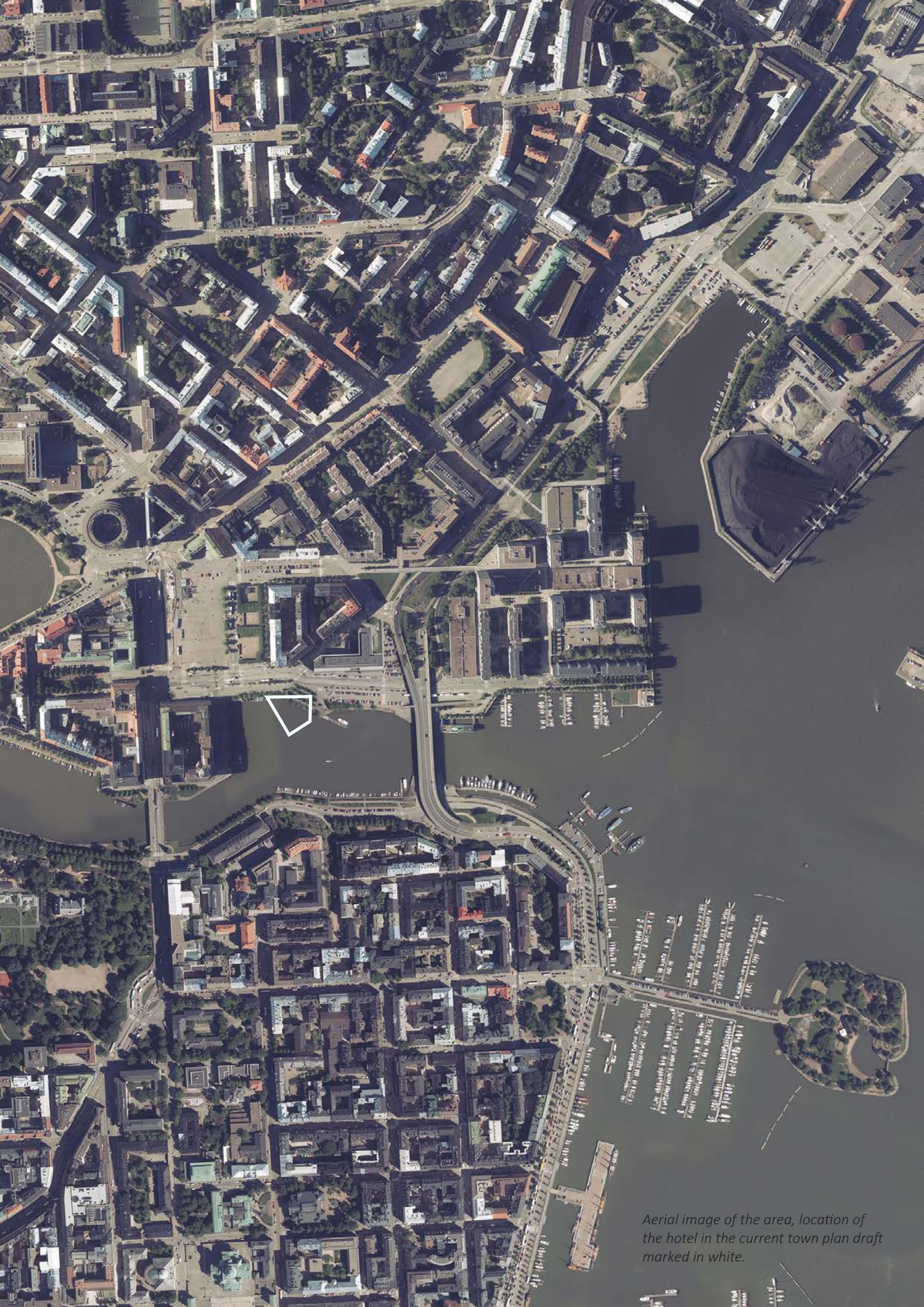


New Beacon of Helsinki



Invitational Architectural Design Competition
Report of the Competition Jury
01.02.2017





Aerial image of the area, location of the hotel in the current town plan draft marked in white.

