1. CULTURAL STRATEGY LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR CULTURAL CLIMATE CHANGE

Oulu’s resilience has always been about the abilities to renew, learn and cooperate both locally and internationally. This Cultural Strategy describes the Cultural Climate Change in our city, Oulu, where culture is one of the key development resource in the future. After the Cultural Climate Change, we will understand the whole variety of culture: culture is civilization and art and it actually includes both the creative fields and everyday community culture. The Cultural Climate Change will strengthen both Oulu’s international connections and the local identity of the regions.

Our cultural attractions are important both for residents and tourists and have positive social and economic effects on the city. They promote well-being and build social safety nets. A city that fosters its creativity attracts visitors to the area and thus creates new jobs for both creative industries and tourism.

Oulu bids for the 2026 European Capital of Culture title. According to the application criteria, the bidding city must have a long-term cultural strategy that creates a vision of the role of art and culture in urban development - a strategy that also ensures that the actions and measures of the Capital of Culture project will continue after the actual project, too.

Our Cultural Strategy has been discussed on board and directors’ team meetings and in several cultural networks. Cultural Strategy deepens the goals of the urban strategy, emphasizing, in particular, culture’s characteristic attractiveness for tourists and locals. Our strategy work has taken into account the programs that guide the city’s activities and are closely related to culture: Education Program, Environmental Program, City Centre Vision 2040, River Delta Vision, Architectural Programme and tourism strategy program. Cultural Strategy especially guides the activities of the City of Oulu Group but also builds dialogue about the importance of culture between the City organization and its stakeholders.

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2. CULTURAL CLIMATE CHANGE MEETS THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME

Oulu needs to strengthen the role of art and culture to face the global and local challenges of the upcoming decades. During the process of developing the Cultural Strategy 2030, we identified the future needs with which the Cultural Strategy 2030 has to especially match.
More broader industrial policy and attractiveness factors

The consumption of intangible assets and experiential content is on the rise, which is why there is a lot of growth potential in the employment of the Oulu’s creative sector. Our city’s cultural attractions are undersized in relation to our city’s size. The population of Oulu is growing, and our city still does attract skilled young people to study, but, at the same time, there is a migration loss in a particularly significant, 25-39-year-olds, age group. In addition to the existing strengths, Oulu needs new openings to increase its attractiveness.

The cultural backgrounds in our region are diversifying. Furthermore, the increase in the share of the elderly in the future population profile will change both the service needs and the city. The city should be spacious and enabling. It is essential to create a climate for makers – an environment where people can build Oulu a city of their own. Culture creates well-being and prevents inequality increasing the sense of community for all age groups throughout Oulu.

Demographic changes

The status of Oulu as the central city of the north.

Oulu has also its special role and responsibility as a locomotive of the north in culture. Strengthening of Oulu’s cultural urban development benefits other municipalities of the region and northern Finland, too. Constructing the common interests of the region is also a prerequisite for the cultural urban development of Oulu. Nationwide cultural policy has thus far focused on funding the arts and culture of the metropolitan area. Fundamental cultural rights cannot be realized equally in Finland as a whole if there is no economic basis for them. Therefore, the Oulu region must receive a share of state funding for arts and culture that is in accordance with its position. The supply of national cultural institutions must extend to the whole country.
3. Cultural Climate Change – the Vision

Cultural Climate Change is the vision that unites the Oulu 2026 European Capital of Culture project and Cultural Strategy. Its purpose is to raise the profile of art and culture to a new level in the urban development of Oulu. Oulu has a lot of cultural capital: artists, cultural heritage, original northern creativity as well as the potential for combining art, science and technology. These are the features that should be brought to the core of cultural production and urban identity.

Cultural Climate Change will be visible both in the city centre and other areas of the city. It will make Oulu stronger for surviving the future economic and social structural changes – socially, culturally and economically. Cultural Climate Change creates new jobs in creative industries that have great growth potential in Oulu.

Cultural Climate Change will take place in a sustainable way, taking into account our own environment and cultural background. It highlights the phenomena of the north and strengthens the local identity. Cultural Climate Change is making the city thrive by making it vibrant and easily accessible to residents and tourists.
4. OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

Cultural Climate Change has three main objectives that will be achieved through distinctive measures. Culture builds Oulu, strengthening the sense of community and laying the foundation for creative working.
Culture as a builder of scenes

Scenes come into existence through spaces and the associated meanings of them. Art and culture colour urban environments and create meanings as well. The core features of urban experiences are for example street arts and interesting architecture as well as the spaces for and eventfulness of making art and experiencing it. Culture connects strongly to urban planning.

