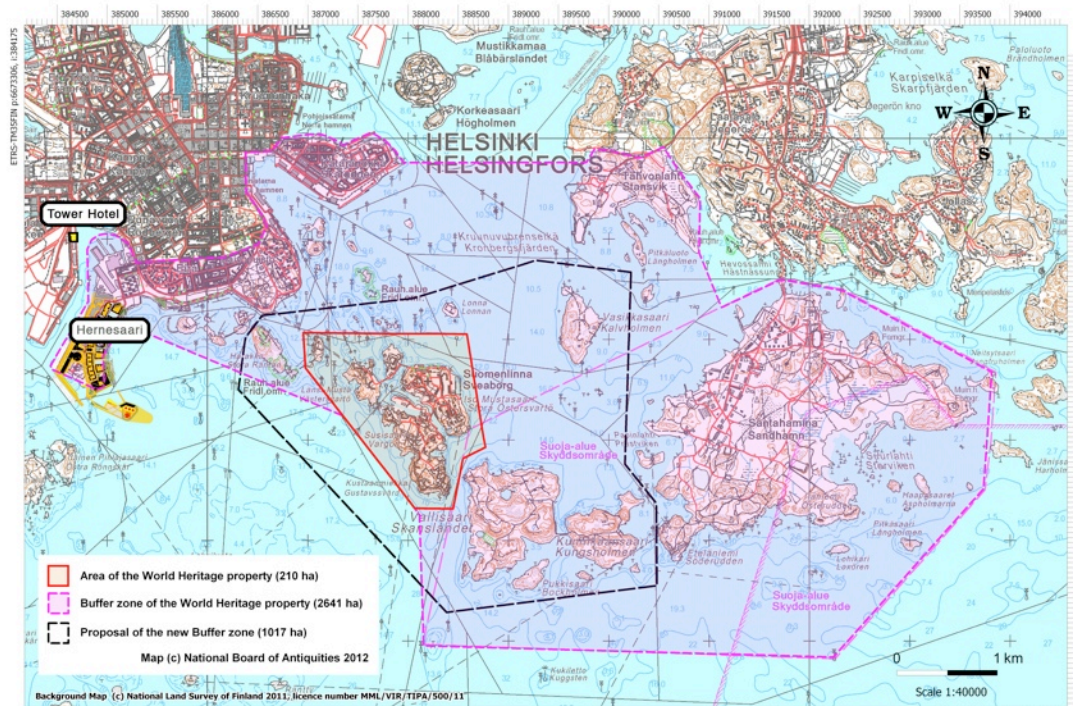


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The Neighborhood Associations adjacent to the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site Suomenlinna (Sveaborg) in Helsinki, would like to bring to your attention the following plans approved by the City Planning Board of Helsinki. We are concerned that the final decisions to be made by the City Council will substantially and irreversibly compromise the quality of the landmark and adversely impact the surrounding seascape and therefore the heritage site as a whole.

### FORTRESS OF SUOMENLINNA, HELSINKI, FINLAND



(Appendix 1. The map)

The ICOMOS report (International Council on Monuments and Sites, March 2012) lists several potential adverse impacts nearby the Suomenlinna Sea Fortress, but does not mention the following two, which locate within or in the immediate vicinity of the buffer zone:

1. A massive sea filling in Hernesaari for a helicopter terminal (an area inside the buffer zone marked in yellow).
2. A plan for a 33-storey high-rise hotel located in Jätkäsaari (an adjacent to the buffer zone).

The detail plan of the Jätkäsaari tower was approved by the City Board on the sixth of May. The final decision will be made at the end of May by the City Council. The Hernesaari plan will be decided by the City Council during this year – perhaps already in the autumn.

### HERNESAARI HELICOPTER TERMINAL

A partial master plan for Hernesaari, an area facing Suomenlinna on the mainland, has now been completed. According to the plan Hernesaari will be developed into a new urban neighborhood with 5100 residents and 2800 work places. The existing 33-hectare Hernesaari area located within the buffer zone, only 2,9 kilometres from the site, will be expanded out

into the sea by an additional 10 hectares (*Appendix 2. Hernesaari plan*). The 600 meter long artificial peninsula with a full-size heliport terminal - planned to provide over 20 daily flights to Tallinn and St. Petersburg - would point directly towards the Suomenlinna Fortress. The reason for extending the peninsula this far out into the sea is the required 500 meters distance for keeping out the helicopter noise from the nearest residential and recreational areas.