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1. Organization of the Competition

1.1 Competition Promoter, Nature and Purpose

AB invest A/S (Competition Organizer), working jointly with the City of Helsinki (the town planner) and SAFA (Finnish Association of Architects) arranged an invited architectural competition for a new hotel building on the Hakaniemi waterfront.

The objective of the competition was to find a feasible proposal representing interesting, architecturally high-quality and fresh building design thinking that suits the local surroundings.

A town plan proposal is recommended to be prepared based on the competition's winning design. The site's future owner will be responsible for the commissioning of the implementation designs and the construction of the hotel. The competition promoters will recommend to the site's future owner that a design agreement be concluded with the competition winner.

1.2 Entrants

The competition was an invitational competition. The teams invited were:

- **Snøhetta**, Norway
- **Wingårdhs**, Göteborg office, Sweden
- **Juul Frost Arkitekter**, Denmark
- **Davidsson Tarkela Architects Ltd**, Finland

1.3 Fee

A fee of **EUR 10,000** + 24% VAT was paid to each invited office submitting an approved entry. According to its competition rules The Finnish Association of Architects will deduct 10% of the fee to cover the amount paid to the competitors' representative serving on the Competition Jury, as well as other similar expenses.

1.4 Competition Jury

The Competition Jury evaluating the competition entries consisted of the following members:

Representing AB invest A/S:

Arthur Buchardt

Chairman of the Competition Jury

Representing the City of Helsinki:

Mikko Aho

Architect, Head of Department
Competition Jury Member

Architect appointed by SAFA:

Asmo Jaaksi

Architect SAFA
Competition Jury Member

The Secretary of the Competition Jury:

Architect SAFA **Timo Metsälä** will function as the competitors' contact person.

1.5 Competition Rules and Competition Programme Approval

The Competition Organizer, Competition Jury, and Competition Specialist of the Finnish Association of Architects have approved the competition programme and its appendices. Competitors adhered to the competition programme and the Finnish Association of Architects SAFA's Competition Rules for an Architectural Competition held in Finland (www.safa.fi).

1.6 Questions Sent by Competitors

The competitors sent a total of five questions to the Competition Jury, which answered them in 12 October 2016.

1.7 Competition Period

The competition began **29th September 2016**. The closing date was **5th December 2016** at **4:00 PM**.

1.8 Arrival of Competition Entries

The competitors sent the competition entries, before the deadline and containing all required documentation, under the following coded pseudonyms:

Entry No. 1: "90723"

Entry No. 2: "Hilbert's hotel"

Entry No. 3: "HELIX"

Entry No. 4: "The Try Square"

2. Competition Evaluation

2.1 Evaluation Criteria

The objective of the competition was to find a feasible proposal representing interesting, architecturally high-quality and fresh building design thinking that suits the local surroundings. Special attention was paid to the building's volume, facade design and logistics.

The objective was to create a landmark building beside one of the most central squares and one of the most significant urban structures in the inner city of Helsinki. The design teams were asked to study and define the role of the new building in the urban structure. The view to the new building and the building's impact to the wider cityscape were asked to be considered carefully.

2.2 General Assessment

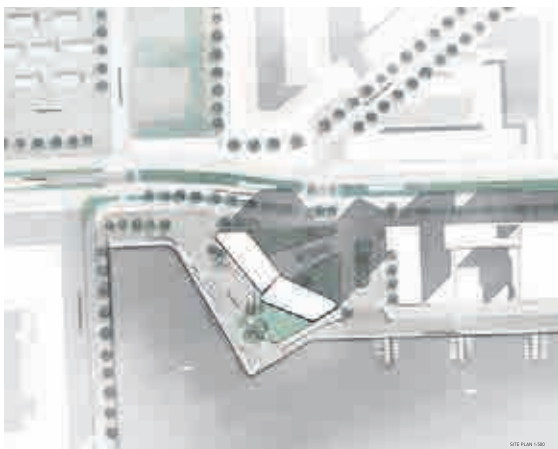
The assessment of the proposal took place over two meetings of the jury during which each of the entries was assessed with scrutiny against the evaluation criteria.