Culture also builds the identity of Oulu and the story of the north. Oulu will be a major cultural tourism destination in the future where it is possible to experience a unique combination of the urban city centre, creative villages, and wild nature.
Measures:

- Diversifying the use of cultural institutions and facilities through co-operation and co-productions with professional event producers and the third sector.

- Updating the main cultural venues and concepts of the city during renovations to meet the future needs. The city library, as the most central one of the city's facilities, will become a meeting space for learning and experiencing. Luuppi tells the northern story, taking into account the possibilities of digitalization.

- Strengthening and making visible the cultural environments and cultural heritage.

- Take into account art, culture and events in urban planning and strengthen the principle of art in construction investments.

- Making Oulu a uniquely distinctive, responsible cultural tourist city and strengthening cooperation with companies to develop tourism products and services that draw from our culture and cultural heritage.

- Bring forth the street arts, underground cultures and northern Finland's cultural phenomenon.

- Develop sustainable commuting and public transportation to meet the needs of cultural and event activities and urban culture.

- Reinforce the connection between art, nature and sports in sports facilities, trails and events.
Culture as a builder of sense of community

Art and culture build bridges between the contrasts of the region. Oulu is determined to strengthen everyone’s right and opportunities to participate in making and experiencing culture. In Oulu, culture comes close to people and that strengthens the importance of culture for locals’ daily lives. Art and culture promote well-being and civilization throughout the region. Furthermore, to promote accessibility, the needs of different population groups are taken into account and audience development is improved to reach new audiences. The targeted cultural services improve inclusion and reduce social exclusion and inequality of the elderly and special groups.

Through early childhood education, basic education and leisure activities, children and young people are offered a wide range of opportunities to increase their cultural competence. Cultural education and curriculum as well as the students’ cultural path safeguard that children receive a rich and equal cultural education that progresses with age.

Photo: Sanna Krook
Measures:

• We develop a cultural well-being plan in a wide-ranging collaboration that will describe the goals and measures for well-being and health-promoting arts and cultural activities.

• Through multi-professional cooperation, we promote the equality of access to art and culture by producing local cultural services, recreational opportunities and events in different districts.

• We draw up an operating model that promotes residents’ own cultural activities and enables the flexible use of multi-purpose facilities, schools and other public buildings as well as parks and yards.

• Student’s cultural path is expanded and resourced to cover the distinctive culture of the Oulu region and all age groups from early childhood to adulthood. We create circular art education operating models and supporting the work of art organizations in daycare and schools.

• We solve how to take children and the young to the activities of the cultural path.

• We establish a children’s' culture centre in Oulu.

• We develop cultural communication that takes into account different customer groups and is used by all cultural operators and event organizers.
Culture as a builder of creativity

At the heart of Cultural Climate Change are the professionals working in the arts and culture as well as the doers of the creative industries. Oulu enables the work of the creators in art and culture, their mutual connections and cultural operating environments. Innovations also emerge at the boundaries of art, science, business and technology. The need for creative experts is increasing not only in the growing business of the creative industries but also in tourism and adventure tourism and more and more in the service businesses and industries that aim for consumer markets and higher value-added.

The contribution of the cultural thinking and brings to Oulu’s regional economy is on the grow.
Measures:

• Actively create workspaces and forms of partnership for professionals and creative entrepreneurs in the fields of art.

• Increase the number of grants to support the work of art professionals as well as the internationalization of the entire cultural sector.

• Create activities to improve job opportunities for professionals in various fields of art and culture in various industries of the City of Oulu as well as the private and third sectors.

• Supporting the project activities of artists and cultural organizations and promoting connections to various funding opportunities e.g. through control and communication.

• Creating new connections between art, science, business and technology.

• The event practices and operating models of Oulu support the organization of distinctive events year-round.
5. EVALUATION OF CULTURAL STRATEGY

Implementation of the Cultural Strategy will be monitored annually from 2021 to 2030 by a group of professionals of different service areas. The progress of the implementation is reported to the City government and boards essential for the Strategy. The evaluation of the implementation will focus on monitoring the progress towards achieving the three main objectives. The key indicators will be established in 2020 in cooperation with the service areas and the Oulu2026 European Capital of Culture project.