There has been an intense opposition against this plan ever since the proposal became public knowledge. Furthermore, most of the statements given by local authorities have seriously questioned the technical and economic feasibility of the heliport as well as its safety features. They have also stated that the heliport plan would dramatically change the maritime environment of the area.

Having followed the process this far, we wonder, whether the Suomenlinna Fortress and its buffer zone have been given any consideration in the long planning process of Hernesaari. Neither the current master plan for Helsinki (2002) nor the Uusimaa provincial plan (2006) does mention or refer to the buffer zone of the Suomenlinna Sea Fortress.

The report Suomenlinna Greater Landscape (Helsinki City Planning Department 2011, page 24) notes: “The partial master plan draft allocates a cruise ship wharf and a helipad on the landfill area at the southernmost tip of Hernesaari. Munkkisaari” (a part of present Hernesaari) “has also previously hosted helicopter traffic and its new location would not significantly change the situation regarding Suomenlinna.” We find this statement extremely misleading. The existing small heliport on the mainland, first established for emergency operations, has been operating on a very limited scale and can by no means be compared with the proposed, massive heliport terminal. The planned three platforms would rise eight meters above the sea level. In addition, a terminal building, about 100 meters long and over 20 meters high, will be built on the tip of the peninsula. The plan also includes an open parking lot for 300 cars. The continuous helicopter noise caused by flights heading east to St. Petersburg over Suomenlinna and south to Tallinn would dramatically change the soundscape of the Suomenlinna Fortress and the historical maritime atmosphere of the area (*Appendix 3. Present and future Hernesaari*).

## **JÄTKÄSAARI HOTEL TOWER**

The Jätkäsaari detail plan provides for a strikingly high hotel tower by the Jätkäsaari waterfront. The 33-floor tower would rise far above the existing Helsinki skyline with its predominantly 6-storey buildings. Viewed from the Suomenlinna Fortress, the tower would stand out clearly and it would significantly affect the silhouette of the entire city center, irreversibly altering the unique historic cityscape of Helsinki (*Appendix 1. The map, site 2; Appendix 4. Jätkäsaari hotel tower*).

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The historical center of Helsinki lies within or in the immediate vicinity of the UNESCO World Heritage buffer zone. Seven nationally significant cultural environments, which are under special protection by the Finnish Government, are located inside the buffer zone. Ten further environments of specifically recognized national significance lie in the immediate vicinity of the buffer zone.

The regional Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY-Centre) and the City Museum have made critical statements regarding the heliport peninsula as well as the Jätkäsaari hotel tower. They note that for a whole variety of reasons neither project is suitable for their proposed location and would dramatically change their surroundings.

National newspaper Helsingin Sanomat reported on 18.10.2012 that the Suomenlinna buffer zone will be revised. Finland has proposed a dramatic 2/3 decrease of the zone. The reduced buffer zone would only cover the nearby islands and the immediate sea area around Suomenlinna. We are concerned that a reduction of this scale might enable massive construction plans in the existing buffer zone and its vicinity, thus compromising the unique qualities for which it has been established. Fortunately the UNESCO World Heritage Committee has not approved the proposed reduction of the buffer zone.

Suomenlinna is not only a site of unique built heritage, it is part of our collective memory. The construction of Suomenlinna/Sveaborg Fortress gave Helsinki significance as naval base and seaport and caused a burst of economic activity. This development made Helsinki a successful candidate when a new capital was chosen for the Grand Duchy in early 1800. The Fortress also embodies our common history with Sweden and Russia, who vied for supremacy in the region over centuries.

## **CONCLUSION**

The existing Suomenlinna Sea Fortress buffer zone is well justified and in line with the ICOMOS report. The reduction of the buffer zone would be an error. Both the Suomenlinna Fortress and the historic cape of Helsinki form the unique seascape of the city and should be protected from the harmful effects of uncontrolled urban growth.

We ask the Committee of the World Heritage Centre to monitor the development plans mentioned above, as well as the proposal for altering the buffer zone, since these initiatives constitute a serious threat to the world heritage site of Suomenlinna.

Helsinki, 8 May 2013

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Neighborhood Associations

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