Overall quality of the proposals is good. The room program is quite simple and functional demands easy. Every project works well - as expected from the invited offices.

Main challenge of the competition task was how to fit the new building in the cityscape. Competition result offers a nice series of different solutions. The entries had chosen very different emphases in terms of perceived building heights and volumes, which brought difficulty to the assessment. Given the fact the whole Hakaniemenranta shore line is in development, the way how to approach the proposals' suitability to the local surroundings versus their landmark quality was debated in length.

All the proposals are quite discrete - no strong "wow" effects. Every building is more or less in balance with the environment. Functional solutions are also conventional. The designers have not tried to question the traditional hotel concept and create it in a totally new way.

Proposals introduce ecological solutions, but neither big innovations nor pronounced "eco-buildings". In other words the proposals presented traditional buildings which can be developed in an energy-efficient and environmentally friendly way. There was no remarkable differences between the proposals in this sense.



Selected pictures from the proposal "90723".

2.3 Entry-specific Evaluations

Entry No. 1 “90723”

RELATION TO THE SITE

The idea of the proposal “90723” is to function as a urban meeting point of the Central Park and the sea. This is not seen as a fully convincing starting point since the Central Park does not extend to the Hakaniemi Square. The design derived from this inaccurate analysis leaves the proposal’s volume and height without a proper explanation.

The wider plaza-like area on the west side of the hotel is a good gesture to connect the Hakaniemi square to the waterfront. On the other hand the path on the southern side between the hotel and the waterfront is too narrow. The wider slope leads to the upper level which seems to function as an area for service and pick-up and drop-off traffic. This raises concerns of the continuity of the pedestrian area to the upper level.

The hotel building is placed between the Hakaniemi square and the waterfront so that the open views are partly blocked. This weakens the area’s visual connection to the sea. The strength of the proposal is its height, which makes the building stand out clearly from the other buildings at the Hakaniemi area. The volume of the hotel room floors is light, which is why the proposal is elegant.

ARCHITECTURE

The building consist of two parts: the ground floor which connects the hotel to the surrounding city and the volume of hotel rooms. The latter splits into two units of which the southern one rises to the hight of the Merihaka tower. The total gross floor area of the proposal is 14 500 m² and the eaves height of the building is +65 meters. The proposed composition has good redevelopment opportunities.

The courageous height makes this proposal a landmark through its form. The idea for the facade, based on varied glass types, has similarities with the surrounding buildings around Hakaniemi market place. Also copper as a material choice has resemblance to buildings close to proposed hotel which relates the building to the Hakaniemi area quite well. Although the idea of varied facade pattern is justifiable it was thought to be rather conventional and toneless in hotel typology.

FUNCTIONALITY

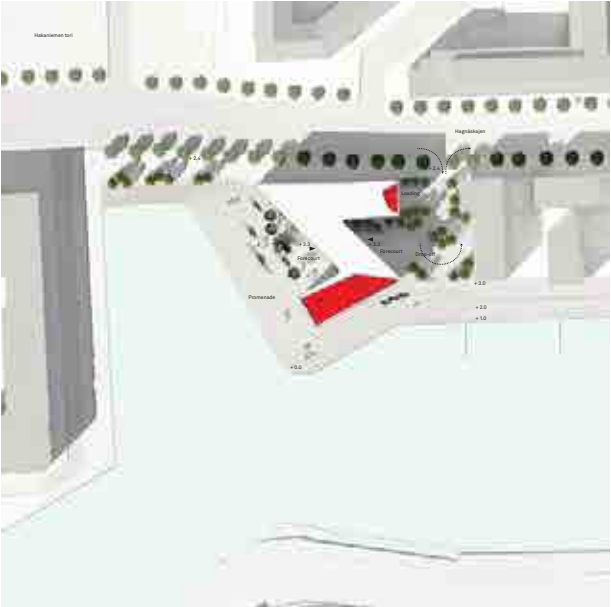
The floorplans of the proposal are carefully studied and seem to work well. The first floor arrangement is functional: the lobby and the bar are opening naturally towards south-west. However, it leaves the restaurant furthest away from the Hakaniemenranta street. The service traffic area is placed inconveniently in the south-east corner of the building and the pick-up and drop-off traffic area is placed on an isolated square. The public spaces towards the waterfront are presented with abundant vegetation.

Footprint of the hotel room floor volumes is small, which gives a clear directionality to the building. The corridors of hotel room levels are short and the views from the rooms are exceptionally fine. There are 354 rooms in the hotel building, which makes the proposal the most efficient one in the competition. The bar and spa are situated in the topmost floors (16th and 17th).

“ Brings the feeling of a metropolis to Hakaniemi, the building is not too high.”

“ I really like it that the building is quite high and it’s unapologetic. We’ll get a worthy beacon for Hakaniemi instead of Ympyrätalo and office blocks.”

Comments of the residents of Helsinki from the open comment section on the competition website.



Selected pictures from the proposal "Hilbert's hotel".

Entry No. 2 “Hilbert’s hotel”

RELATION TO THE SITE

The relation of the building’s volume to the site is solved by folding the building into a Z-shape. The first floor arrangement and transparency through the site is inviting. The idea is simple: the basic lamellar hotel is folded according to the shape of the site. Thus, the building always looks different from different angles. The actual hotel entrance is further away from the Hakaniemenranta street. Using light façade materials makes the building stand out from its surroundings. The building is thus a contrasting element in the cityscape. The building is a landmark, even though it is not higher than the surrounding buildings.

ARCHITECTURE

Using the folded shape in planning the building is simple yet innovative. The materials and the modular nature of the façade strengthen the monument-like volume of the building. The building looks light from all angles and succeeds in avoiding a heavy look and feel. The unorthodox façade that changes according to the number of available rooms is an interesting idea. The building mass is sculptural. The curves are sophisticated and the look is variable and interesting.

The material chosen for the façade is opal glass. The façade is a fragmented arrangement of glass elements which is reminiscent of broken ice. The analogy seems however a little far-fetched, and this idea alone does not wholly explain the unusual façade design. The arrangement blurs the boundaries of the floors. The relation of the represented plan to reality was discussed: it was noted that the planned building requires careful and possibly costly construction.

FUNCTIONALITY

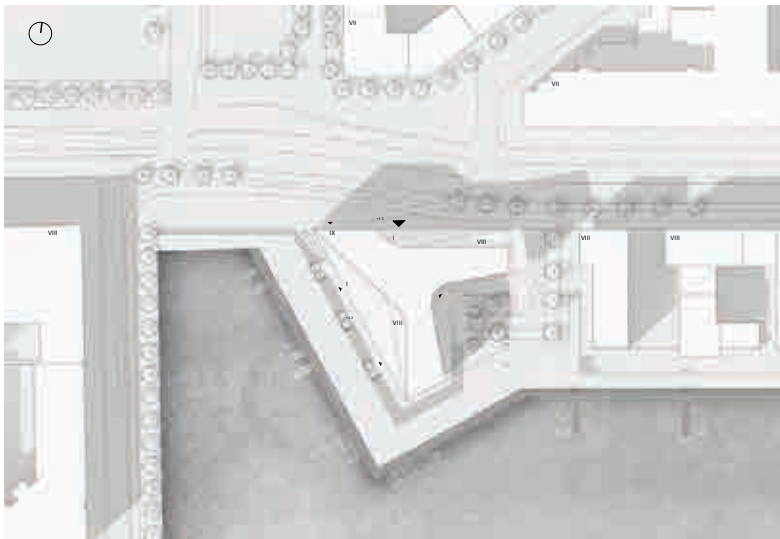
The drop-off and pick-up traffic area is on the eastern side of the building: the form of the building creates room for a large square. The lobby is spacy and it extends through the first floor. As one arrives at the hotel, a view towards the pool beside the Hakaniemen tori square opens. The location for the restaurant and the bar is chosen with the square and the new promenade in mind. “Outdoor lounge”, which is an extension of the bar, could also function as an indoor space. Outdoor areas are divided in appropriately sized portions. Locating the service area in the north-east corner is clever. The waterfront is completely made of terraced steps, which might not work from the points of view of pedestrian walkways and waterbus traffic. The solution can however be developed further.

The hotel room floors are rational, simple and effective – as is the concept. It is possible to get natural light in the corridors. The hotel has 289 rooms and 8 floors. The floor height is + 3,3. The eaves height is +33,0 which is similar to the eaves heights of the surrounding buildings. The floor plans are simple and clear – without artificial complexity. However, the lack of meeting rooms on the first floor raised some questions. The roof terraces and the hotel room floors are justifiable and efficient. The gross floor area is 14,500 m². The building has natural ventilation: the proposal does not thus include room for utility and engineering services.

“ Very stylish idea. The building has an interesting shape and the glass façade is especially nice.”

“ Nice concept that spreads the functions of the market square under the building. Visually effective architecture and a functional whole.”

Comments of the residents of Helsinki from the open comment section on the competition website.



Selected pictures from the proposal "HELIX".

Entry No. 3 “HELIX”

RELATION TO THE SITE

The building is placed on the site in an interesting way. The volume is divided in three axes, which gives room for three indentations that become yards and terraces. One wing crosses the property line. There is a lot of public space for hotel guests and residents of the city, yet, the outdoor areas are not planned in more detail. The first floor plan makes the building attractive for residents of the city, too. The main idea behind the plan is to blur the boundaries between the public and the private spaces around the hotel site.

The building partly covers the view from the Hakaniementori square, and thus does not promote any visual connection between the sea and the site. When observed from above, the star-shaped building mass is quite interesting. The building has three wings and slightly curved forms. Street level structuring (both surface of the earth and ground floor facade) is however unsurprising and toneless. The green areas are left in the shadows. The building’s identity does not translate from the Hakaniemi market square. From the street level, the building appears ordinary.

ARCHITECTURE

The architecture is discreet, modest and subtle – even conservative – and it is based on repeating rectangular windows. A part of the first floor is realized as a green roof. The solution allows more efficient use of the plot but cuts a part of the indented form from sight when observed from a close distance. The façade is based on the room plan. The chosen material is white fibre-reinforced concrete. The window size is reduced with wooden panels. When observed from the street level, the building is somewhat ordinary.

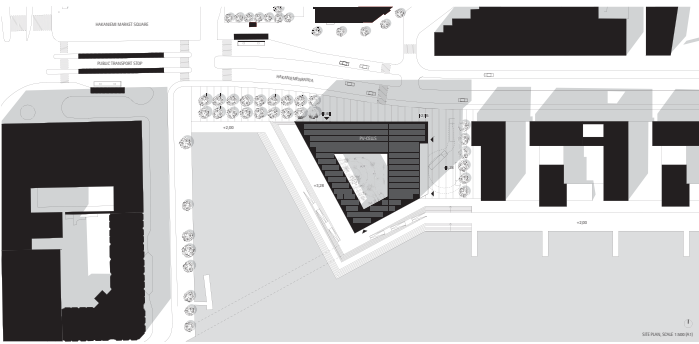
FUNCTIONALITY

The first floor is open towards both the square and the sea. Guest drop-off and pick-up area is combined with service area. This area also has “Beer Garden” – as such, the purpose of the area is unclear. Pedestrian access from Hakaniemi market square to the waterfront was regarded as problematic, but the solution can be developed further. Drop-off and pick-up traffic and service traffic need more careful planning in the proposal. The building has nine floors and the floor height is 3,2 meters. The building fits in its environment because of its height. The eaves height is + 36. The gross floor area is 14 400 m². The floors with the hotel rooms are efficient. The corridor ends are also hotel rooms, which means that the corridors do not have natural lighting. The plan consists of 346 rooms in total. The size of the utility services room on the topmost floor is optimistic. The proposal is calm and adaptable, but its appearance is conventional.

“Pleasantly timeless.”

“More sensitive than the previous, much more appropriate and genuinely brave.”

Comments of the residents of Helsinki from the open comment section on the competition website.



Selected pictures from the proposal "The Try Square".

Entry No. 4 “The Try Square”

RELATION TO THE SITE

The idea of the proposal “The Try Square” is a closed urban block which is fitted to the given lot. The building takes a full use of the site given which from the standpoint of efficiency is a good attribute. The clear footprint of the building also fits well in the Hakaniemi area. The concept however feels somehow “forced”. The totality doesn’t look fluent enough.

The proposed building has 10 floors and total gross floor area of 15 500 m². The eaves height of the building is +34 meters and the floor heights vary between 2,5 and 3,5 meters. The eaves height is expected to increase after the floor heights have been revised. In that case it is possible to remove one floor from the proposal in order to keep the building suitable for the site.

The proposal brings a clear new element to the urban space of Hakaniemi but respects at the same time the basic guidelines of the city structure. The building forms an interesting entity when viewed from different directions. The inner courtyard opens beautifully towards Pitkäsilta Bridge and Siltavuorensalmi.

ARCHITECTURE

The architectural materiality in this proposal is very interesting. Wooden structural system and the use of wood, copper and glass in the facade makes this building unique in its environment and gives it a sophisticated look. The changing fenestration reflects the functions inside. The overall architecture of the proposal is fresh and impressive.

The use of wood, recycled materials, solar panels and the green roof are seen as positive attributes in the environmental aspect. Yet the completely glass-covered outer shell raises doubts about energy economy. The wooden building frame is an attractive but challenging idea. The CLT slab structure is quite optimistic and the wooden surfaces in interiors can prove to be critical because of fire regulations.

The choice of materials is done successfully: the building fits well in the place and on the other hand new architecture is created. The building has a strong identity and it establishes good starting points to the future area development. The entity looks however quite massive and heavy.

FUNCTIONALITY

The volume of the building and the high first floor have a wall-like effect in relation to the surroundings. The restaurant and bar on the ground floor open to the south-west and their entrance is well positioned to face Hakaniemenranta street allowing pedestrian access. The lobby of the hotel as well as the guest entrance and the drop-off and pick-up area are placed on the eastern side of the building apart from the restaurant. The most of the ground floor area is occupied by the 500-seat banquet hall and its foyer. The separate entrance to the hall is from the south-east corner of the building. The idea of banquet hall is nice, although it partly blocks the view through the building from Hakaniemenranta to waterside.

The proposal has 246 hotel rooms and they are placed in the northern and eastern parts of the building. The rooms open to the courtyard which is planted with the vegetation from the archipelago. The landscape viewed from the rooms is framed with a two-storied “beam” containing a restaurant and a spa. There is a separate entrance to the beam from the south-west, which functions also as a column of the overhanging part. The column look quite clumsy and the structure is unnecessarily tricky.

“ Looks scandinavic, good!”

“ Dashing and brave contemporary building which combines the 21th century design and the Finnish nature.”

Comments of the residents of Helsinki from the open comment section on the competition website.

3. Competition Results

3.1 Competition Winner

The Competition Jury unanimously decided to award the 1st Prize to the entry “**Hilbert’s Hotel**”. The other proposals were not ranked in order of superiority.

3.2 Recommendations of the Competition Jury

The competition Jury recommends that based on the competition’s winning design “**Hilbert’s Hotel**”, a town plan proposal for the hotel site will be prepared.

The site’s future owner will be responsible for the commissioning of the implementation designs and the construction of the hotel. The competition promoters recommend to the site’s future owner that a design agreement be concluded with the competition winner.

3.3 Opening of Name Envelopes

The Competition Jury opened the name envelopes of the proposals’ authors. It was verified that the name envelopes had not been opened previously. The proposals’ authors were as follows:

“90723”

Author: Juul Frost Architects

“Hilbert’s Hotel”

Author: Snøhetta

“Helix”

Author: Davidsson Tarkela Architects

“The Try Square”

Author: Wingårdhs

3.4 Affirmation of Assessment Report

Helsinki 25 January 2017

Competition Jury

Arthur Buchardt

AB Invest A/S

Chairman of the Competition Jury

Mikko Aho

City Planning Department of Helsinki

Architect, Head of Department

Competition Jury Member

Asmo Jaaksi

Architect SAFA

Appointed by the competition committee of SAFA

Competition Jury Member

Timo Metsälä

Architect SAFA

The Secretary of the Competition Jury



Hotel
Hakaniemi
Competition